

Schools Forum

6th July 2015

The Free Nursery Entitlement update report

Introduction – 2 year olds

1. In September 2013 the Government introduced the new legal entitlement for up to 40% of all two year olds to access funded early education. This has been introduced in two phases and from September 2014 the offer was extended to reach **1,153** children.

Progress to date – take up

2. As of the 25th June, there are currently **758** eligible 2 year olds accessing a place and a further **63** who have been approved but who have yet to start at a setting. This gives us a target of **332** young children that are not being reached. An interim target of 800 places filled by the end of the summer term was reported to the DfE and this is close to being achieved.
3. There has been a marked increase in take up from the autumn term 2014 to the summer term 2015, when the new criteria was introduced. There has been an increase of 159 places which equates to a 13.8% increase. Take up from schools has now increased to 36 of the 59 primaries joining the programme with another 3 advising that they do not take rising 3's. There are 10 rising 3's being funded for the summer term.
4. The Department of Work and Pensions provide an update 7 times a year, on those families in receipt of eligible benefits. The Families Information Service (FIS) sends out a personalised 'postcard' to encourage families to apply. A list is also sent to the Children's Centre who identify who is known to them so that they can promote the offer on a one to one basis.
5. A comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy is now in place which is proving effective in increasing take up.
6. A new registration form for schools has been produced to promote the offer to parents. The standard registration form is updated so that it includes the Early Years Pupil Premium and 3 & 4yr old funding.

Progress to date – sufficiency of places

7. There are sufficient places for 2 year olds across the borough, however not necessarily in the right location. Work continues to take place to identify those areas of the borough where a lack of suitable provision will potentially impact on a family's ability to access a place close to where they live, with new places being developed to meet demand.
8. Tilery Primary – The facility is part of a Government national pilot scheme which is identifying schools that are demonstrating good practice by integrating 2 year olds into nursery provision. The scheme is working extremely well and is currently offering places to 26 children and now has a waiting list.

Progress to date – quality of provision

9. It is extremely important that our youngest children have access to the best quality provision and to that end the inspection ratings of Stockton's settings and childminders have continued to rise and according to local knowledge are currently:
 - Settings 98% good or outstanding
 - Childminders 92% good or outstanding

Funding update

10. The funding allocated through Schools Forum to develop the initiative, continues to support activity to ensure that places are established in the right areas of the borough alongside working towards maximising take up by eligible children.

Priorities going forward

11. It is imperative that the numbers of children accessing the free entitlement continues to improve in order to ensure maximum take up by January 2016. There is now the opportunity to submit numbers in the autumn term so as not to lose any in-year funding as the initial allocation is based on the January census.
13. Therefore there are three key priorities:
 - To ensure there are sufficient places, in the right areas and available across the borough to meet the increasing demand for provision.
 - To actively promote the entitlement to ensure as many eligible children as possible benefit from free, good quality early years care and education.
 - To work closely with colleagues to ensure the families of those 2 year olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan are encouraged to take up the free offer.

New initiative - Increase in free childcare from 15 to 30 hours for eligible working parents of 3 & 4 year olds.

14. The Government has pledged to increase free childcare from 15 to 30 hours for eligible working parents of 3 & 4 year olds by 2017.
15. The new Childcare Bill, which was presented to the House of Lords on 1st June 2015, contains provisions which will secure an additional entitlement of childcare support to be made available to working parents. It also seeks to help ensure that parents are able to access information about the additional free childcare being introduced and about other childcare provision/other services which may help them to meet their childcare needs. The Bill states:
 - The statutory duty to deliver these places will sit with the Secretary of State.
 - This will enable the Government to set eligibility criteria based on the characteristics of the child and/or parent.
 - This will ensure flexibility over how the additional entitlement is delivered and by whom.
 - Enables the sharing of information from HMRC (and others) to determine eligibility.
16. The changes aim to help 600,000 children a year from 2017. It has been confirmed that families will be eligible where both parents and lone parents are working 8 hours per week including those that are self-employed.
17. The Government plans the following over the coming year
 - The intention to introduce pilot areas from 2016.
 - The commencement of a consultation on funding levels in order to ensure that places are funded at an appropriate level. (See below.)
18. Initial indications are that the following applies to Stockton-on-Tees:
 - In 2014 99% of 3 & 4 year olds already access 15 hours free provision.
 - The Council will need to ensure there is sufficient childcare in place to meet demand alongside managing the increased requirement for places for 2 year olds.
 - The proposal relates to families where all parents are working, therefore there are the following likely scenarios:
 - Working parents will already have children in extended childcare for 30 hours and have a place.
 - A number of eligible 4 year olds will already be in full time school.
 - Working parents use a mixture of care including nursery for 15 hours and family/friends for the remainder – they may choose to have all of the care in a school/setting/childminder – we will need to accommodate this extra demand.

- The new entitlement will encourage more parents into work which will increase demand for the additional 15 hours.
- Approximately 89% of children receive their early year's education (3 & 4 year olds) in a school nursery – current times of operation and the space available will not accommodate the extension of the free entitlement to 30 hours.
- It will be necessary to build some capacity to enable those eligible parents taking up employment for the first time to have access to 30 hours of free childcare within their locality.

19. What do we need to do?

- Establish the Government's full eligibility criteria
- Undertake research to establish how many children, currently in school nurseries, are collected by family/friends, childcare settings or childminders due to their parents working arrangements.
- Undertake research to establish how many children in private settings or with childminders currently attend full-time and parents pay for the additional hours of care due to their working arrangements.
- Undertake research to find out how many 4 year olds in full-time education have working parents.
- Explore opportunities for extending the offer through children's centres, school nurseries and childminders.
- Map where childcare settings have spare places.
- Ensure the Families Information Service is in a position to offer the advice and information detailed within the Childcare Bill.
- Ensure administrative and financial procedures are in place.
- To express an interest in receiving further information on becoming a 2016 pilot programme.

20. The Government has launched a 'Call for evidence: review of the cost of providing childcare' with a response date of 10th August 2015, to support the establishment of a funding rate which is fair to providers and to the tax payer.

21. The Local Authority will be submitting a response and will be encouraging private settings and childminders to do the same.

22. Schools Forum to consider whether schools should be part of the LA response or whether they would prefer to submit in their own right.

23. The consultation paper can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cost-of-providing-childcare-review-call-for-evidence>

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