

	<p>Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee</p> <p>20 April 2015</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Free Early Educational Entitlement for Two year olds</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	<p>Commissioning Director for Children and Young People</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
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<p>Summary</p>
<p>This report provides information for the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee on the development of the free early educational offer for disadvantaged two year olds in the Borough. It sets out the current level of performance together with the challenges and main activities and actions that are being taken to improve both the take up of the offer among eligible families and the supply of places among local providers of early education.</p> <p>The report also invites members of the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee to champion the scheme among residents and members in order to ensure that as many disadvantaged children as possible benefit from the improved life chances anticipated from the programme.</p>

Recommendations

- 1. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee note the current performance and the significant challenge facing the Council in delivering the targeted number of places for free early years education for disadvantaged 2 year olds and note the work programme which is underway to improve performance.**
- 2. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee agree to champion the offer of early education for two year olds among residents and members, as set out in paragraph 1.4 and seek ways to help support the development of new places.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

1.1 The requirement to provide free early years education for two year olds

1.1.1 Since 1 September 2013, local authorities have been required to fund free early years education for disadvantaged two year olds (FEE2). The offer, funded by central government grant, is to provide 15 hours of quality childcare provision per week for the 40 percent most deprived two year olds in each local authority area. The programme initially targeted the 20 per cent most deprived children and was expanded in September 2014. The intention is to improve disadvantaged children's social and cognitive outcomes so that by the age of 5 they are as ready as their more advantaged peers to start and fully benefit from school.

1.1.2 As well as providing good quality early education, the aim is also to support parents to improve confidence in supporting their children's learning and to deal with other challenges, such as health problems and family difficulties. The long term benefits are anticipated to be seen through improved life chances for the most disadvantaged children, specifically in enabling access to further and higher education, reducing anti-social behaviour and offending and improving social mobility. It is also part of a national programme of activity to reduce child poverty. By integrating the two year old programme with the wider early intervention and prevention approach delivered through Barnet's children's centre and early years provision, support can be offered to parents to ensure access to universal services such as health and more targeted and specialist services offered by partner agencies.

1.1.3 The eligibility criteria to access the offer are:

- children from families in receipt of qualifying benefits for the Free School Meals (FSM) criteria
- children who are looked after by the local authority.
- children whose families receive Working Tax credits

- children with a current statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan
- children who receive Disability Living Allowance;
- children who have left care through special guardianship or through an adoption or residence order.

1.2 The two year old offer in Barnet

1.2.1 The Department for Education (DfE) has calculated that there are around 2,000 children eligible for the 2 year old offer in Barnet. The DfE has set a target for each local authority to ensure that all eligible children take up a place.

1.2.2 Current take up in Barnet is around 800 children, the number varies according to the time of year the data is collected. Therefore around 40% of Barnet families eligible to take up the offer have done so. London boroughs share Barnet's challenge in delivering the government targets, the average take up across London of the 2 year old offer was 50% (Autumn 2014) compared to 62% nationally. However, Barnet's statistical neighbours have managed to secure 57%. Barnet's performance is in the bottom quartile nationally and is subject to close monitoring by the Department for Education. The council's Performance and Contract Monitoring Committee considered the council's performance in this area and requested that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee consider a report on this matter in view of the challenge in meeting the government target.

1.3 Barnet's strategy to increase 2 year old places

1.3.1 There two key issues in expanding the 2 year offer in Barnet are:

- a) how to increase the demand amongst parents to take up places as many parents choose not to; and
- b) how to increase the supply of 2 year old places across the Borough- especially where space is constrained.

1.3.2 After a slow start, there was an encouraging increase in take up since Summer 14, from 543 places 820 places by Autumn 14. However, due to an anticipated dip that all local authorities experience as 2 year olds turn 3 years old and drop out of the monitoring, there has been a decrease of 8% between Autumn 14 and Spring 15 (753 places).

1.3.3 76% of places in Barnet are delivered in private and voluntary (PVI) sector providers, 14% Children's Centres, 5% childminders and 3% nursery schools. The take up of places so far demonstrates a geographical correlation with the areas of deprivation in the borough.

