

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 23rd November, 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Review
Autumn 2020 – 2021 (CSA)

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The report aims to provide a summary of the revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report. It details any achievements since the last review and outlines Halton's current position. It also highlights any gaps in provision and how these are being addressed. Early indications of how the effects of Covid-19 are impacting the childcare sector are also discussed.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) **Members approve the revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.**

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Sections 6 and 7 of 'The Childcare Act' (2006) and the associated statutory guidance: 'Early Education and Childcare – Statutory guidance for local authorities' (March 2018), requires all Local Authorities in England to undertake and provide an annual childcare sufficiency report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make it available to the public.

3.2 In accordance with the above, Halton's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) has been reviewed and updated. The purpose of the document is to:

- Assist parents to find suitable childcare across the borough;
- Help inform the Local Authority regarding supply and estimated demand for childcare places in all age ranges, in particularly for the Free Early Years Entitlement places;
- Provide information for anyone who is considering setting up new childcare provision in the borough or becoming a childminder.

4.0 **ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAST CSA REVIEW**

4.1 Since producing the last CSA Review, the following have been achieved:

- The percentage of Day Nurseries with a good or better Ofsted outcome has remained at 100% (excluding one nursery which has not been inspected yet);
- We have increased the number of childminders who are able to deliver the Free Early Years Entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds from 50 to 56;
- We continue to fund an average of 540 funded 2 year old children per term;
- From September 2017, 30 hours childcare was introduced for working parents. Currently 100% of day nurseries, 87.5% of pre-schools, 100% of nursery schools, 12.5% of nursery classes, 60% of nursery academies and one Out of School Club are offering the extended hours. This is in addition to the 56 childminders registered to deliver the FEYE for 15 or 30 hours;
- We have been able to secure sufficient childcare for all vulnerable children and children of critical worker parents/carers who required a place, during lockdown.

5.0 **SUMMARY OF CSA REVIEW**

5.1 The CSA provides the following information:

- A brief introduction to the review, outlining its purpose and rationale;
- A description of the Halton context;
- A statement about Safeguarding;
- An overview of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum;
- Details of Halton's market segments and their characteristics;
- Details of Halton's Early Years market, including;
 - the percentage of Free Early Years Entitlement places by sector;
 - the numbers of 3 & 4 year old places by setting type;
 - the number of early years settings;
 - Ofsted grades for all sectors as at August 2020;
- The supply and estimated demand of childcare places;
- A brief outline of Halton's SEND provision, Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP);
- Details of the affordability and flexibility of Halton's childcare, sustainability and staffing;
- An overview of the changes in childcare places since the last CSA and projected new places;
- Guidance around financial help with childcare costs;

- Details of any apparent gaps in provision and an action plan to show how these gaps will be met;
- Early indications of how the effects of Covid-19 are impacting childcare and sustainability in Halton.

6.0 **CURRENT POSITION**

6.1 Overall, the Halton Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) Review 2020-2021 continues to reflect a vibrant, sufficient and high quality Early Years and Childcare market that delivers choice, high quality and affordable service to parents and carers.

However, this review has been undertaken at a time when the Early Years Sector is under increasing pressure due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Although, early indications show that the sector remains sustainable at present, it is still too early to determine the full impact of Covid-19. This will need to be carefully monitored over the coming months.

The report does identify some gaps in provision. These are as follows:

- Halton Brook CCRA has a deficit of approximately 34 places for funded 2 year olds;
- Windmill Hill CCRA has a deficit of approximately 84 extended entitlement places and 46 places for out of school care for 5-10 year olds;
- Kingsway CCRA is approximately 61 places short of funded 2 year olds;
- Upton CCRA has a deficit of approximately 96 universal FEYE places, 69 places for Extended Hours and 26 places for out of school care for 5-10 year olds.

With regards to the shortage of funded 2 year old places in Halton Brook CCRA, the Two Year Old Funding Officer reports that it has always been possible to find an alternative place in the area. Furthermore, if parents have requested a particular setting where there are no available spaces, they have been happy to wait for availability. Furthermore, one Pre-school in Halton Brook Ward are looking into the possibility of providing care for under 2's.

With regards to the shortage of Universal places in the Windmill Hill CCRA, families are willing to travel to other wards for their FEYE. This may mean accessing a setting which is outside the Windmill Hill CCRA or even out of the borough.

With regards to the shortage of 46 out of School places, local knowledge would support the fact that, in reality, no such shortage exists.

With regards to the shortage of funded 2 year old places in the

Kingsway CCRA, there is a new nursery due to open in Farnworth Ward, Spring 2021. Although this new nursery is not situated in the Kingsway CCRA, geographically it is located close by and parents may be willing to travel.

The shortage of 3 & 4 year old FEYE places (both Universal and Extended) in the Upton CCRA would appear to be due to the continued expansion of new housing estates in that area.

In recent years, prospective childcare providers have considered developing childcare in this CCRA, notably the Birchfield ward. However, no suitable buildings appeared to be available and it was proving too costly to buy land to build premises.

However, the new Day Nursery opening in Farnworth ward will help to alleviate the shortage of 3 and 4 year old places in the Upton CCRA. In particular, it will help the Birchfield ward, as Birchfield ward is next to Farnworth Ward (see map on page 7) and parents are willing to travel across wards to receive their free childcare.

In addition, Birchfield and Hough Green wards are both on the edge of neighbouring authorities e.g. St Helens, Knowsley and Warrington. They are also in close proximity to the M62 motorway. This means that, if parents work further afield, they may choose to claim their Universal/Extended FEYE in a childcare setting nearer to their work, thereby reducing demand for places in Halton.

It is also important to remember that parents do not always access childcare/school places in the ward where they live and children do not always attend a school in the ward where they live.

An Action Plan is included in the CSA showing how the Local Authority will work with a range of partners to address the above gaps to ensure sufficiency.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None identified

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

9.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Research has proven that the earliest years of a child's life are crucial to their development for laying the foundations of success at school and in later life. In Halton, we want to ensure we have high quality childcare available for all parents or carers that need it, in all age ranges. The Family and Childcare Trust Childcare Survey (2018) states: *'Childcare supports parents to work, keeps valuable skills in the workforce, helps children do better at school and can*

narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers’.

9.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

High quality childcare which results in children experiencing success within education will increase training and employment opportunities for pupils and students.

9.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Raising children’s achievements through access to affordable and sustainable early years childcare provision will have a positive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of challenging pupils and students.

9.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified

9.5 **Halton’s Urban Renewal**

None identified

10.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

10.1 Raising children’s achievements through access to affordable and sustainable early years childcare should reduce incidents of challenging behaviour.

11.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

11.1 Raising children’s achievements through access to affordable and sustainable early years childcare provision should ensure that they are able to receive timely support and intervention, thereby reducing inequalities in their life chances.

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Childcare Act 2006	www.legislation.gov.uk	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources
Early Education and Childcare – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2018)	www.gov.uk	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources