

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2019

<b>Cabinet Date</b>	<b>13 November 2019</b>
<b>Deputy Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years</b>	Councillor Richard Boyles
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Background Documents</b>	<a href="#">Early Education and Childcare – Statutory guidance for local authorities</a>
<b>Location/Contact for inspection of Background Documents</b>	<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718179/Early_education_and_childcare-statutory_guidance.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718179/Early_education_and_childcare-statutory_guidance.pdf</a>
<b>Main Consultees</b>	The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment reflects, and is informed by, the ongoing discussions between local providers of childcare and the Council's Early Years team.
<b>Planned Dates</b>	Following approval by Cabinet, the Childcare Sufficiency Strategy will be published on the Council's website in November 2019.
<b>Divisional Councillor</b>	All
<b>Officer</b>	Tim Browne Director of Education <a href="mailto:tim.browne@gloucestershire.gov.uk">tim.browne@gloucestershire.gov.uk</a> Tel. no. (01452) 328693
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To seek Cabinet approval for Gloucestershire's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (2019)
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Cabinet approves the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019 and delegates authority to the Director of Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years to make any final changes prior to publication.
<b>Reasons for recommendations</b>	There is a requirement that local authorities undertake an annual assessment of the capacity and quality of childcare in their area and bring this to the attention of elected members, prior to it being made available to the public.
<b>Resource Implications</b>	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

## MAIN REPORT CONTENTS

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006, and Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance, gives local authorities a duty to secure, so far as is reasonable practicable, childcare provision for children aged 0-14 and up to 18 for disabled children. The provision should be sufficient to meet the requirements of parents/carers to enable them to work or undertake education or training leading to work, and for their child to access their free entitlement childcare place.
- 1.2 A key element within the range of duties placed on local authorities is to carry out an annual assessment of the childcare available in their area and produce an annual report for Council members on how the duty is being met, and to make it available to the public. The local authority also has a strategic role in working with local partners and child care providers to shape provision to ensure it is well placed to meet the needs of local families.
- 1.3 The aim of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019 is to provide an analysis of childcare supply and demand for childcare in Gloucestershire. This encompasses information about the quality, accessibility and affordability of local childcare provision, any gaps and how these will be addressed.
- 1.4 There is a considerable body of research evidence that accessing early education and childcare provision is associated with improvement in children's cognitive and socio-emotional development as they progress through primary and secondary school. For disadvantaged children the opportunity to attend good quality provision is particularly important in enabling them to access resources and experiences they might not have at home.
- 1.5 Children's entitlement to 15 hours a week (30 hours for some) of early education makes an important contribution towards ensuring children are ready for full-time education. The 'school readiness' of children, which describes their general level of development as they enter full-time education at foundation stage, can have a significant effect on children as they progress through school and later life.
- 1.6 For many years the proportion of children in Gloucestershire achieving a good level of development (GLD) when assessed at the end of their reception year (in full-time education) has been lower than the national average. Whilst this is due to a complex range of factors, the importance of children accessing good quality childcare provision cannot be overstated. Intensive work over the last year now reversed this trend, with the provisional 2018/19 data showing a 2.8% increase in GLD, placing Gloucestershire above the national average at 71.9%.
- 1.7 A copy of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (2019) is attached at Appendix 1. Key headlines from the assessment include:
  - There are currently 784 childcare settings, comprising 410 childminders, 148 day nurseries, 206 pre-school, 16 nursery units in independent schools and 4 private non-maintained nurseries.

- There are 16,567 childcare places available for children aged 0-5 years in Gloucestershire.
- The quality of childcare in Gloucestershire is high; 88% of 2 year olds and 92% of 3 and 4 year olds who access their funding entitlements are in 'good' or 'outstanding' provision.
- Increasing staffing costs due to minimum and living wage increases, pension costs and marginal government funding for places are creating challenges for providers in sustaining and developing provision. There has been an increase in the number of settings, particularly smaller businesses, that have closed or report a risk of closure.
- Whilst the take up of funded (targeted) early education for 2 year olds in Gloucestershire remains 3% higher than the national average at 71% and has seen a further increase in taken-up since January 2019, this area continues to be a priority for the Early Years Service. The take up of universal funded early education for 3 and 4 year olds is broadly in line with national averages and has remained fairly consistent over the past years.
- Overall, the available provision in Gloucestershire is sufficient to meet demand in terms of the numbers of children requiring childcare; this is based on available birth data, projection of future demand and information of available childcare provision in the county. Childcare for children with special educational needs and disabilities is available in Gloucestershire, comprising places within mainstream provision and special schools.

1.8 The Childcare Sufficiency Strategy has been completed by the Early Years Service, which is located within the Education Directorate of Children's Services. Comprising around 25 full-time equivalent staff, based in 3 locality teams (Gloucester and the Forest, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, Stroud and Cotswolds), they play a key role in developing the quality and capacity of the childcare market in Gloucestershire. This encompasses the administration and processing of payments, engaging potential new providers, ongoing guidance and support, statutory data returns to the Department for Education and the local implementation of national initiatives and priorities for childcare.