1.3.4 The two challenges above are shared with other London boroughs and we are working closely with the Department for Education to learn about how other boroughs are addressing similar challenges and what strategies are proving the most effective elsewhere in London and nationally.

a) Increasing demand amongst parents to take up 2 year old places

What we've done so far

- Worked closely with the Department for Education (DFE) sponsored consultancy 'Achieving Two Year Olds' to use the best available advice and new ways of working to raise demand from parents to take up places.
- Provided roadshows for parents, providers and schools.
- Significant marketing campaigns, using letters to parents, posters in public places, bus advertising, till receipts, videos etc.
- A new I.T. system which makes the offer easier to access for parents went live in March 2015. This means parents can now immediately check their eligibility for the offer.

Barriers

- Some parents still do not want to take up the offer, a recently commissioned survey recorded reasons for non-take up: as child too young to access childcare; wish to avoid use of childminders; waiting lists for popular providers.
- In particular, parents are not choosing childminders, despite vacancies available

Next steps

- Conduct an end to end review of processes to make it as streamlined and easy to access as possible to parents.
- Deploy additional frontline resources (brokerage and outreach officers to drive a concerted marketing/outreach campaign to raise profile of the offer;
- Work with partners and other stakeholders, including members to enlist support to champion, promote and encourage eligible families to apply.

b) Increasing supply of two year old places

What we've done so far

- We have used capital grant from the DFE to increase place provision across sectors, but specifically with PVI providers. These monies have supported small capital works and have been used to purchase necessary equipment and materials to support settings. Initial estimates indicate that 300 places should be secured through this investment.
- Advice and support has been given to providers to encourage them to set up additional places.

Barriers

- Schools have so far not been keen to offer two year old places- this is a key barrier which needs to be addressed to secure a step change in the supply of places. From a schools perspective, branching into 2 year old provision can seem challenging although across the country, there is evidence that once this reluctance has been overcome, school

places prove popular with parents. Along with other London schools, many schools in Barnet have been providing additional Reception places to meet the demographic growth, and may not also have space to deliver two year old places.

- Some private providers are reluctant to expand their two year old provision because they feel it is not profitable, or because they don't have the space to expand.

Next steps

- Full review of the property strategy to identify and more effectively target opportunities across the school estate and community assets for opportunities to establish provision.
- Work closely with a number of targeted schools who have indicated they are interested in setting up two year old provision from September 2015. Arrange for opportunities to share success stories from Barnet schools and other schools elsewhere in London and the country.
- Work with the proposed nursery school federation to play a key leadership role in driving two year old provision across schools and childminders.
- For council led children's centres with child care we are developing additional places for two year olds as part of business planning for sustainable settings
- Work with school led children's centres with childcare to increase two year old places and be 'pathfinders' for other schools
- Implement a new I.T. system to make it easier for providers to access information.
- Work with partners across health and the voluntary sector to utilise all channels to target potential providers of places.
- Continue to provide support to private providers to encourage increased take-up of the offer through outreach workers, dedicated officer for schools to encourage take up and enable business planning.

1.3.5 The programme is being delivered by a small project team within the council's Family Service, overseen by the Assistant Director with responsibility for Early Intervention and Prevention. There is a project board in place that is responsible for reviewing and overseeing the action plan. Performance is monitored through the council's quarterly performance monitor, considered by the council's Performance and Contract Monitoring committee.

1.4 The role of members and other stakeholders

1.4.1 There is some evidence that where local authorities have had most success, the programme has been championed at all levels in the local authority and across all services. All Commissioning Directors have received a briefing on the two year old offer to ensure that opportunities that may arise as part of regeneration, growth, planning and other services give consideration to the programme and its aims. It is proposed that elected members also play a role in encouraging residents to take up places and to encourage providers within their locality to consider making provision. It is therefore proposed to hold a member briefing session in May/June aimed at all members across the borough.

