

Meeting: Policy Development and Decision Group
(Joint Commissioning Team)

Date: 6 November 2017

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Sufficiency Strategy

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the decision need to be implemented? N/A

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1. Proposal and Introduction

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 years (or up to 18 years for disabled children).
- 1.2 As part of these duties, Torbay Council is required to report annually to Elected Members on the local arrangements to ensure those duties meet and ensure any report is available and accessible for parents.
- 1.3 A copy of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (September 2017) is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

2. Reason for Proposal

- 2.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provides an overview of the local child care market, changes in the supply and demand for places and the actions necessary to ensure these are sufficient, accessible child care places in Torbay.
- 2.2 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017 takes into account significant changes in Government Policy including the ongoing expansion of Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) for disadvantaged two year olds and the extended entitlement (30 hours per week) for working parents of three and four year olds from September 2017.

- 2.3 The population of children in Torbay is increasing, with Paignton and Torquay evidencing the largest increases. Population changes, housing developments and the impact of welfare reforms are leading to changes in the patterns of demand for childcare to meet the needs of parents. The 30 hours childcare initiative for working parents, which commenced in September 2017, is having a particular impact as some parents will be entitled to double the amount of provision they currently receive.
- 2.4 The number of childcare providers in Torbay is not large and patterns of demand and supply are analysed down to ward level within the sufficiency assessment. As a small locality, Torbay residents tend to have a thorough knowledge of the childcare market and make judgements based on first or second hand experience of providers. This creates some difficulties in managing demand as some parents would rather wait for a place at their preferred provider or location, resulting in children not starting until two or three terms after they become entitled. This is particularly the case for the two year old entitlement. As a consequence, some providers have low occupancy and experience difficulty in filling places whereas others have extensive waiting lists.
- 2.5 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017 shows that, although there are sufficient places to meet current needs, there are potentially insufficient places to meet future demand, particularly for the extended entitlement for three and four year olds. It is also the case that, whilst overall capacity is sufficient, some localities may experience demand pressures due to the workings of parental preference. An action plan is attached to the sufficiency assessment setting out the actions that will be taken to ensure childcare capacity develops in line with demand.
- 2.6 Following its approval, the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017 will be published on the Council's website as well as providing the evidence base for the ongoing dialogue with providers, partners and stakeholders on the development of future capacity.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the Torbay Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (September 2017) be approved enabling its publication; and
- 3.2 that the Policy Development Decision Group (Joint Commissioning Team) receive an update on progress at a future meeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (September 2017)