

Decision maker:	Cabinet member children and families
Decision date:	Friday 7 December
Title of report:	Childcare sufficiency report 2019-2020
Report by:	Interim education and capital manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To approve the annual childcare sufficiency report for 2019-2020. This report sets out key data about childcare provision in Herefordshire and areas for future development in the context of changing national policy and requirements, and local demography. It provides a strategic overview within which the council, schools, and private and voluntary providers can develop services for the benefit of children and their parents.

Recommendation(s)

That

- (a) **the childcare sufficiency report and actions for 2019-2020 be approved.**

Alternative options

1. The council has a a statutory duty to support parents to access employment and training and ensure there is sufficient, flexible childcare across the county to enable them to do this. The recommendations in the childcare sufficiency report itself could be amended, providing any amendments

Key considerations

2. Having high quality and accessible childcare supports parents to take part in the local economy and contributes to a key aim of the council in terms of economic improvement and growth.
3. A range of early years outcomes have been identified through the Herefordshire Children and Young People's plan. These include increasing the number of children that are ready for school, improving their health and expanding the number of free preschool places in line with the national agenda.
4. To determine whether the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet those requirements, the council must have regard to the needs of parents in their area so 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).
5. The aim of this report is to show how Herefordshire Council is assessing and promoting sufficiency of childcare
6. As a result of the findings within the childcare sufficiency assessment Herefordshire Council has previously identified the following high level actions to be completed to assist towards improving child care sufficiency across Herefordshire these are set out below and were achieved in the period 2015-2018.
 - Support for parents in rural areas particularly via the childminding community and aimed at 0-2 year olds and holiday provision
 - Support schools where they have no breakfast and after school provision to consider offering this where there is demand
 - Support all early years providers to deliver flexible 2,3 and 4 year old free nursery education funded places
 - Support early years' providers where appropriate to develop their business and expand in identified areas where there is limited provision and or they are full to capacity e.g. Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye and Bromyard, to enable more flexible childcare delivery and support for the proposed government extension to deliver 30 hours nursery education funding in the future
 - Support development of expansion across all areas based on proposed housing developments
 - Carry out a more "drilled down" analysis of the childcare needs specifically for parents of children with complex needs and special needs that may be a barrier in enabling them to access employment or training.
 - Support the childcare market to expand where it is feasible and demand dictates to offer holiday playscheme provision
7. The detailed actions for the coming year are set out in the accompanying childcare sufficiency report.
8. The actions for 2019-2020 in the childcare sufficiency report are:
 - We will encourage early year's providers to consider more flexible childcare delivery, including care throughout the day and throughout the year. We will also support options and strategies for partnership delivery to enable settings currently unable to deliver 30 hours free childcare to be part of the solution for working parents and help them to understand local parental demand in a changing environment and the business opportunities this introduces.

- We will improve our information and signposting through the Family Information Service (FIS) and WISH in order to maximise the ability for parents to identify and secure childcare.
 - We will support recruitment and retention to the childminding sector, supporting stand-alone and partnership models of delivery to meet the needs of parents.
 - We will continue to work with providers to ensure childcare is inclusive and meets the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities, and we will actively promote inclusive childcare to families who require it.
 - We will encourage special schools to see if it is feasible for them support parents by offering breakfast, after school and holiday provision.
 - Given the rural nature of the county and the introduction of the 30 hour childcare extended entitlement from September 2017, Herefordshire is committed to working with all providers to support them to understand local parental demand and monitor trends and gap analysis.
 - We will continue to promote the 2 year old entitlement with children centre services and health colleagues to ensure our most disadvantaged youngsters have access to funded early years education.
9. The report assesses the availability and attributes of childcare in Herefordshire and makes judgements about whether there is sufficient childcare available to enable parents to work or take up training opportunities which lead to work. It makes judgements and recommendations about areas that need to be developed including places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. The childcare sufficiency assessment describes the supply of childcare across Herefordshire and compares this to the demand for childcare from parents and carers. This process helps to identify any gaps in the childcare market and makes recommendations for appropriate remedial action. The trend data will be able to be reported over the coming years on an annual basis.
10. The childcare sufficiency statement and actions will support the local economy and labour market by ensuring there is sufficient childcare places across Herefordshire for working parents wishing to access training and employment. It will support all 3 and 4 year olds to access 15 hours per week of free early education (through the Nursery Education Funding - NEF) and all identified disadvantaged two year olds to take up 15 hours per week of early education.
11. In order to support any increase for additional childcare places in areas of demand some existing community children's centre buildings have been used to procure nursery provision, where it is deemed to be in short supply. This has been developed at Coningsby, Widemarsh and Golden Valley where children's centres are already remodelled to deliver early education and childcare. Green Croft has been remodelled to deliver a maintained nursery at Marlbrook Primary as part of the wider redevelopment of its buildings. This would support our development to increase the number of childcare places offered to meet future demands and generate an income for the council by charging rent, potential business rates and spreading the running costs of council maintained buildings. The childcare sufficiency strategy is to be published on the website to support economic development and growth within the county to meet the statutory duty. The measure of success is that there is sufficient child care in the county that meets the needs of working parents.

Community impact

12. The core strategy is a key document in the local plan, which provides the strategic planning framework for the county's future development needs up to 2031. This has been considered in relation to the content within this report around potential new housing developments. The actions proposed support the main objectives within the Children and Young People's Plan and forms one of the main priority areas of early years. Childcare sufficiency and the delivery of nursery education funding is one of the main priority areas within early years.
13. Early years education and childcare is important for all children and families, but particularly for looked after children. Early years settings provide high quality experiences for children, support for parents, and help ensure all children have access to safe childcare. They generally provide either formal or informal opportunities for parents to get together to develop their own skills and develop a sense of community. Many are co-located in schools or other community buildings such as churches or community centres. Childcare facilitates parents returning to employment and thereby developing the local economy, as well as developing parents' own wellbeing.
14. Looked after children are provided for within the criteria for nursery education funding. All settings have to meet minimum health and safety requirements to enable them to be registered with Ofsted and meet the early years foundation stage curriculum.

