

Children and Young People Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Quality and Sufficiency of Childcare



February 2013

Children and Young People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
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Foreword

On behalf of the Children & Young People Select Committee, I am pleased to present the final report following the Scrutiny Review of Quality and Sufficiency of Childcare. Childcare is an important part of family life, enabling parents to go to work when their children are very young, benefitting the family both financially and socially. Evidence also shows that good pre-school childcare gives children a flying start and leads to better outcomes as they move through school.

The Ofsted results for childminders and childcare settings in Stockton has improved over the last year, with more providers achieving good or outstanding inspection results, however there are still some improvements to be made to match the ratings achieved both in the North East and England. During the review the Committee were pleased to see that a large amount of work is being carried out to help childminders and childcare setting to improve their Ofsted ratings, and this has included the development of toolkits such as 'A Journey to Outstanding' and 'New STEPS'. It is recognised that as childcare providers are independent from the Council, they cannot be required to engage nevertheless it is important that we support providers to improve to ensure the best possible outcome for children in the borough. The Committee's recommendations therefore aim to tackle barriers which might prevent engagement by methods such as peer support and networking.

The Committee were made aware of the requirement to ensure there is sufficient places to meet the three and four year old 15 hours free childcare entitlement, and is satisfied that this is being met. The changes to the two year old entitlement were noted the Committee are happy for the officer project team continue to oversee the introduction of this.

I would like to thank all officers who supported the review, including those officers who attended to present evidence, as well as the nurseries, schools and childminders who contributed to the review, either by allowing Members of the Committee to visit their settings or attending Committee meetings.

Cllr Barbara Inman - Chair

	<p> Councillor Barbara Inman Chair – Children and Young People Select Committee </p>		<p> Councillor Carol Clark Vice-Chair – Children and Young People Select Committee </p>
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Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Council Plan Objective – Children and Young People - No Child Left Behind

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

- To continue to improve the quality of childcare and therefore outcomes for children.
- To identify and plug gaps in provision in order to meet need.
- To prepare for the duty to provide places for disadvantaged 2 year olds by 2013.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- Sufficiency of childcare – how can the Council meet gaps in provision?
- Quality of childcare – how can the Council improve quality of provision?
- How should the Council’s quality improvement programme be used in order to raise standards?
- Evaluation of current support arrangements – are they sufficiently provider focused?
- Do we ensure that parents have access to information to make informed choices?

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

The review will be seeking to improve the quality of childcare in the Borough and ensure there are sufficient places for 2 year olds.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of the Quality and Sufficiency of Childcare undertaken by the Committee during the Municipal Year 2012/13. The topic was identified for review at Scrutiny Liaison Forum and included in the 2012/13 Work Programme by Executive Scrutiny Committee. The topic was identified as Ofsted ratings for childcare setting revealed that Stockton was below average both regionally and nationally.
- 1.2. Childcare plays a crucial role in the lives of most families. It enables parents to go out to work to contribute to a decent family income when they have very young children. A growing body of evidence shows that good pre-school childcare gives children a flying start and leads to better outcomes as they move through school.
- 1.3. There are currently 12,470 children under four years old in the borough, and of these:
 - 74 children access free 2 year old provision
 - 4,900 children aged 3 and 4 years are entitled to claim free early education.
 - 99% of children aged 3 and 4 years access free childcare.
 - 89% of these children access free childcare in a school based nursery.

Improving Quality & Ofsted Outcomes

- 1.4. At the conclusion of the scrutiny review, there were 211 childminders and 42 settings (day nurseries, playgroups, out of school provisions) providing childcare. In March 2012, 63% were judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, which was lower than the national average of 73%. Of all those inspected 2011-12, 78.6% were judged good or better.
- 1.5. In the private sector, Ofsted has highlighted leadership and management as the key area for development.
- 1.6. A substantial training programme has been developed by the service for childcare settings, which includes essential training, accredited training, special educational needs training, and early years and foundation stage training. The 2012 programme has 24 courses available for childcare providers to attend.
- 1.7. SBC has developed the 'A Journey to Outstanding' toolkit which gives examples of best practice and how to achieve 'Outstanding'. It enables settings to use their evaluations to strengthen and build on the most effective practice and to remedy any weaknesses they find in areas that are not as good, seek out good practice across the sector, and search for ways they may not have thought of to improve what they offer
- 1.8. New STEPS has also been launched as a way of recording and measuring progress of individual children. The New STEPS spread sheet records the different stages of development that a child should reach at specific age ranges, and the development in each stage is highlighted for an individual

child. This enables any issues or concerns with development to be identified at an early stage and the appropriate help and support put in place.

