

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 17 November 2020

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Early Years Sufficiency Annual Update

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1. Proposal and Introduction

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).

As part of these duties, Torbay Council is required to report annually to Elected Members on the local arrangements to ensure those duties are met and a report is available and accessible for parents. The purpose of this is to provide an update on progress since 2019.

A copy of the Childcare Sufficiency Report (September 2019) is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

2. Reason for Proposal and associated financial commitments

At the time of submission, the full report demonstrated that there are sufficient childcare places to meet the requirements for funded children in Torbay with enough spare capacity to accommodate children aged under 2 who may be accessing a place which their parents pay for. The report identifies that Torbay does therefore have sufficient capacity to accommodate all children who need a place, although parents may not always be able to access their first choice of provider.

Although there have been some closures of private early years providers. The Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019 provides an overview of the local childcare market, changes in the supply and demand for places and the actions necessary to ensure there are sufficient, accessible child care places in Torbay.

Update since November 2019:

- The 2019 Sufficiency Report has been published on the Torbay Council website.
- Three private providers have ceased trading since the published report.

- Any children who were displaced as a result of the closures have been accommodated elsewhere.
 - No children have been left unable to access a suitable childcare place as a result of the closures.
 - The hourly rate for funding has increased to promote provider sustainability and contribute towards improving the quality of childcare. The rates paid to all early years providers is £5.00 per hour for eligible 2 year olds and £3.96 per hour for 3 and 4 year olds.
 - One of the two providers who was graded Requires Improvement by Ofsted has now raised its grade to Good, leaving only one private group-based provider with a requires improvement grade.
 - The service has received no complaints from parents about being unable to find a suitable childcare place.
 - The service has been working with Holiday Care providers to ensure that they are correctly registered and operating within the required regulations.
 - The service has received no formal complaints from parents that they are unable to access suitable holiday childcare.
 - The sector has responded to the Covid-19 pandemic as required following government guidance.
 - During the Covid-19 pandemic, the service has not received reports of any parent not being able to access a childcare place if they needed one (as a key worker or vulnerable family).
 - The sector have adopted a different way of working during the pandemic, in line with government guidance and Covid-safe procedures.
 - It is anticipated that there may be a temporary reduction in the availability of places and the reciprocal take up of places during the autumn term 2020.
 - There is a recommendation to shift the cycle of the sufficiency reporting process to account for this change and allow the assessment to take place when the sector has moved back to a more normal capacity and way of working
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3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

3.1. That Cabinet note the submitted report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Childcare Sufficiency Report

Background Documents

None