

## Annual Sufficiency Report for Parents

*This report serves to inform parents about the current childcare position for 0-5 year olds. Subsequent reports published by the local authority may focus on a different age range.*

### 1. NATIONAL OVERVIEW

In accordance with section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, the local authority is required to shape and support the development of childcare in Lincolnshire in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community. This role is described as a 'market management' function, supporting the sector to meet the needs of parents, children and young people, and stakeholders.

Previously Childcare Sufficiency Assessments have been undertaken and based on relatively large-scale research projects involving Early Years and childcare providers, and parents/carers across the county. With the revision of the statutory requirements the local authorities are no longer required to undertake assessments on this scale. However, local authorities are obliged to produce an annual sufficiency report which must include the availability and sufficiency of funded early education places and childcare in the area.

### 2. LOCAL CONTEXT

This report serves to collate Lincolnshire's position using data, local knowledge and other supporting evidence, to demonstrate the sufficiency duty is being addressed, and where there are gaps ensure there is an action plan in place to address any areas for development. Lincolnshire County Council works with external partners that also play a pivotal role in considering the childcare market and the needs of parents, these include;

- Childcare providers (vacancy and waiting lists)
- Jobcentre Plus (working with parent/carers, identifying any childcare barriers)
- large employers (hospital and LA – any unmet need preventing parent/carers from working or taking up employment; patterns of work including outside 'normal' working hours)
- health (new birth data)

The local authority has access to a great deal of supply and demand information through a number of sources which is described further in the 'Supply & Demand' section below. This has been supplemented by undertaking an annual capacity audit with early years' providers. This information is collected and analysed providing information to inform the Lincolnshire annual sufficiency position.

Lincolnshire has a diverse range of early years and childcare providers across the county which includes childminders, sessional preschools, day nurseries and maintained/school

based provision under a range of governance models. All providers play an important role in the delivery of funded Early Years Entitlement (EYE) places and childcare.

### **3. SUPPLY & DEMAND**

The sufficiency duty is focussed on working parents and those studying or training for employment. This means that childcare is defined as that which is reliable and regular if it is to meet parents' needs. The local authority currently has several methods of reviewing childcare demand in Lincolnshire including;

- Analysis of FIS enquiries and brokerage work
- Population trends
- Provider vacancy and waiting lists
- Childcare provision occupancy

In addition to the wider childcare sufficiency duty, the local authority has a duty to ensure there is sufficient provision available for the delivery of funded Early Years Entitlement places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. The statutory entitlement for targeted eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds is currently 570 hours per child per year.

The recent capacity audit undertaken with Lincolnshire's providers suggests that there are enough childcare places within settings that have an appropriate Ofsted judgement to deliver funded Early Years Entitlements.

Previous methods to assess childcare demand are still used and are based on a large number of determining factors both social and economic. Some examples are included below in no preferential order:

- Age of child
- Needs of working parents for formal childcare
- Parents accessing informal childcare i.e. grandparents
- Parents choosing not to work or to work part time
- Parents returning to work within the first year of becoming a parent

Other factors that influence the formula are costs of childcare and staff ratios required for different age ranges of children. The method currently used for this assessment is:

- Children under 2 year old – 1 place for every 6 children
- Children 2-5 years – 1 place for every 3 children

The local authority recognise there is a concern specifically regarding childcare for over 11's, as detailed in recent reports published by the Family Childcare Trust. However, locally there is no evidence to suggest that Lincolnshire has a shortfall of places for children over the age of 11 years. Similarly there is no evidence to suggest that there is a shortfall of places for children aged between 5 and 11 years.

#### **4. PLANNING TO MEET IDENTIFIED NEEDS**

From the data collected in the capacity audit, there are no districts that have greater waiting lists than the number of vacancies when measuring 0-5 provision. However, due to the complexities of vacancies versus waiting lists (e.g. where a child may be on more than 1 waiting list or a waiting list includes pre-birth children, this distorts immediate demand) there are areas that will be subjected to ward level analysis to identify where new childcare places are needed in the future.

The district areas identified for more detailed ward level analysis are:

- Lincoln
- Boston
- West Lindsey

**If you have a child aged between 0-16 years (18 with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities) and you are unable to find appropriate childcare in your area, please contact the Family Information Service on 0800 195 1635. The FIS will support you with your enquiry and recording your concerns will also serve to inform future childcare sufficiency reports.**

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