- 1.9. There are currently 86 childminders that are currently rated as 'satisfactory'. These childminders are contacted via telephone and letter to try and engage them in SBC training and networks. Childminders also receive a newsletter offering drop-in sessions in local Children's Centres, training booklets, invitations to meetings, and support visits. There are 19 childminders that currently do not engage with SBC, however, these childminders are still sent newsletters, information on training and invitations to meetings.
- 1.10. During the review, private nurseries and childminders commented that constructive partnerships had been formed with local schools, and their nurseries, and some good relationships had been built. Providers felt that more should be done to ensure that all childcare providers should be working together to ensure the best childcare is available for all children. Providers also highlighted problems with parental perceptions that school nurseries were better or different to private nurseries; one provider commented that they had changed the appearance of their pre-school room to replicate that of a school nursery to meet parents' expectations. There were also misconceptions that a child in a school nursery would automatically get a place at that school.
- 1.11. Providers also felt that the amount of paperwork was a barrier to some childminders engaging. They highlighted the influential role that could be played by outstanding settings in providing peer advice and support, especially where there was a reticence of some childcare settings to engage with the Council.

Statutory Guidance for Three and Four Year Olds Entitlement

- 1.12. From April 2010 for private settings and September 2010 for schools, all 3 and 4 year olds had to be able to access 15 hours free nursery education. Local authorities are required by legislation to make sufficient free early education places available for every eligible child from the beginning of first (school) term after the child's third birthday until the child reaches compulsory school age (beginning first term after their fifth birthday). The free entitlement must be delivered through providers who deliver the full Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and are registered with Ofsted, unless the places are in schools which are exempt from this separate Ofsted registration.
- 1.13. When identifying and funding sufficient childcare, local authorities should take into account the childcare needs of their area including locality, the labour market, flexibility, and the local childcare market.
- 1.14. While local authorities should encourage take-up and conduct outreach activities to identify children not taking up the entitlement, it is ultimately the parent's/carer's decision, to take up the 15 hours free entitlement for their child

Two Year Old Entitlement

- 1.15. In October 2010, the Government announced, as part of the Fairness Premium, that it would extend the free entitlement of 15 hours per week, available to every three and four year old, to all disadvantaged two year olds. The Government also wants local authorities to provide free early education for all two year olds who are looked after by the state and to consider giving places to other two year olds who may get particular benefit, especially children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 1.16. The funding for two year olds enables local authorities to buy places from a setting in blocks and place those eligible in these places. This differs from the funding for three and four year olds, which follows the child. In terms of places for Stockton the new targets are as follows:
- A further 571 places by September 2013 (20% target)
An additional 700 (estimate) places by 2014 (40% target)
- 1.17. SBC will be using information to support the Childcare Sufficiency agenda, School Admissions and School Place planning to support the targeting of eligible 2 year olds. There is also information on Free School Meals which will give the Council an indication of likely hot spots which need to be targeted. Indications are that the areas where more places will be needed are those where there is the least childcare currently available.
- 1.18. A Project Team had been established to manage the process. The Project Team is led by the Planning & Partnership Manager, including representatives from SBC departments including finance and School Improvement, Children's Centres, local schools, PVI childcare settings and childminders. Other departments will be co-opted onto the group as necessary.

Recommendations

- 1.19. In Stockton there has been an improvement in the percentage of childminders and childcare settings achieving good or outstanding at their inspection over the last year. However, there are still some improvements to be made if the Borough is to match the ratings achieved both in the North East and England as a whole.
- 1.20. The Council has introduced 'A Journey to Outstanding' to enable settings to use their evaluations to strengthen and build on the most effective practice. In addition, New STEPS has been launched as a way of recording and measuring progress of individual children. However, there are still a small number of childminders who do not engage with the Council and whose Ofsted ratings are 'satisfactory'. The Committee recognises that childcare providers are independent of the Council and therefore cannot be required to engage with improvement activities. The Committee's recommendations therefore aim to tackle the barriers to engagement by using peer support and networking as well as improving the information available to parents.

- 1.21. The Committee found that there were currently sufficient places to meet the 3 and 4 year old entitlement and that an officer project team were overseeing work on the introduction of the two year old offer.

The Committee recommends that:

- 1. the information available to parents when choosing childcare be expanded to provide information about whether providers are engaging with SBC Journey to Outstanding as well an information about OFSTED ratings;**
- 2. in order to foster closer working between settings, childminders and schools, locality based networks (possibly based around Children's Centres) be considered; the purpose of the networks would be to:**
 - a. share good practice**
 - b. provide peer support**
 - c. ease transitions between settings/schools**
 - d. embed a single approach to EYFS profiles**
 - e. demonstrate partnership working**
 - f. foster early intervention**
 - g. provide a consultation platform**
- 3. a model of commissioned peer support utilising outstanding childminders in a mentoring role be considered;**
- 4. the Admissions Booklet and other information provided to parents be revised to clarify that attendance at a nursery will not give automatic entitlement to attend a school;**
- 5. the Officer Project Board continue to oversee work on the introduction of the two year old offer and engage with the network of providers on delivery, subject to detailed analysis of the Government's recent announcement on childcare provision;**
- 6. officers continue to work towards finding solutions to meet gaps in provision where they are identified in order to provide sufficient childcare places across the Borough.**

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1. This report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of the Quality and Sufficiency of Childcare undertaken by the Committee during the Municipal Year 2012/13. The topic was identified for review at Scrutiny Liaison Forum and included in the 2012/13 Work Programme by Executive Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2. Childcare plays a crucial role in the lives of most families. It enables parents to go out to work to contribute to a decent family income when they have very young children. A growing body of evidence shows that good pre-school childcare gives children a flying start and leads to better outcomes as they move through school.

