

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

TITLE: ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHILD CARE PLACES IN THE BOROUGH

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	31st May 2023
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Children's Services
Key Decision	Yes
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

1. To inform Cabinet of the findings of the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in the Borough.

Council Plan priority

The annual review primarily supports the Council Plan Priority of a **Learning Barnsley** particularly through enabling young children to obtain a good start and to develop a good level of development during their early years as a platform for achieving good education outcomes later.

Recommendation

That Cabinet notes the outcomes of the annual review of the sufficiency of early years provision in the Borough and endorses the actions to be taken to maintain resilience within the sector which supports the sustainability of provision as indicated in Section 4 of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Local authorities are required by legislation to 'secure sufficient childcare' under the Childcare Act (2006) and should report annually on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. Local authorities are responsible for determining the appropriate level of detail in their report, the geographical division and date of publication.

- 1.2 The Barnsley Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) was produced from information gathered from providers in the Summer Term 2022 (see Appendix 1). The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was produced by the Childcare Quality and Sufficiency Manager with support from the Family's Information Service and Quality Improvement Team.
- 1.3 The geographical division within the assessment is based on the six Area Council localities although a full background assessment has been undertaken at Ward level. The full report will be shared with existing and potential childcare providers and will be published on the Council's website

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 Key Findings

- 2.2 The number of 0-4's in the borough has reduced slightly from 14142 in 2021 to 13926 in 2022 a difference of 216 children. This trend is due to continue with the ONS projections for the 0-4 population in the borough reducing to 13205 by 2026.
- 2.3 The number of early years children who have SEN has significantly increased to 335 children either with an EHCP or receiving SEN support according to the Early Years Census January 2022. This compares with 213 children in 2021 and 283 prior to the pandemic in 2019.
- 2.4 Housing development and business development plans are now all progressing with significant amounts of housing and large business parks expected to be complete before 2030.
- 2.5 The number of early years registered providers in Barnsley is 199 which is the same amount as last year and the early years school provision also still stands at 55 which is equal to last year. Therefore, there are a total of 247 providers of early years places in the borough.
- 2.6 Although, the number of providers has stayed the same, the number of places offered by those providers has reduced from 6132 places to 5573 places. As a result the ratio of childcare places to 0-4 population has reduced across all areas with Dearne and the North having the lowest ratio's but the North East has seen the greatest reduction.
- 2.7 Encouragingly the number of schools now delivering 30 hours has increased to over 50%.
- 2.8 The take up rate of 2-year-old funding is 75% which is 3% above the national

average and the take up of 3 and 4 year old funding is 93% which is also 3% above the national average.

- 2.9 Parents are finding the cost of childcare very challenging but 35% of respondents are not accessing any support towards the costs. Parents are reporting that finding childcare to meet their needs is becoming increasingly difficult although they are managing this through flexible working options, grandparents etc.

3. Summary

- 3.1 There is still a good mixture of childcare across the borough and there are several vacancies to support those looking for childcare. However, the places will not always be with their preferred choice, and they may have to travel to access the place.
- 3.2 There is the need to create further places particularly places that meet the needs of the new businesses that are setting up in the borough and who require employees to work 'typical' hours.
- 3.3 Priority should be firmly placed on the providers who are currently registered within the borough to assist them with the staffing and financial issues they are facing so they can provide the places which are registered for and to stabilize the market.
- 3.4 Some of the sessional care currently being provided by early years setting and by schools is not currently meeting the needs of working parents so work should be completed with these providers to support the sufficiency needs of the borough.
- 3.5 Due to the increase in children with special educational needs and disabilities, the increasing complexities of some of those needs and the potential lack of access due to the lower- than- average figures in the census consideration should be given to whether there are barriers to access and how increasing needs can be met.

4 Next Steps

4.1 Workforce Supply

- Facilitate a forum of providers and relevant agencies to discuss and agree strategies that will support the sector with the recruitment issues they are facing.
- Work with South Yorkshire Futures and other South Yorkshire LA's to develop initiatives to support the recruitment of quality staff. Also continue

to be Vice Chair on the Regional Quality Improvement Group which operates across Yorkshire and the Humber.

- Continue to impress on DfE the need for national support for the crisis.

4.2 Financial Pressures

- Investigate ways in which the L.A can further support providers to sustain their provision during this cost of living crisis.
- Work with new employers to assess their employees needs to inform local providers and encourage them to provide financial support to local providers who can meet their needs.

4.3 Creating Childcare

- Work initially with the childcare already in place to increase capacity/increase
- Encourage the setup of new providers including childminders across the borough with emphasis on those wards that do not currently have provision including Dodworth, Stairfoot and Darfield.
- Encourage the setup of new nursery places and the expansion of places/hours of existing provision including schools in the Dearne.

4.4 Promotion of Childcare

- Family Information Service to be transformed into a virtual hub of information.
- Further promotion of all childcare initiative to support parents with the cost of living.

4.5 Budget Update 2023

4.6 This Childcare Sufficiency Report was produced from figures collected in June 2022, since the production of the report in the 2023 budget, the Chancellor set out large-scale childcare reforms to increase availability, reduce costs and increase the number of parents using it. The headlines and timescales of which are below

- **Entitlements:** Eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks a year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school. Govt will also increase the hourly rate for providers.
- **Wraparound:** The government will invest £289m over two academic years, from Sept 2024, to enable schools and local areas to set up wraparound childcare provision
- **Universal Credit reforms** will pay childcare support up-front when parents move into work or increase their hours and increase the monthly re-imbusement caps
- **Market reforms**, including more choice for childminders and changes to EYFS requirements, to improve flexibility for providers and support the workforce.

