

Subject:	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment		
Date of Meeting:	21st November 2016		
Report of:	Director of Children's Services		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report informs the committee about childcare sufficiency in Brighton & Hove, parents' views of childcare in the city and national policy developments regarding childcare. Local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare in accordance with Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 (as amended), and make this report available and accessible to parents.
- 1.2 The report contributes to the priority to ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children receive the council's support, consolidating services where possible, and targeting resources at those most in need.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment at Appendix 1 is noted.
- 2.2 That work continues to prepare for the new entitlement to 30 hours free childcare for working parents of three and four year olds from September 2017 and note the additional administration this will necessitate by the local authority.
- 2.3 That parents, and particularly those facing disadvantage including low income families, continue to be supported, in particular by the Family Information Service, to take up their current and future statutory entitlements in relation to childcare provision and paying for childcare.
- 2.4 That work continues to implement the new national funding formula for the early years free entitlement for two, three and four year olds which maximises the funding passed on to providers from the early years block of the Designated Schools Grant.
- 2.5 To note that the CSA will be used to inform the development of an early years strategy for the city, to include access to high quality childcare, particularly for disadvantaged children.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 There will be a significant increase in eligibility for free childcare from September 2017 when three and four year old children of working parents will be entitled to an additional 15 hours of childcare a week (called “30 hours free childcare”). Brighton & Hove has been awarded “Early Innovator” status for this scheme and is offering support to providers from all sectors to meet this entitlement as well as undertaking specific projects around special education needs and disability (SEND), sufficiency, parental engagement and flexibility to prepare for September 2017.
- 3.2 There will be additional work for the local authority in administering the funding through eligibility verification, offering advice and guidance to parents and managing “grace periods” if children become ineligible.
- 3.3 The CSA did not find any *significant* gaps in childcare in terms of childcare quality, location of childcare, availability of childcare for children of different ages, childcare availability at different times, and childcare affordability, although parents were concerned about the high cost of childcare. In summary the findings were:
 - 3.3.1 Childcare in Brighton & Hove is of high quality, with a good range of different types of provision. It has shown flexibility in expanding to meet additional demand in providing Early Years Free Entitlement for two year olds.
 - 3.3.2 Childcare is not distributed evenly throughout the city, there being a lot more choice in some neighbourhoods than in others. However, most parents should be able to access provision which is reasonably convenient in terms of location.
 - 3.3.3 Childcare supply for pre-school children in Brighton & Hove has seen moderate overall growth in the last eight years. The increase in provision has mainly been in privately owned full day care.
 - 3.3.4 There has, however, been a significant fall in the number of childminders which exceeds the national reduction. However parents have not reported any difficulty in finding places with childminders. More work needs to be done to promote the role childminders can play in providing 30 hours free childcare.
 - 3.3.5 Nearly all primary schools provide breakfast clubs on or offsite. Most offer on or offsite after-school provision. There has been a small reduction in after-school clubs and holiday playschemes although in some cases new provision is being developed to replace that which has closed. A new “right to request” wraparound care may increase school-based provision and informing parents of this right, and working to establish appropriate provision was one of the recommendations of the Fairness Commission. The government’s guidance has been promoted to schools and the Family Information Service will continue to promote the “right to request” to parents.
 - 3.3.6 Take up of Early Years Free Entitlement by two year olds from low income families in the city is significantly higher than the national average (88 per cent in compared with 68 per cent in England as a whole. Council run nurseries provide a high percentage of places for two year olds (19 per cent) and the Family

Information Service has played a key role in supporting parents to take up their entitlement.

- 3.3.7 Childcare costs have increased over the past two years by approximately 4.5 per cent. However, while the cost of childcare in Brighton & Hove is higher than that in England as a whole, it is lower than the average cost in the south east. Changes in support for childcare including the introduction of tax free childcare in April 2017, increased entitlement under universal credit and 30 hours free childcare should help parents with the cost of childcare.
- 3.3.8 Parents are generally very satisfied with their children's childcare, and on the whole it meets their needs. However, a significant percentage of parents are dissatisfied with the cost of childcare, and their level of dissatisfaction has increased since they were last surveyed in 2011.
- 3.3.9 The provision of childcare outside 8 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday has increased for pre-school children; however parents working non-traditional hours may continue to experience difficulty in finding the childcare for the hours they need.
- 3.3.10 Support for children with SEND to attend mainstream childcare continues to be strong and a total of 131 pre-school and 57 school-aged children received additional funding last year to access provision.
- 3.3.11 Parents are keen to use 30 hours free childcare. Some parents will increase their working hours and/or start work in order to be eligible.
- 3.3.12 Availability of sufficient childcare to meet the demand for 30 hours free childcare is unclear as some childcare providers may not commit to offering these places until the rate they will be paid is known. The Government consulted a national funding formula and published funding rates over the summer. Indications are that there will be a gap between the likely rate paid for EYFE and the rate providers charge parents who pay. This may mean that some providers will not offer 30 hours. To minimise this possibility work will continue to implement the new national funding formula for the early years free entitlement for two, three and four year olds to maximise the funding passed on to providers from the early years block of the Designated Schools Grant.
- 3.3.13 Work is continuing to promote 30 hours to providers and this includes working with maintained schools with nursery classes to review their offer to parents including considering working in partnership with other providers.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The recommendations follow statutory guidance which requires local authorities to report on how they are meeting their statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Two parent surveys have been completed; one regarding childcare sufficiency (responses from 805 parents) and the other regarding 30 hours free childcare (responses from 1,431 parents). Twenty-five face to face interviews were carried out regarding 30 hours free childcare.
- 5.2 Childcare providers were consulted regarding their plans regarding provision of 30 hours free childcare from September 2017.
- 5.3 Head teachers of schools with nursery classes are being consulted regarding provision of 30 hours free childcare from September 2017.
- 5.4 Consultation with employers on 30 hours free childcare is planned in the next couple of months.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 High quality childcare should continue to be supported in Brighton & Hove which is accessible to parents and meets statutory duties. This is particularly important for those facing disadvantage and low income families.
- 6.2 CSA findings should be promoted to childcare providers so that they can develop their provision to meet identified gaps

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Funding for the Early Years Free Entitlement for eligible two, three and four year olds is from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The government has consulted on a new national funding formula and rates for April 2017 onwards and the Council has submitted a response to this. The results of the consultation are expected towards the end of the year.
- 7.2 The local authority is required to gain the approval of the Schools' Forum with regard to the amount of funding retained to resource central early years functions. Brighton & Hove currently retains a low rate compared to many local authorities and already meets the proposal in the Government's consultation document to pass-through 95% of early years funding to providers.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Williams

Date: 20/10/16

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 DfE Guidance "Early education and childcare" (issued September 2014) provides that Local Authorities should report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare in accordance with Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 (as amended), and make this report available and accessible to parents. Local Authorities no longer have a duty to assess childcare sufficiency in their area since the repeal of section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 in 2014.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 10.11.16

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The aim of EYFE for two year olds is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children including those in low income families, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and children in care. An EIA was completed for EYFE for two year olds in 2015 and found that the scheme has a positive impact on the most disadvantaged two year olds in the city. An EIA will be completed for 30 hours free childcare.
- 7.4 All early years providers follow the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage which promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment did not find any significant geographical gaps in childcare provision. In general families are able to access childcare in local community reducing the need for travel.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 30 hours free childcare will contribute to the council's strategy to support parents into work and out of poverty by avoiding the benefits cap. It links with the council's work around welfare reform.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016