3.0 Background

- 3.1. There have been many changes within childcare since 1994 when City Challenge established the childcare project and funded Little Angels Day Nursery and Dial-a-Crèche community project; the Childcare Forum was also established at this time. Subsequently, the Childcare Act 2006 introduced the following statutory duties:

- Section 1 – General duties of local authority in relation to well-being of young children
- Section 2 – Meaning of “early childhood services” for purposes of Section 3.
- Section 3 – Specific duties of local authority in relation to early childhood services
- Section 4 – Duty of local authority and relevant partners to work together
- Section 5 – Power to amend sections 2 and 4 - Arrangements for children's centres
- Section 6 - Duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents
- Section 7 – Duty to secure prescribed early years provision free of charge
- Section 8 – Powers of local authority in relation to the provision of childcare
- Section 9 – Arrangements between local authority and childcare providers
- Section 10 – Charges where local authority provide childcare
- Section 11 – Duty to assess childcare provision
- Section 12 – Duty to provide information, advice and assistance
- Section 13 – Duty to provide information, advice and training to childcare providers
- Section 14 – Inspection
- Section 17 – Charges for early years provision at maintained school
- Section 18 – Meaning of childcare
- Section 19 – Meaning of “young child”
- Section 20 – Meaning of “early years provision”

- 3.2. There are currently 12,470 children under four years old in the borough, and of these:

- 74 children access free 2 year old provision
- 4,900 children aged 3 and 4 years are entitled to claim free early education.
- 99% of children aged 3 and 4 years access free childcare.
- 89% of these children access free childcare in a school based nursery.

- 3.3. At the conclusion of the scrutiny review, there were 211 childminders and 42 settings (day nurseries, playgroups, out of school provisions) providing childcare. In March 2012, 63% were judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, which was lower than the national average of 73%. Of all those inspected 2011-12, 78.6% were judged good or better.
- 3.4. At present three and four year olds receive funding for 15 Hours Flexible Free Entitlement, which:
- is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant via an early years single funding formula
 - has a participation led approach
 - offers places through PVI childcare settings, Childminders & Primary Schools
 - £6.7m pa spend
 - Schools Forum Agreed £36k– Development Support Officer
- 3.5. There is also funding available for disadvantaged two year olds, and the current spend is £136,000pa via the Early Intervention Grant and PVI's / Children's Centres. However, there is to be an extension of the offer for two year olds, in two phases from September 2013 and September 2014. Funding for the two year old offer will also transfer to the Dedicated Schools Grant from 2013/14. The DfE will be carrying out a consultation on the extension.
- 3.6. Following the review of the Early Intervention Grant, the following teams were established from June 2012:
- Early Years Manager – pioneered Journey to Outstanding;
 - Early Years Development Officers – 3 fte, visit settings to target improvement;
 - Early Years Development Advisers – 3 fte, qualified teachers who support learning and development in early years.
- 3.7. Each setting has named officer and adviser and receives a termly visit with recommendations from visits followed up. The settings are targeted on closeness to an Ofsted inspection and previous Ofsted rating. The service is also formalising an approach to settings causing concern. The service is currently expanding the network of childminders to two networks where new childminders are recruited and mentored by high quality childminders.

4.0 Evidence

Funding

- 4.1. Funding for childcare comes from several different streams:
1. There is £6.7m pa spend for three and four year olds – 15 Hours Flexible, Free Entitlement, from the Dedicated Schools Grant via an Early Years Single Funding Formula;
 2. The current spend for disadvantaged two year olds is £136k pa, and this is from the Early Intervention Grant. The two year old offer is being extended and will transfer to the Dedicated School grant from 2013/14.

Background to Quality

- 4.2. Evidence from long-term studies in the US and UK shows that in the early years, the quality of early learning and childcare is second only to parenting in determining children's outcomes – both short and long term. It is particularly important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may get less support at home, and can help to narrow gaps in achievement. The Stockton vision of high quality is to have highly-skilled practitioners delivering play based learning adapted to the development needs of each individual child. The early years and childcare sector needs to be able to attract and keep the best people, and create a culture of self-improvement if it is to provide truly world class provision.
- 4.3. The gap between the lowest achieving and the rest in Stockton is getting smaller year on year. Those making the expected level of attainment at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage was 62% in 2012, which was below the 2012 national average of 64%.

