

## CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REPORT

### Report of the Head of Education and Learning

*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.*

**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet welcome and endorse the Annual Childcare Sufficiency Report and arrangements be made for the report to be published on the Council's website.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 It is a statutory duty to secure sufficient, accessible, affordable, high quality early years and childcare places.
- 1.2 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 and maintained sectors.
- 1.3 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).
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 Childcare places are for 0-14-year-olds (or up to 18 years old for disabled children). This provision is paid for by parents.
- 1.6 The local authority should take into account what is "reasonably practicable" when assessing what sufficient childcare means.
- 1.7 [\*The Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities\*](#), sets out that the local authority should report annually to elected Council Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents.
- 1.8 The 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.
- 1.9 This is the eighth Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual report; last year's report was approved by cabinet in October 2019 and can be found here: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/eysc/providers/childcare-sufficiency/childcare-sufficiency-assessment>

#### 2. The Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2019/20

The Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2019/20 (Appendix 1), is brought before Cabinet for endorsement, encapsulates key findings from data relating to 1 April 2019 to 31 August 2020 and actions for the Early Years and Childcare Service for 2020/21.

2.1 This year the report includes data and observations collected from 1 April to 31 August 2020 at the height of restrictions enforced on the childcare sector as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and what the Early Years and Childcare Service have been doing in order to continue to ensure critical workers and vulnerable childcare can still access childcare.

### **3. Key Findings – April 2019 to March 2020**

3.1 The data analysis indicates that overall, there is sufficient early years and childcare provision within Devon. Although the rural/urban spread of different types of provision varies. Childcare Sufficiency Hot Spots have been identified.

3.2 The number of providers has increased this year (+7). However, the population of under-five-year-olds has continued to decrease by 1.4% (-533) across Devon.

3.3 The Early Years and Childcare Service determine there to be sufficient provision overall across Devon.

3.4 The percentage of two-year olds taking up a funded place (86.4%) remains higher than the national average (69.0%).

3.5 The percentage of three- and four-year olds taking up the early years funding (97.1%) has increased this year (+1.1%) and remains higher than the national average (93%). The take-up of the full universal entitlement and those taking up the extended (30 hours) entitlement has also increased.

3.6 The percentage of two-year-olds with additional needs accessing funding has increased from 69.6% in Spring 2019 to 76.0% in Spring 2020 and the percentage of three- and four-year-olds with additional needs accessing a funded place has increased from 94.9% in Spring 2019 to 95.6% in Spring 2020.

3.7 There has been an increase in the number of providers registered for [Tax Free Childcare](#) (66.0% to 71.7%).

3.8 232 children have been funded through the [Disability Access Fund \(DAF\)](#) for early years providers to support children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

3.9 There continues to be increased and improved communication with providers through social media platforms. The number of subscribers to the [Early Years Weekly Digest](#), number of likes of the Early Years and Childcare [Facebook Page](#), the number of followers to the Early Years and Childcare Service [Twitter page](#) and the number of connections to the [LinkedIn Showcase](#) has increased.

### **4. Key Findings – April 2020 to August 2020**

4.1 In April 38.3% of providers in Devon were open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. By the beginning of July this had risen to 62.2%.

4.2 Less than 3% of open providers reported that they were unable to meet all requests for a childcare place.

4.3 From April 2020, the funding rate for three- and four-year-olds increased from £4.08 to £4.16 and the funding rate for two-year-olds increased from £4.90 to £4.98.

4.4 The number of people on Universal Credit in Devon more than doubled in the three-month period from February to May 2020. This is likely to result in an increase in demand for funded two-year-old places.

## **5. Proposals for next year**

### **5.1 The Early Years and Childcare Service propose to:**

- 5.1.1 Change the reporting period to academic year (September 2020 to August 2021).
- 5.1.2 Introduce a new termly survey of providers to ensure the service has regular, up to date information on the supply of childcare.
- 5.1.3 Introduce a new termly survey of parents to capture demand as parents' circumstances change.

## **6. Actions arising from the report**

### **6.1 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.
- Support providers to open or expand their businesses where appropriate.
- Carry out a termly survey of providers to capture data more regularly.
- Continue the data review of out of school provision to ensure accurate data is held.
- Support providers through [Early Years ONE Devon](#) to 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.
- Survey parents to gain a greater insight into the demand for childcare where there is insufficient provision or there are issues raised through data, by the locality teams or by families.
- 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 are 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.
- Review the Golden Ticket process with a view to sending a single Golden Ticket to all parents on the Department for Work and Pensions list.
- Promote the take-up of the Early Years Pupil Premium to parents and providers and highlight the benefits to the child and the setting.
- Promote Free School Meals in nursery classes.

## **7. Options/Alternatives**

No other options were considered.

## **8. Financial Considerations**

There are no additional cost implications to the report actions which will be implemented by the Early Years and Childcare Service.

## **9. Legal Considerations**

There no specific legal considerations in relation to the annual report, key findings or actions arising from the report.

## **10. Environmental Impact Conditions**

There are no specific environmental related issues arising from the report, key findings and proposed actions for the coming year.

## 11. Equality Considerations

The actions arising from the Childcare Sufficiency Report contribute to the promotion of equality of opportunity. The report considers accessibility and affordability of childcare for all families and includes consideration of disabled children, families on low incomes and parents working irregular hours. Early years and childcare provisions are registered and inspected by Ofsted and they are required to comply with all legislation relating to anti-discrimination, safeguarding, employment and health and safety. The inspection will assess the extent to which the provider complies with all legal duties including those set out in the Equality Act 2010 and will pay particular attention to the educational outcomes for specific groups of children which includes all children with protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010). The actions identified for the coming year are a continuation of the ongoing work of the Early Years and Childcare service in promoting equality of opportunity for all families through the provision of accessible, affordable, high quality childcare.

## 12. Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified.

## 13. Public Health Impact

The report identifies that there are sufficient early years and childcare services for families. This should have a positive impact on public health as families can be supported through early years and childcare providers who enable parents to go to work or training and can signpost to other support if required.

## 14. Reasons for recommendation

Data analysis for the Childcare Sufficiency Report indicates that the local authority met the early years and childcare sufficiency duty in Devon in 2019/20.

To continue to ensure the duty is met in 2020/21 the main areas of focus will be:

- Ensuring sufficient places for 2-year olds and marketing and promoting this entitlement.
- Ensuring sufficient places for 3 and 4-year olds of working families.
- Raising the quality of funded places– specifically those judged as Requires Improvement and Inadequate by Ofsted.
- Meeting the need for early years and childcare places where there are new housing developments.
- Ensure sufficient early years and childcare provision for children with disabilities and special education needs.
- Monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on supply of childcare including closure of providers no longer financially viable and the demand for childcare as parents work patterns change.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS  
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[Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Report 2019/20](#)  
[Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Summary 2019/20](#)