

11 November 2021		ITEM: 6
Extraordinary Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment 2021		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead, School Effectiveness and SEND		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines Thurrock's Annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2021.

This report is part of the statutory duty as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 which states Local Authorities need to ensure that we are meeting the requirements of early years entitlement with due regard to planning and growth across the Local Authority.

It recognises the regeneration opportunities locally and will look to support some of the national drivers around early year's education.

Thurrock Council will continue to:-

- a. To support further early years & childcare development across the borough where re-generation and new housing is taking place.**
- b. To consider early education future needs before decisions are taken in relation to capital assets across the Local Authority.**
- c. To support sessional providers to offer, or access wrap around care in partnership, for working parents.**
- d. To encourage providers, including schools, to participate in the 30 hours entitlement offer to enable more working parents to access their full entitlement.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That Children's Services O&S review and approve the Annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2021.

2. Introduction and Background:

2.1. Local Policy Context

The Annual Assessment links with the following Council vision and priorities:-

Vision- An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

Priorities:-

1. People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.
2. Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.
3. Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

2.2. National Policy

Thurrock has been working closely with its early years providers to ensure we can support vulnerable 2 year olds into early education. The Covid Pandemic has had a major impact on the number of Two Year Old Entitlement at the start of the pandemic due to the concerns from parents and the availability of places. The numbers for the last academic year have been low but have slowly been increasing, this is also the same picture nationally.

Thurrock continues to support providers in offering 30 hours of childcare for three and four year olds of working parents, ensuring that we have the appropriate childcare pathways including wrap around care for both early years children, and as they progress to school. This will be critical to the success of encouraging residents to take advantage of the local job opportunities.

Within our Annual Assessment, we recognise that this has the potential to impact on the places that will be available to 2 year olds across Thurrock. The council's early years' team works closely with early years providers to ensure that we can meet local demand for both 2, 3 and 4 year old provision.

Current Support to Early Years Providers from Early Years School Effectiveness Team:-

- Support pathways for new early years' providers.
- Visits to local sites to support early year' providers.
- Liaison with planning department and assets team.
- Monitoring new planning applications to ensure early years provision is included in new development as and when required.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Within the Introduction and Background section of the report.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

The reason for the recommendation relates to the statutory duty on the council to inform elected members about childcare sufficiency within our borough. The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to make sure that there are enough childcare places within its locality for working parents or for parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). The Childcare Sufficiency Report is a statutory report that must be published on our website and updated annually.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Future consultation will take place with parents to ensure we have the voice of parents/carers included in any requirements for early education opportunities.

6. Impact on Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

1. People - a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.
2. Prosperity - a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

This report is part of the statutory duty as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 which states Local Authorities need to ensure that we are meeting the

requirements of early years entitlement with due regard to planning and growth across the Local Authority.
Funding to fulfil this duty is provided by Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The funding to the Local Authority in 2021/22 is to be based on termly census. Funding to providers is based on a termly head count and distributed through the local early years funding formula.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

The Council has a statutory duty under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. The Council is obliged to have regard to the statutory guidance of the Secretary of State. The guidance requires that the Council produce an annual report that is considered by elected members. The format of the report is not prescribed but the guidance suggests it covers provision for specific groups of children, supply and demand, affordability and any gaps in provision.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Development and Equalities

The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 and equality of opportunity is a key principle of all early years' providers; they ensure they meet statutory duties around offering places to all early years children – part of the Ofsted requirement is to evidence how they have ensured equality of opportunity. Further information on the demand of childcare in Thurrock including data in relation to children with Special Educational Needs and or disability (SEND), school age children and the take up funded early education places is contained within the body of the assessment

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

None

8. Appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment 2020

Report Author:

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