- **Childminder grants** to attract people to childminding, with £1200 for those who register with a childminder agency and £600 for those who register with Ofsted
- **Changing staff:child ratios** from 1:4 to 1:5 for two-year-olds in England to align with Scotland and provide greater flexibility for providers

Timescales

- **Autumn 2023 - Childminder grants** become available, **Invest £204m** into 3/4yo and 2yo funding rate, **Staff:child 2yo ratio change**
- **April 2024 -National wraparound support begins, 15hrs for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds** introduced, **Invest £288m** into 3/4 yo and 2yo funding rates
- **Sept 2024 -15hrs for eligible working parents of children 9 months plus** introduced
- **Sept 2025 - 30hrs for eligible working parents of children from 9 months to primary school age** introduced
- **Sept 2026 -All schools able to offer 8am-6pm wraparound** on their own or in partnership

As a result of these announcements the following actions will also be taken

- The Childcare Sufficiency Audit work will commence 2 months earlier than usual starting in April 2023, the work will include the gathering of statistics on who will be eligible and when, so detailed plans and targets can be incorporated into the service plan.
- The proposed work will continue to promote childminding as a career with the new childminder grant information, the enhanced hourly rate and potential relaxation of regulation promoted as a tool to attract interested parties.
- Information will be shared with the sector regarding the increase in ratio for 2 year olds which may result in further places being created in September 2023.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

5.1 Financial and Risk

5.1.1 The Council's Director of Finance or his representatives have been consulted in the drafting of this report.

5.1.2 There are no direct financial implications emanating from the outcome or findings of the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment carried out by the Council. Early Years providers and settings are funded for 15 hours free childcare provision to eligible 2 and 3/4 year olds from the Council's Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation. Barnsley's

provisional early years funding allocation for 2023-24 is detailed below:

	National average funding rate per hour	Barnsley's funding rate per hour	Total EY Allocation
2 year old funding	£6.00	£5.63	£2.535m
3 / 4 year olds funding	£5.29	£4.87	£13.721m
Total			£16.256m

Above funding excludes EY pupil premium and disability access funding

- 5.1.3 The EY funding allocation of £16.256m is in the main allocated to early years providers / settings through a local funding formula, based on actual participation hours for the year (and includes supplementary elements for providers in deprived areas of the borough and to support SEND inclusion).
- 5.1.4 It should be noted that early years providers (mainly those in the private, voluntary and independent sector) continue to express sustainability concerns due to increasing cost pressures such as pay, cost of living, rising inflation and energy costs. This is due to the fact that the increase in Government funding has not kept pace with rising pay and inflation costs.
- 5.1.5 To address sustainability issues in the early years sector, additional funding was announced by the Govt as part of the 2023 Spring Budget: £204 million from this September rising to £288 million next year (2024/25) to increase the funding paid to nurseries for the existing free hours offers. This investment will allow the national average rate for local authorities for 2-year olds to increase by 30% from the current national average rate of £6 per hour to around £8 per hour from September 2023. The national average 3 to 4 year old rate for local authorities will rise in line with inflation from the current national average rate of £5.29 per hour to over £5.50 per hour from September 2023. Details of the funding changes for Barnsley are yet to be confirmed.

5.2 Legal

- 5.3 Please see Paragraph 1.1 of the report. There are no unanticipated legal implications emerging for the Council through this report.

5.3 Equality

- 5.4 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the annual review and is attached as Appendix 2 of the report.

5.5 Sustainability

- 5.1 There are no implications for sustainability in the Borough arising through consideration of this report.

5.6 Employee

- 5.7 There are no direct implications for the Council's employees emerging through this report. However, the report details the broader child-care workforce and

the support which the Local Authority intends to offer as part of improving the sustainability of provision within the Borough (Please also see Paragraph 4.1)

5.8 Communications

- 5.9 The outcomes of the Annual Review will be published on the Council's Web site and widely shared with partners and the public as part of improving the long-term sustainability of the sector and promoting provision so that child-care and early years needs are fully met in the Borough.

5.10 CONSULTATION

- 5.11 The outcomes of the Annual Review have been reported to our early years' partners and the Council's Senior Management Team which has endorsed the proposed action outlined in Section 45 of this report.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The purpose of this report is to set out to Cabinet the findings of the statutory childcare sufficiency assessment and the responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient child-care places to meet the needs of the Borough

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The outcome of the annual review affords Cabinet an insight into the current position of early years provision and its sustainability in the Borough.
- 6.2 As Cabinet is aware, the sustainability of the sector is not only crucial in enabling young children to obtain a good start in life and show a good level of development at an early stage as part of improving life chances and social mobility, sufficient child-care places are also imperative in ensuring parents remain economically active.

7. GLOSSARY

- 7.1 None, applicable

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Annual Review of the Sufficiency of Child Care Places in Barnsley (2022)

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Financial consultation & sign off	Senior Financial Services officer consulted and date <i>Joshua Amahwe (15/02/2023)</i>
Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date <i>M P Farrell - 14/02/2023</i>

Report Author: Nina Sleight

Designation: Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention)