

REPORT TO CABINET

9 October 2019

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| Subject: | Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019/2020 |
| Presenting Cabinet Member: | Councillor Joyce Underhill - Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life |
| Director: | Director – Education, Skills and Employment – Chris Ward |
| Contribution towards Vision 2030:  |  |
| Key Decision: | Yes |
| Cabinet Member Approval and Date: | Cllr Joyce Underhill: 10.9.19 |
| Director Approval: | Chris Ward: 10.9.19 |
| Reason for Urgency: | Urgency provisions do not apply |
| Exempt Information Ref: | Exemption provisions do not apply |
| Ward Councillor (s) Consulted (if applicable): | This report affects the whole borough |
| Scrutiny Consultation Considered? | Report is scheduled for Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 23.09.19 |
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DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Consider the nine recommendations of the Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency report 2019-2020, now submitted as appendix 1 and endorse the report and recommendations.

2. Recommend that subject to the above, the Director - Education, Skills and Employment develop and implement a Childcare Strategic Action

Plan for 2019-2020 to be monitored based on the nine recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report to meet the Council's obligations under the Childcare Act, 2006

3. Note that the Childcare Strategic Action Plan will be monitored by the Early Years Strategic Group and progress will be reported termly to The Director of Education, Skills and Employment Extended Divisional Management Team meeting.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Cabinet is requested to consider the nine recommendations of the Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency report 2019-2020 (appendix 1 attached) and recommend that a Childcare Strategic Action Plan for 2019-2020 be implemented and monitored as outlined in decision recommendations above.
- 1.2 The Children and Families Act 2014 states that local authorities 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.
- 1.3 The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area. Working with providers from the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors, the local authority will look to create a strong, sustainable and diverse childcare market that meets the needs of parents. It focuses on sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs.
- 1.4 Section 6 of the 2006 Act gives local authorities a duty of securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by them) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area to enable them to:
 - a) take up, or remain in, work, or
 - b) undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.
- 1.5 Local authorities are responsible for determining the appropriate level of detail in their report, geographical division and date of publication.

The Department for Education publishes annual Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for local authorities. The June 2018, document which is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718179/Early_education_and_childcare-statutory_guidance.pdf

states that the 2019-2020 Childcare Sufficiency Report should include:

- A specific reference to how they are ensuring there is sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of: disabled children, children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit, children with parents who work irregular hours; children aged two, three and four taking up early education places; school age children and children needing holiday care.
- Information about the current and projected supply and demand of childcare for age ranges of children, and the affordability, accessibility and quality of provision; and
- Details of how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

2 IMPLICATION FOR THE VISION

- 2.1 The Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019-2020 supports the Council's Ambition 4. Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high-quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families. The report assesses the gaps in early education and childcare across the borough.
- 2.2 The findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Report provide an opportunity to deliver Early Help to our most disadvantaged families who are most at risk of poor outcomes in Sandwell, through the recommendations children will be able to access good quality early education and childcare.
- 2.3 Support for families to achieve better outcomes for their children and themselves by ensuring childcare and early education is available to allow parents to remain in or return to employment/training.
- 2.4 Support access to positive activities including holiday play schemes and after school activities.
- 2.5 Ensure that children and young people are safeguarded and have improved outcomes by supporting early education and childcare providers to access training, advice and support regarding health and safety and child protection issues.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Childcare Sufficiency report 2019/20 is due to be presented to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 23 September 2019 and any comments or observations from that meeting will be submitted to Cabinet at the meeting.
- 3.2 The Childcare Sufficiency Report (appendix 1) was undertaken between April and June 2019 by the Family Information Service Manager and the Family Information Service Data Management Officer.
- 3.3 Demographic data was provided by Public Health Sandwell.
- 3.4 Supply of childcare places were extracted from the Local Authority Open Objects database, and from a survey of childcare providers and schools.
- 3.5 Quality data was extracted from the Local Authority Open Objects database and feedback from the Quality Early Years Team.
- 3.6 Gaps were identified against demographic data and supply of childcare.
- 3.7 The report is based on findings for Sandwell overall and for the 24 wards.
- 3.8 The findings have been used to develop the below nine recommendations.
- 3.9 The nine recommendations will be used to formulate a Childcare Strategic Action Plan for 2019-2020 which will be monitored termly to assess the progress being made against the actions.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Sandwell's Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019-2020 is attached as Appendix 1. Progress has been made on the recommendations of the previous report 2018-2019. The number of funded settings has increased and there are now fewer settings graded Requires Improvement or Inadequate by Ofsted. A parent survey carried out in Wednesbury didn't identify childminders as a need. There is now one new childminder in Wednesbury and outreach events were carried out there to promote help with childcare costs. All wards now have at least one provider offering irregular working hours. The two year old funding take up has increased and continues to be extensively promoted. Three and four year old 15 hours funded places have increased in wards previously identified with a gap.
- 4.2 The following nine recommendations arising from the findings of the report, are:

