

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting24th April 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014 - 2015

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that outlined how the Local Authority (LA) was meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare and includes information about the supply of and demand for childcare, details on any gaps in provision and an action plan on how they would be addressed.

The Childcare Act (2006) and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare – September 2013, required Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as was reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who were studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should take into account:-

- what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means for their area;
- 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; and
- the quality and capacity of childcare providers.

The Children and Families Act 2014 repealed the duty on the local authority to prepare assessments on the sufficiency of provision of childcare in their area at least every 3 years and replaced this with the duty to report annually to elected council members on how they were meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. There was also a requirement to make this report available and accessible to parents.

As part of the changes there was no longer a requirement to undertake consultation to support the Assessment.

Local authorities were responsible for determining the appropriate level of detail in their report, 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 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; and
- Details of how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

In addition, local authorities were required by legislation to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents on the provision of childcare in their area, ensuring parents were aware of:-

- Early education places for two, three and four year olds;
- The option to continue to take up their child's 15 hour early education place until their child reaches compulsory school age;
- How to identify high quality provision in their area.

The CSA Report provided information on how the Local Authority would meet its legal duty as detailed earlier in the report.

For planning purposes and to ensure consistency of approach, the delivery of early years and childcare services was brought together within the twelve Children's Centre Areas across the seven Early Years Communities.

The report provided the following:-

- Background and contextual information about the Borough regarding population and Labour Market Information (LMI).
- Early years and childcare information including Ofsted registrations, geographical distribution, vacancies, charging, opening and closing times and quality of provision.
- Details of identified gaps in childcare provision and key priorities.
- An Action Plan with timescales.

Stockton-on-Tees had a good range of quality childcare across the borough; however specific gaps in provision had been identified, as follows:-

Ensuring sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of disabled

children:-

- There is a lack of understanding from parents regarding the availability of childcare for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN).
- Information on childcare for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN) must be included in the Local Offer for Stockton-on-Tees.
- Early years and childcare settings require clarity around the criteria for Early Years High Needs funding and the application process to ensure maximum accessibility for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN).

Ensuring sufficiency for children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit:-

- Low income areas have the lowest take up of Working Tax Credit childcare element.

Children aged two taking up early education places:-

- Insufficient 2 year olds, who are looked after, or eligible for a free school meal, accessing a place.
- Insufficient places available to meet the target for 2014.
- Improved marketing and promotion required to maximise take up.
- Lack of awareness by parents of the advantages of using a childminder.

Ensuring sufficiency for school age children:-

- Gaps in Thornaby have been identified due to lack of childminder provision in the area.

The Action Plan set out the actions that would need to be taken in order to address the identified gaps and key priorities. The detail of each action would be found in individual implementation plans held by the responsible officer / team. The action plan covers 2014 – 2015 and the implementation plans for the delivery of the specific actions identified would be found within individual team delivery plans.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014-2015 underpinned the Government's aim to ensure there was sufficient childcare, as far as was reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who were studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the associated priorities for 2014-2015 be approved.
2. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Action Plan for 2014-2015 be approved.
3. Reasons for the Decision

The Childcare Act (2006) and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare – September 2013, requires Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).
4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014-2015 as his wife was a child minder.
6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 2nd May 2014

Proper Officer
28 April 2014