Ofsted

Ofsted framework

- 4.4. The Ofsted frameworks for schools and settings are being aligned and the only differences remain the judgements (satisfactory as a descriptor remains for settings) and the period of notice (settings do not receive prior notification of an inspection). The key themes for inspections are similar:

Settings	Schools
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	Achievement of pupils at the school
The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being	Quality of teaching at the school
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision	Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school
The overall quality and standards of the early years provision	Quality of leadership in, and management of, the school
	Overall effectiveness

Ofsted Outcomes

- 4.5. The judgements range from 'outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate'.
- 4.6. The outcomes from Ofsted inspection of settings in the period 2008 to June 2012 were:
- 3% (2) outstanding
 - 53% (42) good
 - 21% (17) satisfactory
 - 23% (18) no inspection
- 4.7. The trends from these outcomes were:
- 18% (15) increased their Ofsted rating
 - 20% (16) maintained their Ofsted rating
 - 5% (4) decreased their Ofsted rating
 - 22% (18) have no grade
 - 35% (29) it was their first inspection, and therefore unable compare
- 4.8. The outcomes from Ofsted inspections of childminders in the period 2008-June 2012 were:
- 7% (15) outstanding
 - 51% (104) good
 - 37% (76) satisfactory
 - 5% (10) inadequate
- 4.9. The trends from these outcomes were:
- 20% (39) increased their rating
 - 32% (63) maintained their grade
 - 10% (20) decreased their grade
 - 38% (74) it was their first inspection

- 4.10. Ofsted do not separate their judgement for Early Years Foundation Stage in schools. 79% primary schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding (77% England 2011-12).
- 4.11. The above rating illustrates that there has been an improvement in the percentage of childminders and childcare settings achieving good or outstanding at their inspection over the last year. However, there are still some improvements to be made if the Borough is to match the ratings achieved both in the North East and England as a whole.
- 4.12. In the private sector, Ofsted has highlighted leadership and management as the key area for development.

Improving Quality & Ofsted Outcomes

- 4.13. All new settings in Stockton have a welfare check; no Stockton setting can receive government funding without this (i.e. 2/3 & 4 year entitlement). All settings also have signed terms and conditions and again cannot receive government funding without this.
- 4.14. All settings are supported by an Early Years Development Officer and an Early Years Development Adviser and receive a learning and development check. These checks identify gaps in provision and prepare the setting for an Ofsted inspection. Where necessary each setting receives a termly visit, with recommendations made from the visits followed up.
- 4.15. A substantial training programme has been developed by the service for childcare settings, which includes essential training, accredited training, special educational needs training, and early years and foundation stage training. The 2012 programme has 24 courses available for childcare providers to attend.

Toolkits

- 4.16. Ofsted expects every provider to work towards making their provision outstanding, and SBC has developed the 'A Journey to Outstanding' toolkit which gives examples of best practice and how to achieve 'Outstanding'. It enables settings to use their evaluations to strengthen and build on the most effective practice and to remedy any weaknesses they find in areas that are not as good, seek out good practice across the sector, and search for ways they may not have thought of to improve what they offer. The aim of the "A Journey to Outstanding" process is to:
- be provider focussed
 - involve providers in the on-going development process in order to promote ownership
 - support all providers to implement strategies for continuous improvement
 - clearly take into account the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
 - promote reflective practice
 - provide settings with support and challenge
 - provide a method of monitoring quality in settings
 - use the Ofsted SEF to contribute to the inspection process

- bring together strategies for monitoring and evaluation in order to prevent duplication
 - inform the childcare sufficiency agenda
 - enable the local authority to plan, resource and support requirements
 - support and provide a structure for an annual conversation between the provider and the relevant local authority officer.
- 4.17. All providers in receipt of government funding for 2/3/4 years olds, receive a copy of the toolkit and also receive training. If a provider does not engage with Journey to Outstanding, SBC will take them off the list for receiving the 2/3/4 year old funded places, but cannot stop the provider from operating. The toolkit is considered to be good practice in the region and is currently being updated. Once updated it will be available on disc format for those childcare providers with computer access, saving the cost of producing the folders.
- 4.18. Members were pleased to have the opportunity to discuss “A Journey to Outstanding” with providers who attended the Committee meeting and asked how SBC could encourage providers to engage with the toolkit. It was suggested that SBC could introduce a rating system (e.g. RAG or Star rating) which takes into account not only the Ofsted rating but also engagement with Journey to Outstanding, to help parents make more informed decisions regarding childcare.

The Committee recommends that the information available to parents when choosing childcare be expanded to provide information about whether providers are engaging with SBC Journey to Outstanding as well an information about OFSTED ratings.

- 4.19. New STEPS has been launched as a way of recording and measuring progress of individual children. The purpose of New STEPS is to:
- Benchmark progress against national norms
 - Now works from birth to five so progress can be mapped on entry to any provision
 - Enable continuous charting of development.
- 4.20. The New STEPS spread sheet records the different stages of development that a child should reach at specific age ranges, and the development in each stage is highlighted for an individual child. This enables any issues or concerns with development to be identified at an early stage and the appropriate help and support put in place. The process of completing the spread sheet is as follows:
- practitioners gather evidence to support judgements using the Development Matters – planning, observations, photographs etc.
 - evidence is gathered and analysed by practitioners to identify current learning and development, which is then transferred onto the tracker.
 - the statements on the tracker are then coloured in to signify when the learning and development has been achieved, showing progress from their baseline.

- 4.21. This tool can be used by any childcare provider within Stockton, and settings in other Local Authority areas have also expressed an interest in using the tool.

Under Performance

- 4.22. There are currently 86 childminders that are currently rated as 'satisfactory'. These childminders are contacted via telephone and letter to try and engage them in SBC training and networks. Childminders also receive a newsletter offering drop-in sessions in local Children's Centres, training booklets, invitations to meetings, and support visits.
- 4.23. There are 19 childminders that currently do not engage with SBC however these childminders are still sent newsletters, information on training and invitations to meetings. The service is proposing to inform parents accessing Family Information Service that these settings do not engage and to make unannounced visits. Ratings for these childminders range from 'satisfactory' to 'good' and some do not have an Ofsted inspection grade because they have not yet been inspected.

Developing Networks

- 4.24. There is presently one childminder network in place. The members of this network engage in the following activities:
- Buddy System (phone a colleague)
 - mentor newly registered childminders
 - termly meetings
 - twilight surgeries.
- 4.25. Future work will include:
- targeting places for 2 year olds
 - bespoke training for those delivering the 2 year old agenda.
- 4.26. There are regular managers' meetings with all settings and an Outstanding Forum for those settings that have been rated 'good' and 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Providers' Experience

- 4.27. During the review, the Chair attended a Childminder Network recruitment event. The network meets termly and the role is to support the sharing of best practice and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of childminders, and to ensure the quality of childcare. The terms and conditions of the network had been developed by the network members and those interested in joining the network were required to undertake an interview process - originally the interview process had been a formal process, however, following the first round of interviews, the process has become more informal.
- 4.28. Network members were required to carry out 25 hours CPD per year. CPD included attending training courses, attending meetings, SBC officers visiting

and providing support in their setting, attending sessions held at children's centres, and attending the termly network meetings.

- 4.29. When discussing the support provided by SBC with childminders at the event, they thought they were receiving good support and felt able to contact staff with any queries. They also commented that the support received helped with their Ofsted inspection.
- 4.30. Members also visited two school nurseries, two private nurseries, and a childminder, and saw examples of best practice at these settings. All settings provided the 15 hours free childcare entitlement for three and four year olds.
- 4.31. The settings were fully engaging with SBC and attended the training provided and network meetings. They had systems in place to record each child's development, (some were using New STEPS to do this) and also to 'hand over' information to parents and other childcare providers/ schools when arriving and leaving the setting.
- 4.32. The private nurseries and childminder commented that partnerships had been formed with local schools, and their nurseries, and some good relationships had been built. However, it was noted that there was a high level of competition between nurseries, and there were communications issues with some school nurseries. This issue was also discussed with providers attending a Committee meeting and it was felt more should be done to ensure that all childcare providers should be working together to ensure the best childcare is available for all children. Providers also highlighted problems with parental perceptions that school nurseries are better or different to private nurseries; one provider commented that they had changed the appearance of their pre-school room to replicate that of a school nursery to meet parents' expectations. There were also misconceptions that a child in a school nursery would automatically get a place at that school.
- 4.33. One school nursery discussed the benefits of the free two year old childcare hours, noting that those children who had received this had made better progress than the children who had not attended childcare prior to school nursery.

The Committee recommends that in order to foster closer working between settings, childminders and schools, locality based networks (possibly based around Children's Centres) be considered; the purpose of the networks would be to:

- a. share good practice
- b. provide peer support
- c. ease transitions between settings/schools
- d. embed a single approach to EYFS profiles
- e. demonstrate partnership working
- f. foster early intervention
- g. provide a consultation platform

The Committee recommends that the Admissions Booklet and other information provided to parents be revised to clarify that attendance at a nursery will not give automatic entitlement to attend a school.

- 4.34. During the round table discussions with providers, those attending agreed that support from SBC should mainly be targeted to those settings and childminders requiring more support, but at same time retaining a basic level of support for other providers when needed including annual visits.
- 4.35. There were suggestions to arrange “surgeries” and “workshops”, to enable outstanding providers to provide support to other settings.

The Committee recommends that a model of commissioned peer support utilising outstanding childminders in a mentoring role be considered.

Parent / Child Experience

- 4.36. The 2011 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment found that 89% of people using childcare were satisfied with their current childcare arrangements. No carers who responded to the survey reported concerns about the quality of childcare that they used, although some referred to children not settling in and not being happy. Only two carers who had visited nurseries while looking for a place noted concerns about some provision and had consequently not chosen that provision for their children.
- 4.37. Children between the ages of 4 and 10 years old were also consulted as part of the assessment, and 87% of those consulted said they had attended, or were attending, pre-school childcare e.g. nurseries, playgroups etc. 28% of respondents attended breakfast clubs, 24% attended play schemes/holiday clubs, and 51% attended after school clubs and activities. Satisfaction levels varied with the most popular being after school childcare, 83.3% stated they liked it ‘a lot’. The lowest rating was for childminding with only 52.2% stating they like it ‘a lot’. Children were happier with pre-school childcare than other types of childcare, with only 3.7% reporting that they ‘did not like’ it, compared to 26.8% not liking breakfast provision and 21.5% not liking holiday childcare.

Statutory Guidance for Three and Four Year Olds Entitlement

- 4.38. From April 2010 for private settings and September 2010 for schools, all 3 and 4 year olds were able to access 15 hours free nursery education. In September 2012 further Statutory Guidance was published which makes clear the outcomes that different measures are seeking to achieve, the legal duty required by legislation, and what local authorities should be doing to fulfil their statutory duty. The outcomes are as follows:
- Part A: Free early education for three and four year olds
 - A1: All eligible children are able to take up high quality early education regardless of their parents’ ability to pay
 - A2: Children are able to take up their full entitlement to free early education at times that best support their learning, and at times which fit with the needs of parents.
 - A3: All children are able to take up their entitlement to free early education in a high quality setting.
 - A4: Fair and transparent funding that supports a diverse range of providers. The diversity enables parents to choose a provider that best meets the needs of their child.

- A5: Local authorities and providers work effectively together to ensure children can access the free entitlement in a variety of settings that meet the needs of their family.
 - Part B: Securing Sufficient Childcare
Parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and are delivered flexibly at a range of high quality settings.
 - Part C: Information to Parents
Parents are provided with comprehensive information about their child's entitlement to free early education and childcare options in their area so that all childcare are able to benefit from provision which meets their needs.
- 4.39. Local authorities are required by legislation to make sufficient free early education places available for every eligible child from the beginning of first (school) term after the child's third birthday until the child reaches compulsory school age (beginning first term after their fifth birthday). The free entitlement must be delivered through providers who deliver the full Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and are registered with Ofsted, unless the places are in schools which are exempt from this separate Ofsted registration. The legislation also requires Local authorities to:
- Improve the well-being of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between young children in their area
 - Provide information, advice and training to childcare providers
 - Fund early years provision in all sectors using a locally-determined, transparent formula – the early years single funding formula (EYSFF). The formula must include a deprivation supplement, and must be based on a count of children attending provision conducted at least three times a year.
 - Issue all providers with an indicative budget at the beginning of the financial year, across all sectors
 - Provide Free School Meals for children who are registered pupils of a maintained school, who attend free provision both before and after lunch and whose parents are in receipt of specified benefits.
 - Work with relevant partners to secure integrated early childhood services and act in accordance with the Schools Admissions Code in enabling children to take up a place in reception class from the September following their fourth birthday
 - Secure sufficient childcare, so far as reasonably practicable, for working parents, parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children)
 - Assess the sufficiency of childcare in their area at least every three years
 - Provide information advice and assistance to parents (of children and young people up to the age of 20) and prospective parents on the provision of childcare in their area
- 4.40. While local authorities should encourage take-up and conduct outreach activities to identify children not taking up the entitlement, it is ultimately the parent's/carer's decision, to take up the 15 hours free entitlement for their child. Free sessions should be between 2.5 hours and 10 hours a day, and should be taken between 7.00am and 7.00pm. Local authorities should, as a minimum, ensure parents are able to access 3 hour sessions over 5 days of

the week or 5 hours sessions over 3 days of the week. Any charges the provider makes for additional services, goods or hours should not be done as a condition of the child accessing their free entitlement.

- 4.41. When identifying and funding sufficient childcare, local authorities should take into account the childcare needs of their area including locality, the labour market, flexibility, and the local childcare market.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

- 4.42. 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. Sufficient childcare is defined as: -

- 4.43. "Sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the (Local Authority's) area who require childcare in order to enable them: -

- a) To take up, or remain, in work or
- b) To undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

- 4.44. In determining whether provision of childcare is sufficient, a local authority:

- a) Must have regard to the needs of parents in their area for:
 - the provision of childcare in respect of which the childcare element of the working tax credit is payable, and;
 - the provision of childcare which suitable for disabled children.
- b) May have regard to any childcare, which they expect to be available outside their area."

- 4.45. The duties in the act also require local authorities to shape and support the development of childcare provision in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community.

- 4.46. Section 11 of the 2006 Act requires local authorities to prepare an assessment at intervals not exceeding three years but also to keep it under review until it is superseded by a later one. However, this requirement is due to be taken out of the Act and replaced by a requirement to carry out an annual report. It is believed that the framework for the annual report will be less prescriptive and more transparent for parents, and this will be presented and agreed at Cabinet meetings.

- 4.47. SBC carried out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2011, consulting with parents/carers, children and young people, employers and other key stakeholders. Both qualitative and quantitative measures were used, including a parent/carer questionnaire which received 797 responses. Focus groups and one-to-one interviews were also carried out.

Feedback from Childcare Sufficiency Consultation

- 4.48. The consultation revealed that parents perceived there to be gaps in childcare provision in the following areas:

4.49. Geographical Gaps:

- Lower use of childcare in Central (South) Stockton and within that a relatively high use of informal care only
- Identified unmet need amongst current users of childcare in all Integrated Service Areas (ISAs), with slightly lower levels of unmet need in Central (North)
- General need for childcare in the Port Clarence area
- Billingham had gaps in all childcare types
- Ingleby Barwick and Fairfield/Grangefield had gaps in out of school and sessional care
- Central North had gaps in full daycare and out of school following a recent closure
- There are insufficient places for disadvantaged two year olds in Central North and Billingham

4.50. Income Gaps:

- The cost of childcare was identified as an issue in the Billingham area with 23% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with childcare costs (19% across the borough). However the area had the second highest levels of childcare use
- Low income areas also had the lowest take up of Working Tax Credit childcare element
- Higher income households reported difficulties with childcare costs

4.51. Specific Need Gaps:

- Holiday and out of school childcare for disabled children and children with additional needs
- Availability of childcare generally for disabled children and additional needs, most notable gaps appear to be in the Central Stockton area
- Availability of culturally appropriate childcare for families from BME backgrounds. Issues identified with venue types and locations of childcare, set amongst a context of a growing BME population

4.52. Time Gaps:

- Unmet demand for childcare between 5.30pm and 6.00pm on weekday evenings
- 35% of respondents' partners work nights, evening, weekends or shifts, childcare is therefore provided by the other partner limiting their employment choices and use of formal childcare
- Mis-match in week day supply and evening/weekend and shift working

4.53. Age Gaps:

- Daycare provision for disadvantaged two year olds
- After school and holiday childcare for children aged 5 – 10 years
- A lack of appropriate provision for children aged 11 years and over

4.54. Type Gaps:

- Levels of use of informal childcare for children aged under two and over 11 years suggests a gap in provision
- Extended schools data does not indicate much provision of childcare. Whilst parents request more provision, young people are expressing a preference for unsupervised and safe places to be, including after school and holiday provision

4.55. Information Gaps:

- There remains a need to consider how the Families Information Service (FIS) reaches parents and raises its profile to be the first port of call for all parents wanting childcare (and other) information
- High preference for using information informal childcare as a result of low confidence and trust in formal childcare suggests a need to promote choice, benefits and affordability of formal provision
- Employers would benefit from clearer and more accessible information about childcare and support, with a direct route to the FIS

4.56. A review of the Assessment was published in March 2012, and the results are as follows:

Supply of Childcare Places 2011-12

4.57. The 2011 CSA reported a total of 4,115 registered places for children aged under 8 years old. Comparing registered provision for children aged 0-7 years in 2012 over 2010 shows that the number of childcare places in Stockton-on-Tees has increased by 228 places.

Registered childcare places (0 to 7 years) 2012 compared to 2010

Type of provision	2010 number (reported in the CSA)	2012 number (provided by FIS March 2012)	Increase/Decrease in places
Childminding	1,125	1,155	+30
Crèche	207	274	+67
Day nursery	1,674	1,817	+143
Out of school care	662	736	+74
Pre-school/playgroup	451	365	-86
Nursery unit independent school	117	117	n/a
Overall	4,236	4,464	+228

Source: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011; FIS 2012

3 & 4 year old free nursery entitlement

4.58. From April 2010 (Sept 2010 for schools) all 3 and 4 year olds were able to access 15 hours free nursery education.

Free entitlement provision summer 2011 compared to summer 2010

Provider Type	Summer 2010		Summer 2011	
	No. of providers	No. of PTE places available	No. of providers	No. of PTE places available
Nursery Class (maintained)	59	3,220	59	3,229
PVI (private, voluntary, independent)	36	541	34	547
Total	95	3,761	93	3,776

2 year free nursery entitlement

4.59. Stockton Borough Council currently provides places through 18 providers who have had a good Ofsted inspection outcome, or who had satisfactory and were willing to work with the Local Authority on a focussed quality improvement plan.

4.60. Parents can access 10 hours care over 38 weeks. Over the period 2011/12, 152 children accessed the two year old entitlement in Stockton.

