

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULTS SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EARLY HELP SERVICES COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 DECEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	EARLY YEARS SERVICE 2016/17		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the priorities of the Early Years' Service 2016/17.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Childcare Act 2016 takes forward the Government commitments to secure an additional entitlement of childcare support for working parents. This extends the current universal entitlement for all 3&4 year olds to 570 hours a year of early education/childcare. The new entitlement enables working parents to have an additional 570 hours a year bringing their entitlement to 1,140 hours a year for 3&4 year olds in families where all parents are working.
- 3.2 The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities in England to ensure a sufficiency of childcare for working parents, parents studying or training, and for disabled children. Childcare sufficiency relates to the provision of registered childcare for children aged 0-14 years old, and up to and including 17 years old for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The childcare sufficiency duties include the requirement to shape and support the development of childcare in the area and to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community.

- 3.3 There is also duty on local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents relating to the provision of childcare, services or facilities that may be of benefit to parents and prospective parents, children and young people, something that is strengthened in the Childcare Act (2016). The Family Information Service in Reading undertakes this role.
- 3.4 The Family Information Service (FIS) is a statutory service under Section 12 of the 2006 Childcare Act, & Section 5 of Childcare Act 2016.
- 3.5 Alongside the introduction of the Childcare Act 2016 there are a number of additional policy initiatives that will impact on the early years and childcare provision in Reading. These include:
- National Living Wage
 - Automatic enrolment for employees pensions from April 2016
 - Tax free childcare
 - 30 hours childcare
 - National Early Years Funding Formula
 - Right to Request
 - Changes to universal credit

The impact of these changes have been considered and included in the changes to the national funding formula and the development of the 30 hours entitlement.

4 POLICY CONTEXT - Summary of Priorities for the Early Years' Service in 2016/17

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

- 4.1 The Government proposed to introduce a baseline assessment for children on entry to Reception in 2015. Following a review in 2016 this was not implemented. The DfE have confirmed that local authorities will continue to use the EYFSP until 2018.
- 4.2 For 2016, the EYFSP in Reading continued an upward trend in the number of children achieving a good level of development and narrowing the achievement gap. Reading also continues to achieve outcomes and to narrow the achievement gap higher than the national average.

Performance

Good Level of Development & Gap for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in Reading.						
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017

						Target
LA	70.4%	51.3%	63.7%	67.4%	71.1%	74%
NATIONAL	64.0%	52.0%	60.4%	66%	69.3%	
Gap LA	29.7%	33.3%	31.5%	31.4%	30%	29%
Gap National	30.1%	36.6%	33.8%	31.4%	31.4%	

4.3 In spring term 2016 there were 788 eligible two year olds and 4,811 eligible three & Four year olds taking up their early years entitlement. Reading has 3,526 childcare places for children aged 0-4 years within the PVI sector and 1,813 places in the maintained sector. The majority of 2YO (93.9%) access their entitlement within the PVI sector.

5 30 HOURS CHILDCARE

5.1 According to Early Years Census January 2016, 837 parents are paying for their child to have additional hours alongside their universal entitlement of the 570 hours a year free. This equates to roughly 25% of families.

5.2 From September 2017 eligible parents may seek to 'convert' the hours they currently pay for to funded hours with their current provider. Where this is not possible, they will look to take up some or all of their additional free entitlement at another provider. This will mean childcare bills for eligible families should decrease. The cost of childcare is cited by parents as the main barrier to using more childcare and for some families, the additional free entitlement will mean they can increase their childcare hours, lengthening the childcare day, access childcare at weekends, or stretching their free early learning and childcare across school holidays, or a combination of all three.

5.3 The Early years Team have started to work with Early Years providers and Schools to prepare for the extended hours offer. This will continue up to September 2017 when the extended hours entitlement is introduced.

6 NATIONAL EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA

6.1 A national funding formula for early years will be introduced in April 2017. The Government has committed to uplift to the national average rate paid for the two, three and four year old entitlements. The national average rates for both two-year-olds and three and four year olds will increase.

