



Cabinet

Title	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Date of meeting	14 th November 2023
Report of	Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb - Cabinet Member for Family Friendly Barnet
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	Key
Urgent	No
Appendices	Appendix A - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)
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Summary

Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (April 2023) recommends that an annual report is provided to elected council members on how the council is meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare, and this report is made available and accessible to parents.

This report provides an assessment of childcare sufficiency using data about the need for childcare and the amount of childcare that is available.

In Barnet, there is no immediate concern regarding sufficiency although there is a current plan to support:

- localised areas such as Colindale and Golders Green where more provision is required
- the Government's announcement with regards to the expansion of the Free Early Years entitlement
- any impact arising from rise in the cost of living
- uptake of the Free Entitlement within our refugee community
- changes to demographics including areas of regeneration
- challenges with regard to staff retention and recruitment
- reduction in the number of registered childminders due to retirement
- the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic
- the impact of the introduction of the new Ofsted inspection (February 2022) which nationally has increased the number of early years settings being judged as requires improvement or inadequate. Any setting that is inspected as less than good is restricted to whether they can offer the free entitlement.

Recommendations

That Cabinet note and agree the following;

- a. The Child Care Sufficiency Assessment report at Appendix 1.
- b. In March 2023 the Government announced that there will be an extension of the Free Early Years Childcare Offer for children under five and Primary School wraparound care for Barnet's young people.

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

1.1 Barnet council is required by law to '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'. We have prepared this report in order to meet this duty.

1.2 Having sufficient childcare means that families are able to find childcare that meets their child's learning needs and enables parents to make a real choice about work and training. This inclusive offer applies to all children from birth to age 11. y. We look at sufficiency across the various early years funded childcare offers such as the targeted 2 year old offer, universal 3 and 4 year old offer and the additional hours (30 hour offer) for working parents.

1.3 In this report, we have made an assessment of sufficiency using data about the need for childcare and the amount of childcare that is available. As a Local Authority we recognise the potential impact of increased childcare needs due to the regeneration programmes in Barnet and as such we are monitoring childcare sufficiency in these areas of regeneration.

1.4 Barnet early years settings are reporting that issues with staff recruitment and retention is having an impact on the number of childcare places settings can offer, this is also reflected nationally. As a Local Authority we are working with partners to identify ways to address this.

1.5 Ofsted gradings for Barnet Early Years settings

	Childminders		Childcare on non-domestic		Childcare on domestic	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Outstanding	22	11%	22	15%	2	25%
Good	116	56%	96	66%	4	50%
RI	3	1%	7	5%	0	
Inadequate	0	0%	1	0%	1	12.5%
Not yet had a graded inspection	67	32%	20	14%	1	12.5%

1.6 We currently have 5 Home Office hotels which have a total of 170 children under 5. Some of these children may be of Reception class age. Between the 1/04/2023 – 31/08/2023 (summer term) we have had 22 NRPF Fee2 applications plus 1 Ukraine family. Total: 23 children accessing FEE2. We do not have the numbers for 3 and 4 year olds as this is a universal offer. Welcome packs are available with details of the early years entitlement offer for when families first arrive at the Hotels. Our brokerage team also visit regularly to support families to access their entitlement. We receive weekly updates from the Home Office so we can monitor and assess numbers. At this current time we have not seen an impact on our sufficiency but our nominated Brokerage officer continues to monitor this.

1.7 Barnet's Multi Agency Early Years Action Plan 2022 – 25 has been developed across the partnership to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on both children and early years providers. Since Covid -19 restrictions have reduced and families have grown in confidence, the number of children accessing an early years provision has steadily increased. The focus of the Early Years team is in supporting the increased uptake of the Free Early Years Education and delivering targeted intervention for the early years.

1.8 In March 2023 the Government announced that there will be an extension of the Free Early Years Childcare Offer for children under five and Primary School wraparound care for Barnet's young people.

Timeline of Change;

From **April 2024**, working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours childcare.

From **September 2024**, 15 hours childcare will be extended to all working parents of children from age of 9 months

From **September 2025**, working parents of children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours childcare per week.

These extensions are likely to have an impact on our sufficiency. We are working closely with our Early Years providers to monitor this. We are consulting with Providers and Families to look at the likely impact. As more hours are needed within the free entitlement we will monitor the impact. We will pay particular attention to the offer for 9 plus months as many of our providers do not offer childcare for under 2's.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 Not applicable.