- 1.4.2 Elected members who are school governors will be encouraged as part of this briefing, to raise awareness of the need for more places and encourage schools to consider how best they can help to support an increase in provision for Barnet's most disadvantaged two year olds.
- 1.4.3 Members of the Committee are invited to discuss any other opportunities there may be for members to assist in improving Barnet's performance in this area

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The main purpose of the report is to advise the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee of the requirement of the local authority to make provision for early education for disadvantaged two year olds and to set out the challenges and action being taken to improve performance. The council's Performance and Contract Monitoring Committee considered the council's performance in this area and requested that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee consider a report on this matter in view of the failure to meet the government's target.
- 2.2 Recommendation 2 is intended to outline how members of the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee can help support and champion the programme among local residents and member colleagues.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

The project plan for the delivery of the programme is kept under constant review and all options to increase the supply of places or increase the take up among residents have been, and will continue to be considered.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

The steps outlined above will be actioned and kept under constant review.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 This programme supports the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan 2013 – 2016 including 'To create better life chances for children and young people'. The programme will improve school readiness and life chances for the most disadvantaged children as well as a reduction in child poverty. The two year old offer is a key strand of the council's early Intervention and prevention approach, through supporting the early identification of emerging needs and appropriate interventions to change the trajectory of a young child's journey and improve their outcomes.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.2 Place funding is the allocation for each child's place, the funding follows the

child and the current funding allocation is £6.00 per hour. The rate is set locally. The current budget within the DSG of £4m is based on the full take-up of 1,050 places in the summer term 2015, 1,200 in the autumn and 1,400 in spring 2016. Future place funding will be based on the actual take-up of places.

5.2.3 A paper will be presented to the Schools Forum in May requesting the approval of a 'one-off' budget of £742,410 for trajectory funding from the 2014/15 DSG underspend. DfE guidance suggests that trajectory funding can be used for the following:

- Additional place funding – supporting additional places, growing new places and funding non-statutory/discretionary places
- Infrastructure – short-term internal staffing resource, commissioning external organisations to provide temporary support, setting up IT systems
- Market management and sufficiency – pump priming/block buying places, workforce development and qualifications, consultation and engagement events
- Capacity building quality – quality assurance, networks, professional development programmes and resources
- Promoting the offer to parents - promotion and publicity materials, Family Information Service (FIS) support and a community champion programme.

5.2.4 The capital budget consists of capital grant of £785k allocated by central government to Barnet in 2013/14 for the two year old offer. The council has identified £3m borrowing to increase early years provision overall as part of its medium term financial strategy. The capital funding supports existing providers to expand current provision to provide additional places and enables new providers to enter the market by supporting capital programmes that will enable the development of new places. There is an application process in place and the council's early years' service works to identify providers and to support them in their applications.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 Each Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds under Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006.

5.3.2 From 1 September 2013, all local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient early education places for 20% of the most deprived two year olds with 15 hours of quality childcare provision per week. The eligibility criteria to access the offer are:

- Children from families in receipt of qualifying benefits for the Free School Meals (FSM) criteria or
- Children who are looked after by the local authority

5.3.3 From 1 September 2014 a second phase of expansion took place and the statutory duty was extended to 40% of the most deprived two year olds. In

addition to the above qualify criteria additional groups of children have an entitlement:

- Children whose families receive Working Tax credits (income less than £16,190 per year)
- Children with a current statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan
- Children who receive Disability Living Allowance;
- Children who have left care through special guardianship or through an adoption or residence order.

The London Borough of Barnet has adopted these criteria to identify and fund two year olds.

5.3.4 The Constitution, Responsibility for Functions – Annex A, states that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee has responsibility for the following:

- Providing effective support for young people in care and enhancing the Council's corporate parenting role.
- To ensure that the Council's safeguarding responsibilities are taken into account.

5.4 Risk Management

5.4.1 The actions outlined in the report require implementation in order to support an increased uptake of places. Without this action, it is unlikely that there will be a significant increase in provision.

5.4.2 There is a risk that the Schools Forum does not approve the 'one off' funding set out in paragraph 5.2.3. The service would then be either required to work within a reduced budget or other alternative avenues for funding would need to be explored including council funding.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

5.5.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

5.5.2 Detailed profiling has been undertaken in order to identify eligible children in Barnet, this includes a wide range of characteristics, including relevant equalities and diversity characteristics.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

As part of Barnet's implementation of Free Early Educational Entitlement for two year olds, there has been a wide range of consultation and engagement undertaken, particularly with schools.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Delegated Powers Report No. 1163 - An increase in places offered under the Free Education for less advantaged Two Year Olds Scheme. Published 18 May 2012.