

Agenda Item 7



Policy and Scrutiny

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	19 October 2015
Subject:	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Annual Report

Summary:

This report presents the annual sufficiency report for comment and gives the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee an update on the delivery of Lincolnshire's Childcare Sufficiency report for 2014/15. Following the presentation of the sufficiency paper in January 2015, it was agreed that the Birth to Five Service would develop the annual sufficiency report based on the following :-

1. Revisit the methodology of assessing sufficiency to give assurance that it is fit for purpose;
2. Develop and deliver the annual sufficiency report for 2015 within associated costs and timeline agreed;
3. Consider strategies for financing sufficiency gaps once the assessment is complete.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to

- Approve the attached annual sufficiency report
- Support the working group to continue to meet as a collective to review the resource allocations to ensure the local authority meets its statutory duties regarding sufficiency of childcare places
- Give consideration to identifying a funding stream of both capital and revenue to support meeting the gaps identified through the sufficiency assessment process

1. Background

When the update was presented in January 2015 it was confirmed that the sufficiency duty remains the responsibility of the local authority (LA). The LA is charged with securing sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 years (or up to 18 years for disabled children).

The guidance indicates that local authorities should take into account what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means in their area. Consideration should be given to:-

- The state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
- The state of the labour market;
- The quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise.

It is suggested that LA's should influence the market place to ensure sufficient childcare by

- Encouraging schools in their area to offer out-of-hours childcare from 8.00am and 6.00pm;
- Encouraging existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market.

In the past, financial incentives were offered to schools and the PVI sector via grant funding in order to stimulate the market place when a sufficiency gap was identified. These grants are no longer available, however we have applied to the DFE for permission to capitalise some of the revenue funding to enable the LA to develop provision around the needs for 2 year old provision. Permission has been received and confirmed.

In order for the sufficiency of childcare places to be monitored the duty requires the LA to produce a report which will have two key audiences; Elected Members and parents/carers. Further information is included in the attached report.

The revised requirements give the LA the flexibility to determine the appropriate level of detail in their report, the geographical division and date of publication, however the report should include:

- A specific reference to how they are ensuring there is sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of: disabled children; children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit; children with parents who work irregular hours; children aged two, three and four taking up early education places; school age children; and children needing holiday care;
- Information about the supply and demand of childcare for particular age ranges of children, and the affordability, accessibility and quality of provision;
- Details of how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

As advised by Hemsall's the content and detail required to be produced within the LA annual childcare sufficiency reports has changed significantly in recent years.

Lincolnshire has adopted an approach taken by many which is to take a snap shot survey and utilise this data to form the basis of the assessment. Further information is included within the annual sufficiency report attached.

2. Conclusion

The working party has reviewed the processes and systems used previously with a view to identifying approaches that would enable the LA to collect meaningful data in a timely and cost effective way.

The data collection process has been integrated in to the Early Years Census.

Proposed process for assessing sufficiency of childcare places in Lincolnshire for 2014/15

The local authority completed a capacity audit with all providers registered to deliver the Early Years Entitlement funding in January 2015 as part of the Early Years Census to capture their current occupancy levels and vacancy information across the 0-11 year age range.

This provided a snap shot approach to data collection to give a picture of current childcare take up levels on the week that the census takes place. Although this process has been more time and resource effective than previous models we feel that lessons could be learnt and the questions revised in order to get a more robust data set. It became evident on analysing the data that there was a significant variant in the responses received due to interpretation of the questions. This required additional resources to follow up and clarify responses and a further data cleansing exercise to be undertaken which has resulted in a delay in producing the report. However it is felt that this could be refined and improved in future years.

Overview of the content of the local authority's annual sufficiency report for 2014/15

- Introduction - linking childcare sufficiency to wider duties and priorities and annual reporting requirements
- Overview of sufficiency - summary of key findings relating to the capacity audit, including an analysis of the impact of any known changes to population, housing and school planning
- Gaps in provision - identification of any gaps, including: geographical; type; age of child
- Priorities - planned actions to address identified gaps

Publication and format of the report

The proposal is to provide the attached report for Senior Officers and Elected Members, with a summary produced for parents which will be published on the local authority's website.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire's Annual Report 2015
Appendix B	Capacity Audit (appendage to the Annual Report 2015)
Appendix C	Parent Report

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
The Childcare Act (2006)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents
Children and Families Act (2014)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted
Childcare and Education Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (September 2014)	https://www.gov.uk/government/.../early_education_and_childcare_for_local_authorities.pdf

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