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.
2. Aim to improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.
3. To extensively market and promote the Family Information Service Hub and the help available with childcare costs to families across Wednesbury.
4. To work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South ward to address the need for more holiday provisions.
5. To work with the school that has no access to out of school care: Hanbury in Greets Green and Lyng ward (before school club)
6. There is a sufficiency of places for the two year old offer. However, in most areas there is a need to increase the take up of the free early learning for two year olds using a wide range of direct and indirect marketing as well as extensive outreach.
7. There is a sufficiency of places for the universal 15 hours entitlement. However, monitoring the take up of 15 hour places in the maintained sector (schools) may be necessary to gauge the impact of the take up of the two year old offer and 30 hours on school nursery provisions.
8. To monitor the termly take up of 30 hours for three and four year olds against the places available, prioritising the wards where the take up exceeds number of places: Bristnall, Great Barr with Yew Tree, Greets Green and Lyng, Newton, Rowley and Wednesbury South and where the surplus places is minimal in Cradley Heath and Old Hill. Currently some neighbouring wards have capacity which could meet additional demand. Additional capacity could be achieved by encouraging existing and any new providers to offer funded places flexibly.
9. To prioritise the following wards identified as having more than one childcare gap: Greets Green and Lyng and Wednesbury South to increase access to childcare in these wards.

- 5.1 To satisfy the legislation detailed below, Childcare Providers, schools and internal teams were consulted, and their information contributed to the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019/2020.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Report assesses the supply of childcare places against the demand for childcare places and identify any gaps. Findings are developed into recommendations.
- 6.2 There are no other alternative options.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This area of work is a statutory duty funded through Target Funding.
- 7.2 Capacity to achieve the recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019-2020 falls within the remit of staff within the Quality Early Years Team and Family Information Service and the recommendations have been taken into consideration.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Childcare Act 2006 –The Local Authority has strategic responsibility to plan, support and commission childcare and should only provide childcare directly if no other person is willing to do so or it is appropriate for the local authority to do so.
- 8.2 The Childcare Act 2006 - Local Authorities must secure the free minimum amount of early year's provision for all three and four year olds whose parents want it and to assess the sufficiency of childcare and to secure sufficient childcare.
- 8.3 The Education Act 2011 gives parents of disadvantaged two year olds a new right to free early year's education and care.
- 8.4 The Children and Families Act 2014, states that 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.
- 8.5 The Department for Education published in June 2018, the Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities. This

document also addressed changes with regards to securing sufficient childcare.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening has been carried out. However, a full assessment is not required for the purposes of this proposal.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 There are no specific data protection implications arising from the content of this report. The report focusses on statistical data.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from the content of this report.
- 11.2 The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with - to identify and assess any significant risks associated with this decision/project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.
- 11.3 Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that no significant risk has been identified.
- 11.4 Risk is continuously monitored through the Early Years Strategic Group, to ensure we meet the needs of children and their families.
- 11.5 If the Cabinet Report is not approved and the action plan not developed, then the local authority would fail to meet its obligations under the Childcare Act 2006 and could fail to deliver the 9 recommendations from the findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Report.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 Capacity to achieve the recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019-2020 falls within the remit of staff within the Quality Early Years Team and Family Information Service and the recommendations have been taken into consideration.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE

13.1 A sufficient supply of high quality early years and childcare places:

- enables young children to access safe early learning and play opportunities
- enables school aged children to access positive activities including holiday play schemes, before and after school activities
- supports parents to return to or remain in employment/training
- ensures that children and young people are safeguarded and have improved outcomes by supporting early education and childcare providers to access training, advice and support regarding health and safety and child protection issues.

14 **IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

14.1 The Local Authority have a duty to secure sufficiency of childcare, so far as is reasonable practicable.

14.2 If providers in the Private and Voluntary Sector ceased providing early learning and care, then the Local Authority would need to consider what is 'reasonable practicable' and decide if providing services itself, may have accommodation implications for the provisions of such services.

15 **CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

15.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 states that local authorities 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.

15.2 The 2019-2020 Childcare Sufficiency Report has been developed based on the June 2018 Early Years and Childcare Statutory Guidance.

15.3 The supply of childcare places has been assessed against the potential demand for places and the findings have been formulated into the above nine recommendations.

16 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1 DfE June 2018 Early education and childcare. Statutory guidance for local authorities

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718179/Early_education_and_childcare-statutory_guidance.pdf

17 **APPENDICES:**

17. Appendix 1 – Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019/20

Chris Ward

Director – Education, Skills and Employment