

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny
MEETING DATE:	18 th July 2011
TITLE:	Childcare Sufficiency Final Report and Action Plan
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Childcare Sufficiency Report and Action Plan	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to carry out and publish a sufficiency assessment of childcare in their area at least every 3 years. Local authorities carried out their first assessment in 2008 and the subsequent report completed by April 2011. The draft report for 2011 was presented to the then Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 17th January 2011 who recommended that “at a later date the Panel will review, comment and endorse the action plan arising from the final published Childcare Sufficiency Report 2011.”

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny committee is asked to agree that:

2.1 To endorse the action plan arising from the final published Childcare Sufficiency Report 2011.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 In summary, sufficient childcare is defined as:

- enabling parents/carers to take up, or remain in work;
- undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work;
- to secure free early years provision for all eligible children. Currently this is for 3 and 4 year old children but the new 2 year old offer will extend this duty between the 2011 and 2014 sufficiency cycle.

3.2 The local authority must have regard to the needs of parents in their area:

- for provision for which the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is payable; and
 - the provision of childcare that is suitable for disabled children
- 3.3 The Childcare Act 2006 legislation, Section 8(3), specifies that a local authority may not provide childcare unless it is satisfied that no other person is willing to provide it or, if another person is willing to do so, that in the circumstances it is appropriate for the local authority to provide the childcare.
- 3.4 The local authority role is that of market management, for example, monitoring the childcare market and gaps in the market; supporting new entrants to the market; supporting existing providers where it is necessary to maintain sufficient levels of provision; provision of information, advice and guidance; enabling national requirements for change to take place e.g. increases in hours of the 3 and 4 year old early years entitlement, the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage, changes in Ofsted registration requirements for all providers with children up to the age of 8.
- 3.5 To date the Council has used the funding received from the Sure Start Grant and other Government grants, often but not exclusively from, the Department for Education, to enable this work to happen.
- 3.6 From April 2011 these funding streams have been replaced by the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) from the Department for Education. Part of the EIG has been allocated to support delivery of this work, but it is not ring fenced to do so.
- 3.7 The Council would be obliged under current legislation to meet the requirements of the Act with or without the EIG. Provision of the EIG for this work enables the duty to not impact on other Council resources.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 The final action plan recommended that:

- the reports on the levels of provision contained within the childcare sufficiency assessment to be refreshed every 6 months, and the results published on the Bath and North East Somerset website
- the majority of providers are confident that their business is sustainable over the next two years. However, 42% of providers had seen a negative effect on their business from the current economic climate. Bath and North East Somerset should continue to monitor the impact of the economy on provision and provide strategies for market management in order to sustain existing quality provision, or in areas of shortfall to encourage new entrants into the childcare market
- to plan the expansion of the two year old funding from 10 hours per week to 15 hours per week term time only, to be implemented from 2013
- to evaluate the DCATCH initiative during 2011 and implement the recommended actions to improve the sufficiency of childcare for disabled children
- to publish an action plan in line with the childcare sufficiency report and will be reviewed every 6 months with an update on progress made and outcomes achieved.

4.2 the action plan also recommends that in addition to the above the following are required to be planned for:

- meeting the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) outcomes
- ensuring there are sufficient two year old places to enable take up of the two year old early education pilot as there is a lack of two year old provision in some areas and a lack of good quality provision in some areas. This will be developed through Early Years Quality Improvement Support Programme (EYQISP) and the Baby Quality Scheme. This will therefore be a longer term target.
- ensuring there are sufficient three and four year old entitlement places within the guidelines of the Childcare Act 2006.
- using EYQISP to drive quality improvement in three and four year old entitlement provision.
- ensuring there are sufficient out of school places for working families by managing the demand for places and ensuring that settings are not created but then closing due to lack of demand
- improving the take up of tax credits
- supporting setting to achieve sustainability
- increase the number of Childminders where demand exists, ensuring that they are a sustainable long term business
- monitoring DCATCH outcomes which will increase parental confidence around provision for disabled children.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 A proportionate equalities impact assessment was carried out in January 2011 as part of the publication and consultation on the report.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Cabinet Member weekly list approval 15th April 2011; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Charter Trustees of Bath; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer

7.2 Extensive consultation has been carried out in compiling the report including:

- 525 Families/Parents responded to our questionnaire
- 52 children took part in consultations at their out of school club, over 20 gave their views at a play event, and 284 children evaluated the "Your Time" activities
- 66 registered providers replied to a consultation
- 132 questionnaires were sent to employers from a list from Business West and 55 responses were received (42%) from a variety of sectors.

7.3 Extensive consultation was carried out on the draft report including:

- the Council's on line consultation facilities which attracted 14 replies
- press releases receiving local media coverage
- Children's Trust Board
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Cabinet Member.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Human Rights; Corporate; Health & Safety; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	Philip Frankland 01225 394330 philip_frankland@bathnes.gov.uk
Background papers	The national guidance for childcare sufficiency can be found on the Department for Education website at the following link http://publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00274-2010&
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	