

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**DATE: 24 MARCH 2015**

**REPORT OF: MRS LINDA KEMENY, CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING**

**LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

**SUBJECT: CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (CSA)**



#### **SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

This paper asks for the Cabinet to note the content of the report on the sufficiency of childcare and early education places for children under five years, and for school aged children.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Cabinet notes the content of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report (CSA).

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The 2006 Childcare Act places a duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to make sure there are sufficient childcare places of high quality for parents that need them to allow them to work or to train. There also needs to be sufficient services for parents of eligible children to take up their offer of free early education, even for parents who are not working or training. Department for Education (DfE) Early Education and Childcare, statutory guidance for local authorities (September 2014) states that to secure sufficient childcare places, we should take account of the local childcare market, and the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty to report annually to elected council members on how we are meeting this duty and to make the report available and accessible to parents.

#### **DETAILS:**

##### **2014 Childcare sufficiency assessment: overview**

1. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) identifies gaps in childcare provision in the county. This will be used to help assess the childcare market to ensure that duties can be fulfilled, that there are enough childcare and early education places, that childcare places are of high quality, that a range of childcare services are offered to meet parents' needs, that childcare and early education places are accessible and that enough information is available to parents and carers to allow them to make informed decisions about childcare and early years services. The full report is attached as Annex 1.

## What the CSA takes into account

2. The CSA brings together data from various sources to effectively analyse the supply and demand for childcare services, and to identify gaps in provision. To measure the supply of childcare places in Surrey, account is taken of current provision, such as the number of childcare places that are available, opening hours, and Ofsted inspection outcomes. Data is used about the population of children, as well as other demographic data, such as ethnicity, and deprivation information.
3. To measure demand for childcare and early education services, results from surveys of Surrey parents are used, information is collected about needs for services and views about local provision, along with information from focus groups with parents of disabled children. Take-up rates of early education and childcare services are used as well as calculations for the projected number of early education places needed for the next five years.
4. Information collected from childcare settings, findings from consultations with parents, and projection calculations are all combined and data is analysed at ward level. Data is used on where people travel to and from to take up early education. This enables wards to be grouped together in a way that makes sense because ward boundaries do not necessarily define childcare and early education use. The data reveals that people use early education services close to where they live, but sometimes this means crossing ward boundaries. There are 206 wards in Surrey, and these have been grouped into 73 clusters.

## Key findings

5. The CSA finds that, overall, 29% of parents in Surrey are not using as much childcare as they need to work or train. Parents are dissatisfied with the affordability of childcare. It is the main barrier for all parents, although particularly so for those on lower incomes. Although parents are generally satisfied with the availability, they would use more childcare and early education if more places were available, particularly sessional settings, including maintained nursery schools and classes, and before and after school care. Working parents would like day nurseries, and before and after school clubs to open earlier and stay open later. Parents of disabled children would use more provision if they knew about it, if it were more affordable and if there was more of it that could cater to their children's special needs.
6. Nearly three quarters (74%) of infant, junior and primary schools have access to before and/or after school group settings. Of the schools that do not have access to before and/or after school group settings, either on site or through a pick-up service, most (84%) have at least one childminder that picks up from the school. All schools in Elmbridge have either provision on site or a pick-up service offered by another group setting. Schools in Tandridge are significantly less likely to have access to before and/or after school group settings. More research needs to be carried out to measure the sufficiency of before and after school clubs and holiday playschemes.
7. When using free early education, parents often have to consider a range of information and their own preferences before reaching a compromise. While most parents (95%) who access free early education do so at their first choice of provider, 42% are dissatisfied with the choice of free early education sessions offered by providers. Some parents are prevented from taking up the

full 15 hours of free early education because of a lack of places. Some settings are not open long enough in the day. Parents would like free early education sessions that are longer.

8. Rising free early education take-up rates and population, pupil yields from planned housing developments, and the increased number of two year olds eligible for free early education mean that there will not be enough childcare and early education places in the future in some parts of the county. Nine areas (ward clusters) have been identified where current provision will not be able to meet future demand for early education, and a further 15 areas where current provision might not be able to meet future demand. These are detailed in Section 6 of the main report (Annex 1).

#### **CONSULTATION:**

9. There is no requirement for any formal consultation on the CSA.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

10. Apart from provision delivered through maintained nursery schools and classes, Surrey County Council (SCC), does not deliver early education provision directly. It is largely delivered by the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. While SCC's Early Years and Childcare Service (EYCS) supports the development of new provision in areas of need with a tendering process, expert advice and some start up funding, it is not always possible to identify suitable providers to deliver services. In some areas of the county, there is a lack of premises suitable for delivering childcare and early education. These factors may contribute to unduly raising expectations of parents and carers and risk the council not meeting its duty to ensure sufficient provision.
11. EYCS is working with borough and district councils, and other local, voluntary organisations to identify suitable premises. EYCS continuously improves the tendering process to recruit suitable providers, and work with current providers to identify where expansion of existing services can help to meet the need. EYCS also works with colleagues in the Schools Planning and Commissioning Team to identify additional pupil yields resulting from new housing developments, and request an appropriate community infrastructure levy from housing developers to help meet the cost for additional early education places.

#### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

12. The County Council does not provide childcare provision directly, although some maintained schools and some children's centres managed by schools, do offer childcare provision. Where this is the case, the childcare provision is operated under a business model so that all costs are met by fees to parents. The vast majority of childcare provision is managed in the private, voluntary and independent sector, and these organisations operate under a business model to ensure all costs are met by the income they receive from fees paid by parents.
13. The County Council administers funding allocated from the DfE to enable parents to access the free early education entitlement of 15 hours a week for a maximum of 38 weeks for all three and four year olds and for eligible two year olds. The 2014/15 funding for this purpose was c.£38m. This will contribute to

the childcare costs for many parents. There is no further requirement for the County Council to provide financial assistance for the cost of childcare. The childcare market in Surrey is very vibrant and it is able to respond to the growing demand for places in most areas.

14. However, to ensure that there are sufficient places, particularly in areas of greatest need, as identified in the CSA, the Council has allocated EYCS capital resources of over £4m. This funding is used to create places identified in the CSA or to sustain provision in these areas, where a provider requires temporary support to continue to offer places. All allocations are provided following a rigorous process that requires a sound business plan to ensure that the provision will be sustainable in the medium to long-term.

#### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

15. The capital and revenue resources currently prioritised for Early Years childcare provision is adequate for the provision of childcare across Surrey and the action plan will be delivered within existing resources.

#### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

16. The Childcare Act 2006, places a duty on local authorities to ensure there are sufficient childcare and early education places for children aged 0 – 14 years (up to 18 years for disabled children), to allow parents to work or train, and sufficient free early education places for all eligible two, three and four year olds. Under DfE Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities (September 2014), there is a requirement to assess the state of the childcare market, including the supply and demand of childcare, affordability, accessibility and quality of provision. The Children and Families Act 2014, places a duty on local authorities to provide an annual report on this and detail how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed, and present this to Elected Members and to parents and carers.

#### **Equalities and Diversity**

17. A full equalities assessment has not been undertaken for this as it is unlikely that it would have a negative impact on any groups with protected characteristics. The CSA and accompanying action plan particularly takes account of the needs of disabled children, children from families on low incomes, children aged two, three and four taking up early education places, school age children and children needing holiday care, in line with DfE guidance. In the assessment, particular attention is paid to lone parents, young parents (both parents or a lone parent aged 25 and under) and parents from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.

#### **Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications**

18. There is a process in place to monitor the take up of free early education by Looked After Children, and work with Children's Services to ensure children have access to services, where appropriate.

#### **Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications**

19. No significant implications arising from this report.

**Public Health implications**

20. No significant implications arising from this report.

**Climate change/carbon emissions implications**

21. No significant implications arising from this report.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

22. The CSA has identified gaps in childcare and early education places across the county and EYCS will take action to address these gaps. The CSA will be updated each year.

**Contact Officer:**

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**Consulted:**

Finance service within Surrey County Council  
Peter-John Wilkinson, Assistant Director, Schools and Learning

**Annexes:**

Annex 1 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014 Report

**Sources/background papers:**

- Childcare Act 2006
- DfE Early Education and Childcare, Statutory guidance for local authorities (September 2014)
- Children and Families Act 2014

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