6.2 The funding allocations will come as part of the direct schools grant (DSG) in the early years funding block. The early years' service has consulted with providers and reported to schools forum on the rates set for 2016/17.

- 6.3 The early years' service has been working with providers to prepare for this change to funding. The impact of this new formula in Reading should provide an uplift to most providers. The new formula will however, have an impact on the funding that Maintained Nursery Schools receive. Local authorities will receive a supplement for the Maintained Nursery Schools to 2019. The Government have indicated that there will be further consultations with the sector in the coming months.

7 RIGHT TO REQUEST

- 7.1 From September 2016, parents have the 'right to request' the school their child attends considers establishing wrap-around and holiday childcare to support working parents. Childcare providers will also have the 'right to request' a school allows them to use its facilities at the end of the school day and during school holidays when the school is not using them.
- 7.2 The overall aim of the policy is to help parents to work, or work for longer. The 'Right to request' refers to children from Reception up to the end of Key Stage 3. Where there is demand, schools and providers may also want to consider wraparound/holiday childcare for the under 5s or for Year 10 and above.

8 THE FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE (FIS)

- 8.1 FIS has been instrumental in providing information, advice and guidance to parents and carers on childcare in Reading particularly during the development of the free childcare places for two year olds.
- 8.2 FIS is a well-established service in Reading offering impartial advice, support and brokerage to families for over 25 years, it is a trusted and valued service by both parents and practitioners. The Reading Services Guide (RSG), www.reading.gov.uk/serevicesguide is the web platform which supports the work of FIS and this is well used by both parents and providers in Reading. It has become 'the front door' and a single point for information on childcare as well as other information for parents which helps them access support and services in Reading. The website gets on average 30,000 to 40,000 hits per month, and this is growing each year. Providers can keep their information and vacancies updated so the information is current and relevant to parents; this process helps alleviate sufficiency and empowers the providers to promote their settings to potential families.
- 8.3 FIS have also worked on implementing the Local Offer to meet the SEND Code of Practice and the associated reforms to meet statutory requirements. The Local Offer is also hosted on the Reading Services Guide and is an integrated part of the FIS. Settings that have completed their local offer information are given a 'local offer' image which indicates to the parent the setting can offer support to a child with SEND, further robust tagging is also done to ensure the parent can find the information on settings offering specific support which can be found quickly and efficiently; this is in line with the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years.

9 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 During the summer of 2016 the early years' service commissioned work with Hemsalls consultancy on the Childcare Sufficiency Audit for 2016/17. There was a clear focus on the context of this audit taking into consideration future plans for the expansion of the childcare market with the introduction of the entitlement for working parents.
- 9.2 Alongside the work on the audit of childcare we also undertook a consultation with parents on childcare in Reading. We had just fewer than 900 parents take part in this consultation. We have subsequently worked with specific groups of parents in focus groups to gain further understanding of the childcare market in Reading. This work is currently underpinning the planning for meeting the growing demand for childcare and to ensure sufficiency of childcare for September 2017.
- 9.3 The recommendations from the Childcare Sufficiency Audit will enable the childcare market in Reading to meet existing & changing childcare needs. Given a more diverse population, an increase in the child population, the introduction of 30 hours childcare from September 2017 and 'right to request', the sector could expect new or different demands from parents and carers on the next few years.

10. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 10.1 An effective early education is crucial to the success of Reading pupils. It must be able to provide good quality education for our young people so that the council can provide the best life through education, early help and healthy living.

11. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 11.1 Engagement with parents and carers is vital in the Early Years. The assessment of children's attainment and progress provides a comprehensive analysis of a setting's performance.

12. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 The Early Years team will focus on key gaps within the results for those children in settings to ensure that each group and setting is supported so that every child receives a good start to their school life.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Covered under section 5.

14 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 National Early Years Funding Formula - section 4.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.