

8 July 2013**Agenda Item: 5**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE

ACHIEVING 2 YEAR OLDS FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Committee on the development of the free early education programme for 2 year olds in Nottinghamshire and to outline progress with the roll out of the offer across Nottinghamshire.

Information and Advice

2. The Government is introducing a new targeted entitlement for two year olds to access free early education (up to 15 hours per week). This is part of the Government's Fairness Premium, to drive up social mobility and improve life chances. The initial focus will be on disadvantaged children (those who are Looked After or who will be entitled to receive Free School Meals), who are currently less likely to access the benefits of early education. The new entitlement will be implemented in two phases. In September 2013 (phase one), around 130,000 (20%) two year olds in England will be able to access free early education places. From 2014 (phase two), the entitlement will be extended to around 260,000 (40%).
3. In Nottinghamshire, the delivery of early years provision is currently managed through a partnership between the Council, schools and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector providers, with provision including day nurseries, playgroups and childminders.
4. The early years sector in Nottinghamshire has had early experience through piloting arrangements for delivering the new entitlement, and as such currently provides 219 places for the most vulnerable 2 year olds. From September 2013, the requirement for Nottinghamshire will be to offer early education places for 1,625 2 year olds (Department for Education (DfE) figures).
5. In addition to the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 2 above, the DfE allows some local flexibility regarding the identification of some children who may be eligible from September 2013. This means that there will be flexibility in identifying and targeting children who may access the offer, based upon the local knowledge of services and professionals.
6. The revenue funding for the additional places is delivered through the Council, via the Dedicated Schools Grant (£4.7m in 2013/14). In addition, there are two other funding streams:-

- Trajectory funding of £1.4m in 2013/14 (for capacity building purposes including training, staff recruitment & equipment)
 - Capital funding of £1.1m in 2013/14 (to develop provision/settings).
7. This funding is being allocated based on the capacity building needs of individual localities, based upon an analysis of those areas where support is needed to build capacity and to improve current provision. A capacity/place building programme has been implemented to ensure that all appropriate early years providers are able to apply to access the funding, and training and workshops are being delivered in all districts to support providers to navigate through the procurement process associated with the establishment of additional places.
 8. The DfE has made a strong recommendation that only provisions with a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' grade may be used to deliver places. The new early years Ofsted inspection framework is very challenging for early years settings, and is resulting in some settings receiving lower than anticipated inspection outcomes. However, the Council's Early Years Specialist Teacher Team is currently engaged with those settings requiring improvement and is targeting its work to support their improvement (though this relies heavily on the cooperation and engagement of those settings).
 9. **Table 1** highlights that on a County-wide basis the Council is in a position to secure the required amount of additional early years education places by September 2013. However, at a more local level, analysis suggests that capacity pressures are strongest in the following areas: Huthwaite in Ashfield; Ladybrook and Ravensdale in Mansfield; and Netherfield in Gedling. In addition, there is limited provision in Ollerton which is currently graded as 'Good' in Ofsted terms. As a response to these pressures, work is underway to build capacity in these communities by developing and expanding existing provision and in some cases building new day-care settings. The Service will work with parents to access local provision, and is developing child minder networks to meet the demand in areas where there is a current lack of places.

Table 1

District	NCC estimate of eligible children September 2013	Ofsted registered day nursery/play group places available September 2013	Comments
			There are approximately 1,000 Ofsted registered child-minders in Nottinghamshire
Ashfield	402	279	Existing child minding capacity will initially be used to provide the remaining 123 places
Bassetlaw	231	314	
Broxtowe	147	207	
Gedling	210	379	
Mansfield	364	265	Existing child minding capacity will initially be used to provide the remaining 99 places
Newark & Sherwood	224	443	
Rushcliffe	47	302	
Total	1625	2189	

10. The Council's Customer Service Centre will deal with the high volume of anticipated enquiries from parents about eligibility and information on where provision can be found in their local areas. In addition, a communications plan is currently being delivered to publicise the offer across the County. The Council will write to all eligible parents to outline details of how to access the offer for their child.

Summary

11. Nottinghamshire County Council is in a strong position to fully deliver the 2 year olds early education offer from September 2013. In the main, parents will be able choose the setting - day nursery, playgroup or child-minder - that is the most suitable for them and their child in their local area.
12. The Early Years Service will continue to support growth in the market for providing free child care to vulnerable 2 year olds and will be in a strong position to meet the Government requirement for a further expansion of 2 year old places to approximately 3,400 by September 2014.

Other Options Considered

13. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. To consider the content of the report and the wider implications.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

16. Parents with eligible children will have a choice of settings in most areas in the County; however where the eligible number of children is high and the availability of places is low, parents will have a more limited choice. Children's Centres will provide additional support to parents who require extra help with finding available and suitable day care places.

Financial Implications

17. Funding is provided by the Department for Education to support the provision of places, build capacity and for capital improvements. In April 2014 the revenue elements of this funding will be aligned with current revenue funding for the early education of 3 and 4 year olds.

Equalities Implications

18. Due regard has been given to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Safeguarding of Children Implications

19. All settings operate within the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Procedures and all provision is regulated by Ofsted.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the development of the free early education programme for 2 year olds in Nottinghamshire and the plans to address capacity for the roll out of the offer for Nottinghamshire be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

20. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA xx/06/13)

- 21.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Families in the Foundation Years - DfE, 2012

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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