Two Year Old Entitlement

4.61. In October 2010, the Government announced, as part of the Fairness Premium, that it would extend the free childcare entitlement of 15 hours per week available to every three and four year old, to all disadvantaged two year olds. The Government also wants local authorities to provide free early education for all two year olds who are looked after by the state and to consider giving places to other two year olds who may get particular benefit, especially children with special educational needs and disabilities.

4.62. Clause 1 of the current Education Bill enables a statutory duty to be put on local authorities to secure provision for eligible children. The Government's intention is to introduce this duty in September 2013.

4.63. On the 29 November 2011, the Chancellor announced that the Government will invest a further £380m per year by 2014/15 to extend the 15 hour entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds, to include an extra 130,000 children. This doubles the commitment announced at the Spending Review. Instead of around 20% of all two-year-olds in England, now around 40% of all two-year-olds will benefit from the new entitlement by 2014/15.

4.64. This announcement is accompanied by additional funding over the next three years as follows:

2012/13	£73m
2013/14	£203m
2014/15	£380m

- 4.65. This will bring the total national investment in free places for disadvantaged two-year-olds over the Spending Review period to:
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| 2011/12 | £64m |
| 2012/13 | £296m |
| 2013/14 | £534m |
| 2014/15 | £760m |
- 4.66. The funding for two year olds enables local authorities to buy places from a setting in blocks and place those eligible in these places. This differs from the funding for three and four year olds, which follows the child.
- 4.67. In terms of places for Stockton-on-Tees the new targets are as follows:
- A further 571 places by September 2013 (20% target)
 - An additional 700 (estimated) places by 2014 (40% target)
- 4.68. A total of 1271 places are estimated to be required in total and therefore the gaps in provision will need to be identified.
- 4.69. SBC will be using information to support the Childcare Sufficiency agenda, School Admissions and School Place planning to support the targeting of eligible 2 year olds. There is also information on Free School Meals which will give the Council an indication of likely hot spots which need to be targeted. Indications are that the areas where more places will be needed are those where there is the least childcare.
- 4.70. The settings where the two year old entitlement is placed should be rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted and the Council works with 'satisfactory' settings to develop the skills needed. It is recognised that childminders will play a key role in providing support and advice to parents to help prepare their child for school.
- 4.71. A Project Team had been established to manage the process. The Project Team is led by the Planning & Partnership Manager, including representatives from SBC departments including finance and School Improvement, Children's Centres, local schools, PVI childcare settings and childminders. Other departments will be co-opted onto the group as necessary.
- 4.72. The providers who took part in the round table discussions at the Committee meeting indicated that they would be willing to take extra places. Providers also felt that the new guidance could create the opportunity for SBC to encourage providers to work together, as part of a network which was a requirement of receiving the 2 year old placements.

The Committee recommends that the Officer Project Board continue to oversee work on the introduction of the two year old offer and engage with the network of providers on delivery, subject to detailed analysis of the Government's recent announcement on childcare provision.

The Committee recommends that officers continue to work towards finding solutions to meet gaps in provision where they are identified in order to provide sufficient childcare places across the Borough.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. In Stockton there has been an improvement in the percentage of childminders and childcare settings achieving good or outstanding at their inspection over the last year. However, there are still some improvements to be made if the Borough is to match the ratings achieved both in the North East and England as a whole. The Council has introduced 'A Journey to Outstanding' to enable settings to use their evaluations to strengthen and build on the most effective practice. In addition, New STEPS has also been launched as a way of recording and measuring progress of individual children. However, there are still a small number of childminders who do not engage with the Council and whose Ofsted ratings are satisfactory. The Committee recognises that childcare providers are independent of the Council and therefore cannot be required to engage with improvement activities. The Committee's recommendations therefore aim to tackle the barriers to engagement by using peer support and networking as well as improving the information available to parents.
- 5.2. The Committee found that there were currently sufficient places to meet the 3 and 4 year old entitlement and that an officer project team were overseeing work on the introduction of the two year old offer. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment identified a number of actions to be taken forward into 2012/13 including:
- to have a sufficient range of quality childcare settings, childminders and schools to meet the requirements of the 1271 places for the 2 year free nursery entitlement.
 - work needs to continue with childcare providers in order to effectively communicate parent demand and provision of vacancy data to the Families Information service
 - ensure childcare is fully inclusive and accessible for all children
 - ensure childcare in the borough is affordable and sustainable
 - improve the knowledge and information available to parents
 - ensure there is a sufficient range of flexible provision within the borough to meet demand
 - improve and raise the quality standards in all childcare settings
 - provide specialist advice and support to all settings in relation to the Statutory Duty for Local Authorities on delivery of Free Early Years Provision for 2, 3 & 4 year olds

Glossary of Terms

DfE	Department for Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
SEF / SAF	Self-Evaluation Form / Self-Assessment Form
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EYSFF	Early Years Single Funding Formula
SBC	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
ISA	Integrated Service Areas
CSA	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent Sectors