

To: **Schools Forum**
9 March 2023

2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Executive Director of People

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update School Forum on the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA), attached as Annex A, to be submitted to the Executive Member and subsequently published on the Bracknell Forest Council Website, as required by the authority's statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That Schools Forum NOTES the attached CSA**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 Statutory Guidance sets out the Local Authority's statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare. To meet this duty Bracknell Forest Council is required to submit a report to elected council members on how it is meeting its duty and to make this report available to parents.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No alternative options were considered

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Section 6 and 7 (as substituted by section 1 of the Education Act 2011) of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on English local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and to secure early years provision free of charge.
- 5.2 Part B of the Statutory guidance for local authorities sets out how Local Authorities should meet this duty, including the requirement to report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and make this report available and accessible to parents.
- 5.3 In assessing the sufficiency of the local childcare market, the CSA draws on data from the Office for National Statistics, labour market statistics from the National Online Manpower Information System (NOMIS) and census data, Health data, local statistical data, information provided by local childcare providers, and a survey of parents in Bracknell Forest.
- 5.4 Currently evidence indicates that in the summer term 2022 there was sufficient childcare capacity for children aged 0 to 4 (not in school), but supply of childcare for school age children (ages 4 to 16) has not recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels, with parents reporting continued difficulties accessing childcare before and after school and during school holidays.
- 5.5 Analysis of the available data indicates there is currently sufficient childcare across Bracknell Forest to meet demand for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 in the following categories:
- Free entitlement for eligible 2-year-olds

Unrestricted

- Universal 15 hours free entitlement for 3 and 4-year-olds
- Extended 30 hours free entitlement for 3 and 4-year-olds of working parents
- Early years childcare outside the free entitlements

5.6 Based on challenges identified in the CSA, the priorities for childcare in 2023-24 are:

- Identify and understand the impact changes to family circumstances and the cost-of-living crisis are having on the childcare market in Bracknell Forest by continuing with ongoing work to:
 - understand the changes in the supply of childcare
 - Identify where supply does not match demand and work with providers to meet the demand.
 - Help providers identify and understand opportunities in the childcare market, and to effectively advertise the childcare they offer.
- Continue working with providers to ensure they remain sustainable and understand and adapt to the changes in the childcare market. We will continue to offer business support to those providers who need it.
- Ensure providers considering opening new provision within BFC understand the current position regarding the population forecast and current sufficiency, and work with them to mitigate any detrimental impact on existing Early Years providers.
- Improving data on all aspects of the childcare market including capacity, vacancies, waiting lists and costs. A particular focus continues to be childcare for school age children and holiday clubs.
- Actively promoting the Bracknell Forest Local Directory, which holds information on all childcare in Bracknell Forest. This includes the use of social media, local advertising e.g., buses, bus shelters and Town & Country, community events, school newsletter and websites, post cards advertising the free entitlements, Family hubs and other BFC services, Job Centre and Health Visitors.
- Early Years Forum
 - Review the Early Years Forum terms of reference and membership
 - Engage with and recruit new members and work with the forum to support sufficiency and sustainability
- School Age Childcare
 - Consult with schools and childcare providers to investigate solutions to the parental survey concerns regarding availability of childcare places
 - Continue to engage with providers to deliver the Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF)

5.7 The CSA will be submitted to the Executive Member for information and subsequently published on the Council website where it will be available and accessible to parents and childcare providers.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Comment requested 16 February 2023, outstanding

Director of Resources

- 6.2 The revenue related cost of delivering the CSA will need to be financed from within the Dedicated Schools Grant income which is allocated by the government through referee to actual hours delivered for the free entitlement. A detailed assessment of affordability is considered each year as part of the Early Years budget setting process

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Not Required

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 BFC will be at risk of not meeting its statutory duty if it does not submit the CSA to the executive member and publish the report where it is accessible to parents.
- 6.5 If BFC does not complete a sufficiency assessment; development of childcare may not be placed in the correct area, may not meet the needs of working parents and may destabilise the local childcare market.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 In preparing for the CSA, data on current capacity and costs were gathered from providers of childcare in Bracknell Forest. Parents of children resident in or accessing childcare in Bracknell Forest were consulted on their need for childcare in June 2022.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Data was collected from providers via the Provider Self Update portal, provider surveys, email and telephone and provider websites. Parents were consulted via an online survey using Objective and was advertised via childcare providers, the Council website, the Family Information Service website and social media.

Representations Received

- 7.3 312 parents responded to the consultation, an decrease of 134 responses compared to the previous survey in June 2021.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718179/Early_education_and_childcare-statutory_guidance.pdf

Early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities - June 2018

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents>

Childcare Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/5/contents/enacted>

Childcare Act 2016

Unrestricted

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Cherry Hall, Head of Early Years

01344 352811

cherry.hall@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

David Allais, Early Years Business & Family Information Manager

01344 354027

EHBS@bracknell-forest.gov.uk