

CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Report of the Interim Head of Education (Delivery)

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Cabinet be asked to:

- (a) Agree the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Report as a true reflection of the Council's current position in relation to meeting its duty to secure sufficient, accessible, affordable, high quality early years and childcare places *so far as is reasonably practicable*.
- (b) Confirm that Members of the Cabinet are satisfied that the sufficiency duty has been met this year.

Please note this report will be published on the website.

2) Background / Introduction

It is a statutory duty for Local Authorities, set out in Section 6, of the [2006 Childcare Act](#), to secure sufficient, accessible, affordable, high quality early years and childcare places *so far as is reasonably practicable*. Childcare and early education should be available at times that support children's learning and development and that enable parents to take up, or remain in work, or undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

The [Children and Families Act 2014](#) requires that a report be prepared annually for elected council members on how the Local Authority is meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. [The Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#), sets out that the local authority should make this report available and accessible to parents.

The 2022/23 Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report is the tenth time an annual report has been submitted for approval.

Sufficiency is met through a variety of providers that includes all types of schools, pre-schools, day nurseries, holiday clubs, breakfast clubs, after school clubs, childminders, etc. These provisions are within the private, voluntary, independent, maintained and academy sectors.

Early years places are for under-five-year-olds. Some two-year-olds and all three- and four-year-olds are funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant to access 570 hours of education a year (equivalent of 15 hours per week term time).

Some three- and four-year-olds of working families are eligible for an additional 570 hours of childcare per year. This is an annual total of 1140 hours of early education and childcare. It is known as the extended entitlement or 30 hours.

Childcare places are for 0-14-year-olds (or up to 18 years old for disabled children). This provision is paid for by parents. The cost of childcare can be reduced by using [Tax Free Childcare](#).

[*The Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*](#), sets out that the Annual Sufficiency report should include how the local authority are ensuring there is sufficient childcare available for all children with specific reference to **children with special educational needs and disabilities**, children from **families in receipt of Universal Credit**, children with parents who work **irregular hours**, children aged **two, three and four taking up funded places**, school age children and children needing **holiday care**. The report considers the affordability, accessibility, and quality of provision and how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

3) Main Body / Proposal

The Early Years and Childcare Service determine there to be sufficient provision in almost all areas of Devon for under-five-year-olds and where hotspots have been identified the service is pro-active in responding to developing more childcare.

The data analysis indicates that overall, there appears to be sufficient early years and childcare provision within Devon. Although the rural/urban spread of different types of provision varies. Childcare Sufficiency Hot Spots (where we are concerned about sufficiency) have been identified.

The overall number of providers has decreased by 47, this is mainly in the childminder sector and is broadly in line with national trends.

The population of under-five-year-olds has decreased by 2.1% (751 children) compared with a decrease 324 (0.9%) in 2022.

The Early Years and Childcare Service recognise that there is a lack of out of school provision in some areas of Devon. There are several factors impacting on this including recruitment, low levels of pay, working hours and lack of demand. Parents are opting to use informal arrangements due to costs due to the challenges of cost of living currently.

The percentage of two-year olds taking up a funded place (85.7%) remains higher than the national average of 72%.

The percentage of three- and four-year olds taking up the early years funding at 96.1% remains higher than the national average of 92%. Children accessing their full universal entitlement and those taking up the extended (30 hours) entitlement has also increased.

There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of providers graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted. This is indicative of the current recruitment difficulties, and impact on children's social and emotional development following COVID restrictions. The Early Years One Devon process has ensured that all settings have improved during this period, and this has been recognised by Ofsted.

There were 1487 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds receiving Individual Inclusion Funding to support settings to meet their needs. 177 children have been funded through the Disability Access Fund for early years providers to support children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT

The Early Years and Childcare Service will:

Continue to assess sufficiency and identify hot spots through data analysis and discussion **on the supply and demand of childcare with locality teams.**

Provide advice, guidance and support to providers to open or expand their businesses in areas where there is insufficient provision or where we need more provision to meet the new entitlements.

Use the provider self-update to inform our knowledge of provision across the county.

Continue the data review of out of school provision to ensure accurate data is held through the provider self-update. Work with schools and providers to develop the wraparound offer in schools and holiday provision.

Support providers through [Early Years ONE Devon](#) to maintain or become good or outstanding.

Work with providers to build greater flexibility and affordability into their provision for parents, where provision is open all year round but does not enable parents to stretch their funding for two-, three- and four-year olds.

Promote the take of the entitlement and hours particularly for children with special educational needs and disabilities and those living in the most disadvantaged areas of Devon.

Continue to survey parents regularly to gain a greater insight into the demand for childcare

Use data from the Devon County Council Economy team to help inform demand for childcare as working patterns change.

Promote the use of the '[unable to find childcare form](#)' to parents as a way of feeding back to Devon County Council when they cannot find childcare, particularly in areas where places are limited, so that Devon County Council is informed when more places are needed.

Promote childminding as a career, particularly in rural areas.

Work with the School Place Planning Team to establish Early Years Provision in new schools and request Section 106 for early years provision where appropriate.

Promote the take-up of the Early Years Pupil Premium to parents and providers and highlight the benefits to the child and the setting.

PRIORITY – Ensure that the implementation of the new entitlements (as detailed in the report) is delivered including sufficient provision for new funded entitlements and wraparound provision in all primary schools.

4) Options / Alternatives

There are no options in relation to presenting the Childcare sufficiency Assessment Report

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

Data is collated from a number of sources to support the information provided and are referenced in the report.

6) Strategic Plan

The provision of sufficient high-quality childcare meets a broad range of aspects linked to the strategic plan by supporting parents to work and improving outcomes for children.

7) Financial Considerations

There are no direct additional costs linked to this report.

However, there will be a significant positive financial impact in relation to government funding to support the roll out of the new entitlements, the increase in the hourly funding rates and the funding to implement the school wraparound programme.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

Improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. Support parents back into work or training.

10) Equality Considerations

It is noted that currently insufficient data is collected to identify the sufficiency of provision for families from ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups. The EYCS will review the process for ensuring there is equity in access to these families during the coming year.

Where relevant, in coming to a decision the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

11) Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

The report is an annual requirement.

Name - Head of Service – Rachel Shaw

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Samantha Chapman

Telephone: 0796692543