

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 78

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Date of Meeting: 28th March 2010
Report of: Strategic Director, People
Contact Officer: Name: Vicky Jenkins **Tel:** 296110
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Key Decision: Yes Forward Plan No. CYP20234
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 s.11 requires local authorities to carry out an assessment of the childcare in their area at least every three years. Local authorities carried out their first assessment in 2008 and the next one must be completed by April 2011.
- 1.2 Section 6 of the same act requires local authorities to secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents in their area for children up to the age of 14, or 18 where the child is disabled.
- 1.3 Brighton & Hove's childcare sufficiency assessment (CSA) was carried out in accordance with the Childcare Act 2006 and associated statutory guidance.¹ It involved assessing demand for childcare, mapping childcare supply, and matching the two together to discover whether there were any gaps in provision. The draft CSA has been made public in order to consult on its findings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) Note the contents and findings of the CSA.
- (2) Note that the CSA found a positive response to childcare by those using it and that parents were very happy with their childcare arrangements overall. No major geographical gaps in provision were found; however many parents reported finding childcare expensive. Other gaps in childcare provision are outlined in Section 3.8 of this report.
- (3) Agree that an action plan be developed to address the gaps outlined Section 3.8 as part of a childcare commissioning strategy.

¹ *Securing Sufficient Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in Carrying Out Their Childcare Sufficiency Duties DCSF 2010.*

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The 2011 CSA was completed between March 2010 and February 2011. The full CSA document, and technical report, is available in members' rooms.
- 3.2 In order to assess childcare demand a postal questionnaire was completed by 1,870 parents from a random sample of those with children aged 0 to 14 across the city (a return rate of 25.3 per cent). In addition a focus group was held with parents of disabled children (which included parents with older disabled children) and data from the Compass database was also reviewed. Additional childcare demand data was supplied the Family Information Service (FIS). Change in demand from the last CSA has also been considered, and local demand data has been compared with national data where available.
- 3.3 Childcare supply was assessed through an audit carried out by the Family Information Service, and through information from its database. Supply data was compared with the last CSA and with national data where available.
- 3.4 The childcare market was assessed through a questionnaire sent to all registered childcare providers in the city.
- 3.5 Children's views of childcare were gleaned by talking to 70 children in six different childcare settings.
- 3.6 Childcare Demand**
 - A. Amongst parents using childcare the most commonly used was a day nursery by 35 per cent of parents, followed by friends or family by 30.7 per cent.
 - B. Parents using childcare had a high level of satisfaction with their childcare arrangements overall, with 86.8 per cent very or fairly satisfied.
 - C. Parents using childcare were happy with its quality, with 92.5 per cent reporting that they were very or fairly satisfied.
 - D. Parents using childcare were happy with its location, with 91.8 per cent reporting that they were very or fairly satisfied.
 - E. Parents using childcare were also happy with the way their child's individual needs were catered for (86.7 per cent very or fairly satisfied) and opening hours (86.4 per cent very or fairly satisfied).
 - F. Parents using childcare were less satisfied with childcare affordability with 69.2 per cent very or fairly satisfied and 15 per cent fairly or very dissatisfied. Many parents (both users and non-users of childcare) commented on the need for affordable childcare in response to the questionnaire.
 - G. Parents using childcare were also less satisfied with childcare choice, with 67.2 per cent very or fairly satisfied and 14.5 per cent fairly or very dissatisfied.
 - H. The majority of parents using childcare found it very or fairly easy to find (78 per cent).
 - I. Most parents using childcare reported that their childcare arrangements met their needs fully (63.9 per cent).
 - J. Parents in Brighton & Hove using childcare appear to spend more per week than parents nationally.
 - K. It appears that there is more use of formal childcare in Brighton & Hove than is the case nationally.

- L. The highest levels of satisfaction with childcare arrangements overall were found amongst those using day nurseries and school nursery classes, with 93.6 per cent and 92.4 per cent respectively very or fairly satisfied.
- M. Those using holiday activities for their children found childcare hardest to find.
- N. Whilst levels of dissatisfaction with childcare were low, there was more dissatisfaction from parents using childcare for school-age children than those using childcare for pre-school children.
- O. Most of those not using childcare stated that this was because they were at home with their children (53.1 per cent of those not using childcare). In 29.8 per cent of cases parents said they did not use childcare because their children were at school and their work fitted around school hours. However, in 22.8 per cent of cases parents said that they did not use childcare because of its cost.
- P. When parents not using childcare were asked about the consequence of lack of available childcare, in 35.9 per cent of cases parents reported that this prevented them from working more flexibly.
- Q. There is a continued future need for childcare, with after-school clubs, day nurseries and after-school activities topping the list of childcare types most needed in the next 18 months. However, compared with supply, there appears to be the greatest need for breakfast club and pre-school or playgroup places.
- R. In terms of future childcare services needed, parents indicated that they wanted childcare which was affordable and flexible, both to make it worthwhile working and to fit in with flexible and changing work schedules.
- S. In a focus group, parents with disabled children highlighted significant challenges in working and caring for a disabled child. The need for one to one support for disabled children to access mainstream childcare was highlighted, as well as on-going training for childcare providers and improved communication with parents.
- T. Children attending childcare generally enjoyed themselves, in particular playing outside and with friends.

3.7 Childcare Supply

- A. Childcare in Brighton & Hove is of high quality compared with England as a whole, with 82 per cent of settings on the early years register judged good or outstanding, compared with 69 per cent nationally.
- B. In the past year there has been a 15.1 per cent increase in pre-school or playgroup places, a 7.2 per cent increase in full day care places and a 2.9 per cent increase in after-school club places. There are also now 58 at home childcarers who are part of the Family Information Service's scheme which was developed since the last CSA.
- C. The number of childminding places has fallen by 10.7 per cent, consistent with the fall in childminding nationally.
- D. The number of holiday play scheme places has decreased by 8 per cent whilst the number of schemes has increased by 10 per cent.
- E. Childcare provision is not spread equally over the city, with some areas having more than others. This is particularly significant when "penetration rates" are looked at (that is the number of children per childcare place) in different areas, which for full day care range from 2.6 children aged 0 to 5 per full day care place in West Hove to 14.1 children aged 0 to 5 per full day care place in South Portslade. However parents will not necessarily use or want to use childcare in the area in which they live and may well be able to travel to childcare.
- F. There is very little childcare available during a-typical hours, that is outside 8 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday. Those who are able to provide this offer home based care, namely childminders and at home childcarers.

- G. All childcare providers in the city have full-time vacancies, some of which are explained by new provision which is not yet full. Childminders have the highest number of vacancies as a percentage of total registered places at 34.7 per cent, although this figure includes part-time vacancies.
- H. Vacancy levels have increased in the past year; for example vacancies in full day care have increased from 8 to 15.9 per cent of registered places.
- I. Full day care costs in Brighton & Hove are on average £4.37 an hour for a child under two and £4.01 for a child over two. However, they are lower than south east average costs by 5.8 per cent and 12 per cent respectively, but as might be expected, 12.6 per cent and 6.6 per cent higher respectively than those for England as a whole.
- J. Childminding costs in Brighton & Hove are on average £4.40 an hour, which is 14.6 per cent higher than the south east cost.
- K. After-school clubs in Brighton & Hove cost on average £8.30 per session, which is 1.2 per cent less than the south east average.
- L. Holiday play schemes in Brighton & Hove cost on average £106.50 per week which is 14.5 per cent higher than the cost for England.²
- M. Childcare costs have increased in the past year for full day care, pre-schools or playgroups and holiday play schemes. They have stayed the same for childminding and have slightly reduced for after-school clubs.
- N. Childcare providers in Brighton & Hove are generally able to meet demand for places from children of most age groups.
- O. There is significantly less holiday play scheme provision in the city for secondary school-age children (159 holiday play scheme places) than there is for primary school-age children (885 holiday play scheme places).
- P. There is very little childcare provision for older disabled children with only 37 holiday play scheme places across the city.
- Q. Childcare providers are reasonably confident about their business sustainability, with 66.1 per cent stating that they are confident that their business is sustainable over the next three years, and only 2.9 per cent stating that they did not plan to continue to provide childcare for the next year. However, 43.9 per cent of childcare providers stated that their business had been affected by late or non-payment of fees.

3.8 Childcare Gaps

- A. Geographical gaps: There were no areas of the city identified where there is a general shortage of supply of childcare. However, there may be localised cases where parents have difficulty accessing childcare, for example where a club serving a specific school is full.
- B. Income gaps: By far the most significant issue for parents is childcare affordability, and therefore this might be seen as an “income gap”. The cost of childcare will be a real issue for parents in low wage jobs or those seeking to start or return to work, particularly those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

² Data for the south east was not available.

- C. Type gaps: Flexible childcare and that offered during a-typical hours, that is childcare offered outside Monday to Friday 8 am to 6 pm, was identified most by parents, although childminders who may be able to provide this have the highest vacancy levels. The At Home Childcare Service run by the Family Information Service and established after the last CSA plays and will continue to play a key role in provision flexible childcare, and the number of at home childcarers is continuing to increase. Parents also wanted more choice of childcare. There is future demand for all types of childcare. Compared with the number of places this may be greatest for breakfast clubs and pre-schools or playgroups.
- D. Specific needs gaps: Continuing support for parents of disabled children to access suitable childcare is needed. Further exploration is needed on childcare satisfaction of particular groups.
- E. Time gaps: This is covered by “type gaps” above.
- F. Age gaps: Whilst there were high levels of satisfaction reported by those using childcare in the city, these were lower for those using childcare for school-age children. There is very little formal after-school provision for secondary school-age children and few holiday play scheme places for older disabled children, although the parent questionnaire did not show high demand for this type of provision.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Consultation to produce the CSA was widespread and is set out in Section 3 above. Statutory guidance states that local authorities must consult the local safeguarding children’s board, Jobcentre Plus and its partners as defined by Section 10 of the Children Act 2004.
- 4.2 The draft document was made available to the aforementioned and to other interested parties including on the local authority’s website, and comments received have been included.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The development of the action plan, to address the gaps in childcare provision as part of a childcare commissioning strategy, will be within existing resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Louise Hoten Date: 17/02/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The legal framework and requirements for the CSA are as set out in the body of the report.

Layer Consulted: Natasha Watson Date 16/02/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out by City Early Years and Childcare in April 2009. The EIA showed that CEYC, in general, promoted equal opportunities outcomes and its policies, strategies and services were unlikely to result in adverse impact for any group. Any new initiatives arising from the CSA will be subject to an EIA.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Childcare close to or in parents' homes reduces the need for travel and consequent environmental impact. Good quality childcare promotes sustainable communities and reduces poverty.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no specific crime and disorder implications.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Any new initiatives arising from the CSA will be subject to risk and opportunity management.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The council's priority to *Reduce inequality by increasing opportunities* is relevant to the CSA, as there is clear research evidence of the role of good quality childcare in improving outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The CYPP strategic improvement priority to *promote health, well-being, inclusion and achievement* is also relevant to childcare provision.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 None

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Statutory guidance requires publication of a sufficiency action plan. The plan should detail what the local authority and its partners plan to do to fill the gaps between supply and demand in the area. It is proposed to do this following completion of the consultation on the draft CSA and when budget details become clearer. It will also link with other relevant strategies, in particular the child poverty assessment.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

2. Appendices

Appendix One: Parent Questionnaire: *“We Want to Hear Your Views About Childcare in Brighton & Hove”*

Appendix Two: Map of Brighton & Hove Children’s Centre Areas

Appendix Three: Focus Group with Parents of Disabled Children

Appendix Four: Childcare Types

Appendix Five: Provider Questionnaire: *“We Want to Hear Your Views About the Childcare Market in Brighton & Hove”*

Appendix Six: *“How to Calculate Your Occupancy Rate”*

Background Documents

1. Childcare Act 2006
2. Securing Sufficient Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in Carrying Out Their Childcare Sufficiency Duties
3. Brighton & Hove Childcare Sufficiency Assessment March 2008
4. Brighton & Hove Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Refreshed October 2009