Equality duty

15. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

16. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
17. Many of the families seeking childcare will have "protected characteristics". Early years providers support families with their children's childcare and educational development. The childcare sufficiency survey highlights gaps in certain types of childcare and in some of the rurally isolated areas of the county, which the recommendations and action plan will attempt to address. Free nursery education funded places for 2 year olds are aimed at families who are in receipt of certain benefits. Childcare providers across Herefordshire support children with disabilities/special educational needs in a

mainstream environment, where the parent requests this and work with families to meet the individual needs of children.

Resource implications

18. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funds £9.4m for early years which is paid by the Department for Education (DFE) according to the number of entitled children taking up the offer. Approximately £6.3m million per year is received for 3 and 4 year olds (£2,451 per pupil x 2,592 part time equivalent pupils), £1.0m per year is received for 2 year olds (£2,964 x 339.44 part time equivalent pupils) and £2.0m for the extension to 30 hours for entitled 3 and 4 year olds (£2,451 per pupil x 804.8 part time equivalent pupils).
19. The School Finance (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I.2012/335) set out how local councils must operate their Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF). The regulations require that a local council must consult its schools forum and decide upon the funding formula which informs the hourly rate paid to all providers (Local Authority Nurseries and Private/Voluntary Sector Providers).
20. On schools forum's advice, the council set the hourly rate for 3 and 4 years olds for 2018/19 at £3.90 (plus an extra 30p per child entitled to early year pupil premium). Two year old funding is paid at £5.20 per hour. Every setting delivering at least 100 hours of NEF per week receives a rurality supplement of £50.00 per week over 38 weeks. (This equates to a lump sum of £1,900 per year on top of the basic hourly rate received). For those that deliver less than 100 hours of NEF per week (fewer than 7 children) it equates to 50p per hour of NEF. The information above is to provide an overview of the nursery education funding hourly rate that the government give to local early years providers. The hourly rate can influence the childcare sufficiency report.

Legal implications

21. In discharging the duty to secure sufficient childcare in accordance with section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 (as amended), the council must have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.
22. The Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance issued in June 2018 requires a report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and make this report available and accessible to parents. The report attached contains the details set out in B1 and B2 of this guidance and therefore complies.
23. It should be noted the council no longer has a duty to assess childcare sufficiency for Herefordshire since the repeal of section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 in 2014.

Risk management

24. The risks of not agreeing to the proposed actions would result in insufficient childcare places to meet parental demands. This would impact on parents' ability to access training and employment opportunities and to get parents back into work.
25. A lack of childcare places would impact on families' ability to take up the 2 year old funding and the universal offer of free 15 hours per week early education for 3 and 4 year olds.

26. These risks are mitigated by supporting all childcare providers to meet parental childcare demands through flexible opening hours, affordable childcare costs, capacity/expansion and high quality provision. By addressing identified gaps in provision the council can support market development to ensure the supply of childcare available meets parental demand.
27. There is no identified financial resource to undertake market development, so there is limited capacity to support childcare providers/childminders to expand their provision. This will have to be done when opportunities arise in the context of other projects, such as the re-accommodation of early years provision on school sites.

Consultees

28. In order to inform this childcare sufficiency report the views of parents and their childcare needs were gained across Herefordshire. This was carried out through an online questionnaire marketed at all early years providers, schools, childminders and children with disability organisations. Paper copies of the questionnaire were also distributed to all eight children's centres across Herefordshire. It was also advertised through social media and Herefordshire early educators Facebook page. The survey ran from 14 May to 8 June 2018.
29. Parents were surveyed online and with the option of a paper survey in late spring 2018. The key results have been used to inform the childcare sufficiency strategy and are shown below:
 - 85% of parents surveyed did not use the Family Information Service to search for childcare. Childcare was found using family & friends (65%) or through local knowledge of a nursery or childminder 28%.
 - By far the most popular type of childcare parents are wishing to access is day nurseries for 0-4 year olds (70%). This has seen a sharp increase since 2015 where it was 53%. This is likely due to the new government initiative in September 2017, around the extended entitlement of 30 hours. Sessional childcare (16%), childminders (15%) afterschool clubs (23%), breakfast clubs (17%) and holiday play schemes (27%) and specialist holiday play schemes for disabled children were identified.
 - 61% of parents said they found the childcare they were looking for, compared to 58% in 2015. 23% found some of the childcare, and only 5% of parents did not find any childcare they were looking for. This would suggest that in most cases parents are finding the childcare they need. Where parents did have trouble-finding childcare, the main reasons were location of childcare was not suitable (43%), the hours of childcare were not suitable (33%), or the childcare was too expensive (28%).
 - The age range of parents looking for childcare were between 26-35 years (47%) and 36-45 years (37%). 17% were lone parents. Working arrangements varied between couples with one parent working part time 55% and 93% of their partners working full time. For those parents not working or in training, this was not due to insufficient childcare but other reasons 72%.
 - 41% of respondents earned over £35,000, with 23% earning between £25,000 and £35,000. Only 16% were earning below £16,190.
 - A small number of parents with children with very complex needs had challenges around finding specialist holiday play schemes to cater for their child's needs. Some parents expressed concern that children with complex needs did not have access to breakfast, afterschool and holiday care at their special schools and that this type of provision for children aged over 5 years was difficult to find.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Herefordshire childcare sufficiency report 2019

Background papers

None identified.