

CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT ANNUAL 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 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Report and arrangements be made for the report to be published on the Council's website and social media platforms.

1. Background

- 1.1 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*. To 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The [2020/21 Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report](#) is the eighth time an annual report has been published. The report is also attached for ease of reference. Last year's report was approved by Cabinet in November 2020 and can be found here: [Childcare Sufficiency Webpages](#)
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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).
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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](#).
- 1.8 The local authority should consider what is "reasonably practicable" when assessing what sufficient childcare means.
- 1.9 [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.

2. The Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2020/21

2.1 The [Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2020/21](#) (attached) is brought before Cabinet for endorsement and encapsulates key findings from data relating to 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021 and actions for the Early Years and Childcare Service for 2021/22.

3. Key Findings

- 3.1 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 have been identified.
- 3.2 The overall number of providers has decreased this year (-31). However, the population of under-five-year-olds has also continued to decrease by 1.9% (-705) across Devon.
- 3.3 The Early Years and Childcare Service determine there to be sufficient provision in almost all areas of Devon for under-five-year-olds.
- 3.4 The Early Years and Childcare Service recognise that there is a lack of out of school provision in some areas of Devon. This is partly as a result of the impact on providers of the COVID-19 pandemic and lower take-up over the past 12 months.
- 3.5 The percentage of two-year olds taking up a funded place (86.5%) remains higher than the [national average \(62.0%\)](#).
- 3.6 The percentage of three- and four-year olds taking up the early years funding (95.9%) has increased this year (+0.7%) and remains higher than [the national average \(90%\)](#). The take-up of the full universal entitlement and those taking up the extended (30 hours) entitlement has also increased.
- 3.7 There has been an increase in the percentage of providers graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted from 94.5% in Summer 2020 to 96.5% in Summer 2021 this is similar to the national average (96.4% March 2021).
- 3.8 127 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 significantly. The Early Years and Childcare Service have also now introduced an [Instagram](#) profile

4. Focus for next year

4.1 The Early Years and Childcare Service will:

- 4.1.1 Carry out regular audits of **out of school provision** to better understand what is available including school run provisions that are not separately registered with Ofsted.

- 4.1.2 Carry out a **travel to work** survey with Exeter Providers to understand whether fewer children are accessing provision on travel to work routes.
- 4.1.3 Monitor the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** on the supply of childcare including closure of providers and the demand for childcare as parents work patterns change.
- 4.1.4 Promote the services of the Early Years and Childcare Service including the unable to find childcare form to **better understand the demand** for childcare.
- 4.1.5 Introduce **spotlight areas**. In some areas the data we use to determine sufficiency is not aligned to what the locality teams are telling us. In these spotlight areas we will carry out a deep dive investigation into the supply and demand for childcare and consider other local factors and data than may have an impact. This will enable the most appropriate response to be made in those areas.
- 4.1.6 Embed the new **two-year-old funding process**.
- 4.1.7 Monitor outcomes in registered childcare providers as **Ofsted start to reinspect** provision.

5. Actions arising from the report

5.1 The Early Years and Childcare service will:

- 5.1.1 Continue to assess sufficiency and identify hot spots through data analysis and discussion on the supply and demand of childcare with locality teams.
- 5.1.2 Support providers to open or expand their businesses where appropriate.
- 5.1.3 Continue the termly survey of providers to capture data regularly.
- 5.1.4 Continue the data review of out of school provision to ensure accurate data is held.
- 5.1.5 Support providers through [Early Years ONE Devon](#) to become good or outstanding.
- 5.1.6 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.
- 5.1.7 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.
- 5.1.8 Continue to survey parents termly to gain a greater insight into the demand for childcare
- 5.1.9 Use data from the Devon County Council Economy Team to help inform demand for childcare as working patterns change.
- 5.1.10 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.
- 5.1.11 Promote childminding as a career, particularly in rural areas.
- 5.1.12 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.
- 5.1.13 Promote the take-up of the Early Years Pupil Premium to parents and providers and highlight the benefits to the child and the setting.
- 5.1.14 Promote Free School Meals in nursery classes.

6. Options/Alternatives

- 6.1 No other options were considered.

7. Financial Considerations

- 7.1 There are no additional cost implications to the report actions which will be implemented by the Early Years and Childcare Service.
- 8. Legal Considerations**
- 8.1 There are no specific legal considerations in relation to the annual report, key findings or actions arising from the report.
- 9. Environmental Impact Conditions**
- 9.1 There are no specific environmental related issues arising from the report, key findings and proposed actions for the coming year.
- 10. Equality Considerations**
- 10.1 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.
- 11. Risk Management Considerations**
- 11.1 No risks have been identified.
- 12. Public Health Impact**
- 12.1 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.
- 13. Reasons for recommendation**
- 13.1 Members are asked to endorse the Childcare Sufficiency Report so that it can be published for the benefit of families in Devon. Publication fulfils one of the Local Authority's statutory duties.
- 13.2 The report identifies other statutory responsibilities that must be met in relation to the sufficiency of high quality, affordable and flexible early years and childcare provision.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
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[Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Report 2020/21](#)

