
REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	24 May 2016
Subject:	Early Years Strategy and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Chris Spencer, Corporate Director People Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Simon Brown, Portfolio Holder Children, Schools and Young People
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016 Appendix B Harrow's Early Years Strategy 2016-19 and action plan /Key Performance Indicators Appendix C Ofsted inspections update Appendix D Equalities Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report presents the statutory Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016 and Harrow's Early Years Strategy 2016-2019 for approval.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the outcomes of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016.
2. Approve Harrow's Early Years Strategy 2016-19.

Reason: (For recommendations)

To enable the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work, or to undertake education and training leading to work.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

1. Harrow Council is committed to providing high quality and sustainable childcare to meet the needs of the local population and so that children are better prepared for school.
2. Harrow's Early Years Strategy aims to improve outcomes for children, especially disadvantaged children and children with SEND, and to narrow gaps in achievement. It sets out how the Council will work with providers and partners to improve the quality of childcare provision and meet the targets for take up set by the Department for Education (DfE).
3. The strategy enables the Council to fulfil its obligation to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and those seeking work.
4. The Council will continue to work with partners in the private, voluntary and independent sector to improve the quality of childcare provision and meet the targets for take up set by the Department for Education.
5. The strategy will also support school readiness and improvements in outcomes in early year's settings in schools.
6. This report provides Members with the national and local context and the Early Years Strategy including priorities for the next three years.

Background

7. The Council is required to secure sufficient childcare provision, having considered the level of existing and proposed provision. In July 2013, Cabinet noted the progress developing Harrow's Early Years Strategy drawing on the early year's needs assessment undertaken in 2012/13. A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was completed in spring 2016 which has also informed the Strategy.
8. The Government has flagship policies aimed at meeting the childcare needs of working parents. The new Childcare Act 2016, albeit not currently in force, proposed to extend free early education to eligible three and four year old children from September 2017 where both parents are working. Along with increasing numbers of children and

demographic changes, this will result in pressures on the capacity for local provision to meet these needs as well as maintaining standards.

9. There is funding available from the Dedicated Schools Grant [DSG] to implement the Early Years Strategy in the short term and the Strategy aims to sustain this beyond this time, in the context of an impending national funding formula, and proposals that will have a major impact on the role of local authorities in statutory education.
10. The strategy has been shared with local childcare providers including childminders, as well as headteachers in primary schools and early year's practitioners. A small number of responses made were positive.

Current situation

11. The Council has a statutory responsibility to consider the childcare provision. The Government in recent years has extended the free childcare from 15 hours for all children who are three and four year olds, to eligible children who are two years old. This is due to be expanded again to eligible 3 and 4 year olds for 30 hours from September 2017. Action is required to be taken to ensure that the Council supports the capacity within Harrow to meet the national agenda and the changes in Harrow's population.
12. Within Harrow, childcare is provided in a wide range of settings including sessional and full day care, pre-schools and nurseries, childminders and early year's settings in academies, schools and the independent sector. There are 5,060 places for children aged 0-4 provided by the PVI and maintained sectors. Provision is across the borough although some areas are better provided. The quality of the provision is good overall with 72% of settings judged as good or above by OfSTED. There is excellent take-up of entitlement for children aged four, and scope for improvement for take-up by three and two year olds.

Options considered

13. Funding for two years has enabled work to be undertaken to increase capacity and sustainability through the creation of a number of posts and to develop data collection systems and analysis services, support for SEND, and a focus on quality to enable better outcomes and transition arrangements.
14. In April 2015, a lead adviser was appointed and from January 2016 a team of early year's advisers and practitioners has been recruited on short term contracts. The focus of the work since April 2015 has been to build capacity and a sustainable approach to promoting quality and standards within early years.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

15. In October 2015 the development of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016 was commissioned and this work was undertaken from November 2015 to February 2016 and finalised in March 2016. A copy of the CSA is provided at Appendix A.

16. The CSA is based on data collated from a range of sources including Interviews with parents/carers via Children's Centres and Community Groups including Community Ambassadors and Supplementary Schools; distribution of questionnaires and data analysis.
17. The 2016 CSA identifies the changing demographics in Harrow with increasing numbers of families from minority ethnic backgrounds, increasing numbers of children from 0-5, and the high proportion of children with SEND.
18. Within the context of concerns about the affordability and convenience of childcare costs, and the increasing demands on local providers, there is also a mismatch in key parts of Harrow of supply and demand. These areas are in most cases the most deprived and fastest growing wards. These include Canons, Marlborough, Wealdstone, Roxbourne and Harrow Weald.
19. This has a particular impact on disadvantaged families and children, and leads to gaps in achievement which widen during formal education. Affordability has been identified as a key factor in parental choice, and sometimes a barrier to taking up early childcare, for particular groups of parents, including lone parents, families on lower incomes, and those of an ethnicity other than White British. Parental satisfaction has also been raised as a concern, particularly for parents with children with SEND. Finally, the CSA found that access to quality information and guidance for parents was variable and needs to be improved.

Harrow's Early Years Strategy

20. The Early Years Strategy places the achievement of all children at its heart. The overarching aim of the Strategy is to close gaps in so that all children are better prepared for school. There is a particular focus on disadvantaged children and those with SEND.
21. The strategy is based on funding streams that enable the Council to provide additional staffing and resources over the next two years. The focus is then on ensuring that systems are sustainable so that outcomes continue to improve.
22. From the CSA, analysis of data and engagement with early year's professionals, providers and officers, 6 priorities have been identified. For each priority a series of objectives have been developed. These are set out as follows:

Priority One:

Improve the quality of Early Years provision and outcomes across the Maintained and the PVI sector so that all settings achieve Good and above.

Objectives

- Improve leadership of PVI settings to secure both capacity and quality of provision for two year olds [as well as 3 and 4 year olds].

- Provide support and challenge to settings through evaluation, feedback and targets.
- Develop sector led capacity and skills to model and share best practice.
- Provide targeted support to those settings who are at risk of being judged to be below Good by Ofsted.
- Review and audit of settings against the Early Years single inspection framework on request, in accordance with the local authority's statutory duty.
- Create self-sustainable networks of PVI settings.
- Improve transition into and out of PVI settings.

Priority Two:

Increase capacity within the PVI and maintained sectors in respect of eligible two year old places and in respect of the likely increase from 15 hours free nursery education to 30 hours of free nursery education for three and four year olds (predicted start in 2017).

Objectives

- Create additional capacity within the PVI settings, in particular, those areas identified in the CSA report March 2016.
- Targeted support for existing PVI settings with potential to expand.
- Identification and targeted work with potential new providers, particularly in those areas identified in the CSA report March 2016.
- Liaison with Corporate Estates to identify premises.
- Create a sustainable marketing strategy.
- Targeted outreach work in localities and specific ethnic minority communities and individual families – working in partnership to cross hard to reach communities, with newly identified 'parent champion' volunteers and the local Community Leaders, in addition to Children's Centres.
- Carry out regular comprehensive childcare sufficiency assessments in line with requirements of local authorities.

Priority Three:

Improve the quality use of assessment and data across the Early Years sector.

Objectives

- Establish appropriate and sustainable systems for monitoring and tracking two year old progress (which can also be utilised for three and four year olds).
- Design and implement sustainable systems for monitoring and tracking pupil baseline and progress data.
- Train and support settings in the use of tracking system, via the Kent Tracker system identified as meeting this need.
- Plan for the costs for the development of the new system.

Priority Four:

Meet more effectively the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children within the Early Years sector (health needs, DSEN, CLA, Pupil Premium).

Objectives

- Secure sufficient capacity within the PVI's to provide high quality support for two, three and four year olds with SEND.
- Develop skills and expertise of staff within the PVI's to plan for and ensure appropriate targeted support for any disadvantaged children.

Priority Five:

Support the development of quality and capacity of childminders providing for two to five year olds.

Objectives

- Provide access to training and support on the EYFS to childminders.
- Facilitate quality networks [including childminder agencies] for childminders which are self-sustaining in the longer term.

Priority Six:

Adopt an Early Years team approach.

Objectives

- Ensure that all those contributing to the overall Early Years strategy are clear about their roles and accountabilities and deliver these effectively.
- Provide strong leadership to the team through sharing key data and information with the team and providing clear direction for individuals and the team as a whole.

Implementation:

23. The action plan is being led by a strategic group of officers, and is being implemented by an operational group which reflects the different stakeholders within the community. The plan has measurable performance indicators which are monitored and reviewed on a termly basis. These reviews will contribute to the annual report on early years presented to members.
24. In preparation for the extension to 30 hours of free child care to eligible 3 and 4 year olds, the Government is asking local authorities to lodge an expression of interest for capital expansion to meet these increased demands. The Department for Education will then decide on which bids will be followed up. Successful local authorities will be informed during the autumn term 2016.

Performance Issues

25. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data shows that in Harrow in 2015, 70.4% of children achieved a good level of development. This is an increase of 9.1 percentage points on 2014 compared to 5.9 percentage points nationally.

26. 72% (76 settings) of Harrow's 105 Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years settings in Harrow are rated Good or Outstanding. Appendix C sets out the most recent Ofsted outcomes, summarises the main strengths and areas for development that were identified in the Ofsted reports and provides the EYFSP trend data for Harrow compared with England.

Environmental Implications

27. There are no environmental implications arising directly from the Early Years Strategy.

Risk Management Implications

28. Risk included on Directorate risk register? No
Separate risk register in place? No

Main Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Controls
Increased demand for services against reduced budgets	Low	Low	The strategy aims to help all childcare provision to be self-sustaining over time. Support and advice on business development and marketing is provided.
Implications if KPIs are not met	Low	Low	Termly reviews will identify risks and target improvements in specific settings.
Implications if the quality of provision is not maintained	Low	Low	Ofsted outcomes reviewed so that vulnerable settings [PVI and Childminders judged to require improvement or inadequate; and new settings] are given targeted support.
Implications if the quality of children's outcomes does not improve	Low	Low	Improved data sharing will enable the early years team to track the progress of vulnerable groups of children [including those with SEND, CLA, and EYPP] and offer support and advice.

Legal Implications

29. Under the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities have various duties in relation to young children in their area. This includes a general duty under s.1 to improve the well-being of young children and reduce inequalities and specific duties to provide early years services in an integrated manner and to promote services to those parents who are unlikely to take advantage of them.
30. The 2006 Act also contains a specific duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision of sufficient childcare to enable parents/carers to take up or remain in work, or to undertake education and training leading to work.

31. The Childcare Act requires local authorities to take account of the quantity and quality of early childhood services that are or are expected to be provided. For this reason it is appropriate to carry out an assessment of the sufficiency of childcare within the area. The assessment measures the nature and the extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare within each local area.
32. Statutory guidance – Early Education and Childcare - was published in September 2014. The guidance recommends that local authorities report annually to council members on how they are meeting their sufficiency duty. It recommends that the report includes details of how the local authority is ensuring that it meets the specific needs of children with disabilities, children from families in receipt of working tax credit or universal credit, children of parents who work irregular hours, children age 2-4 entitled to free childcare places, school age children and children requiring holiday care. The report should also cover the accessibility, affordability and quality of provision and how any gaps in provision are being met.

Financial Implications

33. Funding for Early Years provision comes from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Local Authority is funded based on Early Years Census data in relation to participation of disadvantaged 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds receiving 15 hours a week free nursery education. In respect of 2 year olds, providers are funded on a flat base rate of £5.50 per hour of participation. Funding for 3 and 4 year olds is distributed through the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) which includes a base rate, funding for deprivation, quality, flexibility and professional leadership of up to a maximum of £4.29 per child per hour.
34. The same level of funding is provided to private, voluntary and independent settings, maintained nursery schools and nursery classes within maintained schools and academies, based on participation.
35. £1.5m of one off DSG has been committed to funding an Early Years Project, anticipated to be carried out over 2 years, to improve quality of provision, identify eligible children not currently participating (particularly 2 year olds) and increase capacity where gaps have been identified by the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Part of this project will be to ensure that the Council's statutory role within Early Years education is sustained once the funding for the project ceases. The Early Years Strategy and outcome of the CSA will be contained within the DSG available for Early Years provision.
36. The Government has announced that a new National Funding Formula for Early Years will be introduced from 2017-18 and intends to carry out a consultation on this in the near future. The impact for the Council and Harrow providers is not yet known.

37. In addition to this, the Government has announced an extension to the 15 hour free entitlement for eligible working parents to 30 hours of free entitlement per week for 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017. Funding available to the Council for this provision is not yet known but is expected to be announced as part of the consultation on the National Funding Formula.
38. There is currently no capital funding available to the Council to fund expansion or increase of Early Years provision. However, the Government on 3 April announced a call for expressions of interest from local authorities to bid for capital grants that will become available to early years settings to support the delivery of the 30 hours extended entitlement coming into effect from September 2017. The Council is currently working with providers in all sectors to identify those which currently offer, or plan to offer, this provision for 3 and 4 year olds.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

39. Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix D. The assessment identifies that Harrow has higher proportions of children with special educational needs (than in outer London and England) that are eligible for 2, 3 and 4 year old funded early education entitlement. Also that a higher proportion of parents of children with special needs report not using childcare, finding it harder all year to access childcare and being less satisfied with childcare. There is also evidence that indicates some minority ethnic groups are not taking up their entitlement to free childcare, especially for 2 year olds.
40. The strategy recognises the importance of local businesses and communities in supporting the childcare needs of vulnerable families. In particular the strategy places a high priority on meeting the needs of children with SEND. In addition, the strategy focuses on the needs of particular minority ethnic communities that currently do not access their entitlement to free childcare.

Council Priorities

The Council's vision is: **Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow**

41. The Council Priorities are as follows:
 - Making a difference for the vulnerable
 - Making a difference for communities
 - Making a difference for local businesses
 - Making a difference for families
42. The Council Strategic Themes are to:
 - Build a Better Harrow.
 - Be More Business-like and Business Friendly.
 - Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families
43. The Early Years Strategy supports these priorities and strategic themes by:

- working to ensure sufficient high quality childcare places for families in Harrow
- supporting local childcare businesses to be successful and be able to reach their full potential

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jo Frost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 8 April 2016		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 8 April 2016		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
EqIA carried out:	YES
EqIA cleared by:	Johanna Morgan, People Services DETG

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Brian Netto, Senior School Improvement Adviser
020 8420 9497 brian.netto@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Call-In Waived by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	NOT APPLICABLE <i>[Call-in applies]</i>
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