

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	<b>Cllr Chris Watt, Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b>		
DECISION DATE:	<b>On or after 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011</b>	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		<b>E</b>	<b>2207</b>
TITLE:	<b>Childcare Sufficiency Report 2011</b>		
WARD:	All		
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>			
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> <b>Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011</b>			

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 instructs local authorities to assess the local childcare market and to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. The legislation requires that a full report and action plan are published every three years. This is the second report and plan following the first published in 2008.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet member is asked to agree that:

- 2.1 The report and its recommendations are used by the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations for reporting on Childcare Sufficiency as outlined in the Childcare Act 2006.

### **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, so far as is reasonably practicable, 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 CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people

The opportunity to access high quality Early Years and Childcare provision has a positive impact on the life chances for all children and in particular those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds as evidenced through longitudinal research.

- Improving school buildings

Many of the recent developments in childcare provision have been on or around schools sites adding substantial capital investment into the building stock of school buildings.

- Sustainable growth

Enabling families to work while their children attend high quality childcare provision not only enables families to benefit but also creates growth and employment in the childcare sector as evidenced in the report.

## 5 THE REPORT

5.1 During 2010 extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders has taken place and been analysed alongside data held by Bath and North East Somerset in order to produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which considers the following points:

- Is childcare accessible?
- Is childcare affordable?
- Is childcare of good quality?
- Perceived actual and potential gaps in childcare places
- Early Education places.

5.2 The overall findings of the report are:

- there has been a notable increase in childcare provision since the last report with relatively stable population growth
- newly established provision may not provide places where they are needed the most
- the Bath area has seen an influx of baby and very young age provision, however working families with pre school age children may experience difficulties finding provision which is totally flexible, although some providers offer holiday/breakfast/after-school provision alongside the provision for very young children
- the majority of providers are happy with the level of childcare in their local area, with the exception of Paulton and Chew Valley. The completion of the Children's Centres at Chew Valley and Paulton will help to alleviate the shortage in provision experienced by some families
- families with disabled children report encountering significantly greater difficulty in finding childcare across the whole of Bath and North East Somerset.

5.3 The report recommends:

- reports on the levels of provision contained within the childcare sufficiency assessment will 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 for the expansion of the two year old funding offer for 25% of two year old children from 10 hours per week to 15 hours per week (term time only) to be implemented from 2013
- evaluation of the DCATCH (Disabled Children's Access to Childcare) initiative and implementing the recommended actions to improve the sufficiency of childcare for disabled children
- an action plan will be published in line with the childcare sufficiency report and will be reviewed every 6 months with an update on progress made and outcomes achieved.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 The report author and Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

## **7 EQUALITIES**

7.1 A proportionate equalities impact assessment has been carried out using corporate guidelines.

## **8 RATIONALE**

8.1 The report has been compiled in order for the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations for reporting on Childcare Sufficiency as outlined in the Childcare Act 2006.

8.2 The report and action plan have followed the Department for Education statutory guidance for local authorities in carrying out their childcare sufficiency duties.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 None

## **10 CONSULTATION**

10.1 *Cabinet member; Parish Council; Town Council; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Youth Council; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Charter Trustees of Bath; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer*

10.2 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.

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

- use of the Council's on line consultation facilities which was joined by 126 people and 14 chose to make a written response.
- a press release receiving local media coverage
- Children's Trust Board
- Overview and Scrutiny panel 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

## 11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Property; Young People; Human Rights; Other Legal Considerations.

## 12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 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.

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<b>Background papers</b>	The national guidance for childcare sufficiency can be found on the Department for Education website at the following link <a href="http://publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&amp;PageMode=publications&amp;ProductId=DCSF-00274-2010&amp;">http://publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&amp;PageMode=publications&amp;ProductId=DCSF-00274-2010&amp;</a>
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