1.9 Gloucestershire's Childcare Sufficiency and Assessment (2019) concludes that there is currently sufficient provision to meet the needs of children requiring childcare, with the greater majority of provision of good or outstanding quality. However, it also highlights some challenges in terms of the take up of the 2 year old targeted offer and the risks to provider sustainability due to a combination of cost and funding pressures. The action plan attached is part of the sufficiency assessment aimed to address these issues.

## **2.0 Options**

2.1 To approve the Gloucestershire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019 and associated action plan.

2.2 To not approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019. This would mean that the local authority would not be planning strategically and would be in breach of its statutory obligations.

### **3.0 Risk Assessment**

3.1 There are a range of risks associated with the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment:

**Risk:** There is insufficient accessible childcare capacity in Gloucestershire.

**Mitigation:** The action plan attached to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment includes the completion of a Business Risk Analysis to identify areas of vulnerability and enhance the sustainability of provision. This will take place alongside the ongoing programme of work to recruit and sustain the local childcare provider market.

**Risk:** The quality of childcare is less than good or outstanding.

**Mitigation:** The Early Years team will continue to work with providers and their workforce to ensure the children and families are able to access good or outstanding provision.

### **4.0 Officer Advice**

4.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places a statutory duty on local authorities to undertake an annual assessment of the sufficiency and quality of childcare provision in their locality. Whilst the statutory duty is not prescriptive on its precise form, there is a requirement for the local authority to complete an assessment in order to meet its statutory obligations.

4.2 It is considered that the Childcare Sufficiency Strategy Assessment, attached at Appendix 1, is of good quality and represents a positive response to the requirements placed on Gloucestershire County Council, by the Childcare Act 2006, and associated statutory guidance.

4.3 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to reflect the changing patterns of childcare demand and capacity in Gloucestershire.

4.4 Officers therefore recommend that Cabinet adopts Option 1 and approves the Gloucestershire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019 and associated action plan, subject to any final amendments agreed by Cabinet.

### **5.0 Equalities Considerations**

5.1 The Childcare Act gives local authorities a duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, childcare provision for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). This is underpinned by a funded entitlement for all 3 and 4 year olds of up to

570 hours per academic year of free early education or childcare and a targeted offer, for eligible families, of 570 hours for 2 year olds.

- 5.2 A key part of the work of the Early Years team is to ensure that local provision is inclusive, non-discriminatory and able to meet the needs of children and families, including children with disabilities, special educational needs, BME and those from disadvantaged families. The Sufficiency Assessment and resulting action plan outline how the Early Years Team will work with local providers to ensure the market continues to develop to meet the diverse needs of children in Gloucestershire.

## **6.0 Consultation Feedback**

- 6.1 The Early Years Team is involved in a dialogue with childcare providers on an ongoing basis, to ensure that local provision continues to meet the needs of children and families in Gloucestershire. Alongside demographic and birth data, the sufficiency assessment also draws upon the concerns and pre-occupations of childcare providers in order to develop a rich picture of the quality and distribution of childcare provision across the county.
- 6.2 The assessment, when published, will also be a resource for parents to understand the types and distribution of childcare in their area, and how the Early Years Team is working to ensure this is sustained and developed.

## **7.0 Performance Management/Follow Up**

- 7.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Strategy assessment will be kept under regular review by the Early Years Team, Education and Disabilities and Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to ensure it remains fit for purpose. It will be refreshed on an annual basis. This will include performance metrics that highlight take up of the funded child care offer, the quality and availability of provision acknowledging their importance as key contributors to the readiness of children to commence full-time education.

<b>Report Title</b>	Gloucestershire's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
<b>Statutory Authority</b>	Childcare Act 2006 Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities (2018)
<b>Relevant County Council policy</b>	Looking to the Future 2019-2022 – Children's Wellbeing and Safeguarding.
<b>Resource Implications</b>	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.
<b>Sustainability checklist:</b>	
Partnerships	The Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities (2018) outlines how local partners will work together to ensure that Early Education and Childcare in Gloucestershire is effective in meeting the needs of children and families.
Decision Making and Involvement	The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is informed by the ongoing dialogue between the Early Years Team and existing or potential childcare providers.
Economy and Employment	Accessible, good quality childcare provision is an important element in enabling adults to enter the jobs market and contribute to the local economy.
Caring for people	The proposals accord with the Council's strategic priorities relating to caring for people.
Social Value	Accessible, good quality childcare provision is an important contributor to the development of children, particularly to the most vulnerable, and a key determinant of subsequent progress through school and on to adulthood.
Built Environment	No impact.
Natural Environment' including Ecology (Biodiversity)	No impact.
Education and Information	Accessible, good quality childcare provision is an important contributor towards school readiness and subsequent educational progress.

<b>Tackling Climate Change</b>	Carbon Emissions Implications? Neutral Vulnerable to climate change? Maybe
<b>Due Regard Statement</b>	Has a Due Regard Statement been completed? No
<b>Human rights Implications</b>	None.
<b>Consultation Arrangements</b>	As detailed in report.