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1 The council will continue engagement with local providers and parents to explore opportunities for expansion and use local data to monitor sufficiency.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

- 4.1 Childcare sufficiency enables parents who want to return to work to do so without reliance on extended family members to provide day care. Opportunities to stay in work and/or return to work can provide greater financial security reducing risk of poverty, support inclusion and provide children with safe and stimulating care and early learning environments. These are core to the corporate priority in Caring for People.
- 4.2 Family Friendly is a key driver of our corporate planning with the vision of "Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best".

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

- 4.3 Measurement of the uptake of the free entitlement at a local level will continue and compared to national uptake.

Sustainability

- 4.4 The Department for Education has announced a capital funding project to support with the role out of the extended entitlement. No detail has been given at this stage.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.5 There are currently no sufficiency issues that impact on the council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The Early education and childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities April 2023 states we must 'Promote equality and inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged families, looked after children, children in need and children with special educational needs and disability, by removing barriers of access to free places and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. Local authorities must ensure they meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and take account of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 0-25 when securing free places.' The Early Years and Brokerage team work with families, Children's social care and other teams such as the virtual school to ensure these children are able to take up their Early Years entitlement.

Risk Management

- 4.6 Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People's Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMT if necessary

Insight

- 4.7 The following data sources have been used when undertaking the London Borough of Barnet's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment:
- Number of children: based on GLA population projections from the London Data Store
 - Children with EHC plans: based on January 2023 School Census data held by London Borough of Barnet
 - Supply of childcare: based on data provided to us by Ofsted, who regulate early years provision in schools and childcare provision (In some cases, we have supplemented this with local intelligence where providers are not registered with Ofsted).
 - Funded early education: data on take up of funded early education entitlements is based on the Early Years and Schools Censuses, which are taken every January and published by the Department for Education in the statistical collection *Education provision: children under five years of age*. Data on entitlement to a funded early education place for 2-year-olds is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.
 - Price of childcare: Collected from Free Early Education providers in Barnet
 - Quality of childcare: data on childcare quality is provided by Ofsted.

Social Value

- 4.8 Access to good quality early education and childcare provision plays an important part in children's development and can support children to be prepared for education. Sufficient childcare provision that is accessible and inclusive will improve opportunity and choice for local parents.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 5.1 Barnet has been awarded £81,254 Local Authority support funding to support with the roll out of the extended free entitlement
- 5.2 We have been informed by the Department for Education that there will be some capital funding to help with the expansion. No detail has been provided as yet.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

6.1 The Childcare Act 2006

- Section 6, which places a duty on English local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents.
- Section 7 (as substituted by section 1 of the Education Act 2011), which places a duty on English local authorities to secure early years provision free of charge. Regulations made under s7 set out the type and amount of free provision and the children who benefit from free provision.
- Section 7A (as inserted by the Children and Families Act 2014). Regulations made under section 7A make provision about how local authorities should discharge their duty under section 7.
- Section 9A (as inserted by the Children and Families Act 2014). Regulations made under section 9A limit the requirements local authorities can impose when they make arrangements to deliver early education places for two-, three- and four-year-olds.
- Section 12, which places a duty on English local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents. Section 12 is amended by section 5 of the Childcare Act 2016 to enable the Secretary of State to make regulations placing a duty on English local authorities to publish certain information at prescribed intervals.

6.2 The Childcare Act 2016

- Section 1, which places a duty on the Secretary of State to secure the equivalent of 30 hours of free childcare over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying children. Children in England will qualify if they are under compulsory school age and meet the description set out in regulations made under Section 2. These regulations also set out the conditions to be met by parents in order for their children to qualify.
- Section 2, which allows the Secretary of State to discharge their duty under section 1 of the Act by placing a duty on English local authorities to secure free childcare for qualifying children. This duty is set out at regulation 33 of the Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) Regulations 2016

6.3 Under the Council's Constitution Part 2D, the terms of reference of the Cabinet includes:

6.4 The Cabinet is responsible for the following functions:

- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
- Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;

- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
- Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;
- Management of the Council's Capital Programme;

7. Consultation

7.1 We are currently consulting with providers and residents to determine the likely interest and uptake of the extended offer. This consultation was published on the 21st September 2023. It will close on the 12th November 2023.

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 All eligibility criteria is set out by the Department for Education. The entitlements differ within the various offers.

- 2 year old free entitlement - Families with children aged two are currently eligible for 15 hours per week of funded care and education (for 38 weeks of the year) if they receive any of the following benefits: Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- 3 year old universal offer – All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours free childcare over 38 weeks.
- 30 Hours - Both parents (or a single parent) are earning or expect to earn the equivalent of at least 16 hours per week at the National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage over the coming three months. If you earn more than £100,000 per annum you will not qualify.

9. Background Papers

9.1 [Early education and childcare - Statutory guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

9.2 [Early education entitlements and funding update: March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)