

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny **Date:**

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Early Years Sufficiency Duty Report – 6 month update

When does the decision need to be implemented? n/a

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Nick Bye, Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
nick.bye@torbay.gov.uk

Director Contact Details: Nancy Meehan Director of Children's Services
nancy.meehan@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to provide an update on the sufficiency of early years childcare places in the Torbay area.

2. Background

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 As part of these duties, Torbay Council is required to report annually on the local arrangements to ensure those duties are met and a report is available and accessible for parents and the wider childcare market. This annual report went to Overview and Scrutiny in November 2024. The next full report will be due November 2025.
- 2.3 This report provides a 6 month update on childcare sufficiency.

3. Progress

- 3.1 Currently there are 2,637 children reported on the Spring 2025 headcount taking up funded hours at an Early Years Setting in Torbay. The split between setting type can be seen below:

Childminder 11.72%	Nursery/Preschool 60.75%	School Based Nursery 27.53%
-----------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------

The funded entitlements available to children and families (and numbers accessing each offer) is broken down below:

- Under 2's Working Parent Entitlement Funding Take-up 15 hours (*new offer introduced September 2024*) – 488 children
- 2 Year Old Working Parent Entitlement Funding Take-up 15 hours (*new offer introduced April 2024*) – 502 children
- 2 Year old Targeted Funding Take up 15 hours – 148 children
- Universal 15 Hours Funding for 3&4 Year Olds Take-up – 583 children
- 3 &4 Year Old Working Parent 30 hours Extended Funding Take-up - 916

Since the last Sufficiency Report there has been the introduction of the Under 2's Working Parent Entitlement and the continuation of the 2 Year Old Working Parent Entitlement. Both these offers are for 15 hours a week and are included in the figures above.

- 3.2 To access the working parent entitlement, eligible parents/cares need to apply and are given an eligibility code. Current data from the DfE dashboard shows that 92% of Under 2's have had their code validated and 94% of 2 Year Olds. This indicates that a large majority of children have been able to access their Early Years entitlement in provision within Torbay.
- 3.3 A recent capacity survey of Early Years providers showed a mixed picture across Torbay. Of those providers who responded 48% had available spaces (23% had under 10 unfilled spaces and 25% had more than 10 unfilled spaces). The remainder of respondents were currently at capacity and not able to take on new children. However the response rate to the capacity survey was approximately 50%. We are currently looking at ways to streamline how we gather data and utilise current systems to capture information which does not rely on individual responses.
- 3.4 Increased demand will continue across Torbay as the offer for both working parents for Under 2's and 2 years Olds doubles to 30 hours in September 2025
- 3.5 To support this expansion we have been working with the sector to expand provision and increase capacity. To date the following new places have been or will be generated by September 2025:

Through the Capital Grant Expansion Programme

Two brand new under twos nursery provision - totalling 18 available places

Capacity expansion in four settings - totalling approximately 40 available places

Through the Schools Based Nursery Grant

Two expansions of school settings - totalling approximately 45 available places

4 newly registered childminders- approximately 12-15 available places (depending on age of children)

There will be a final round of applications for the Capital Grant Expansion which will look to support further growth and expansion within the sector.

3.6 A recent parent/carer survey found that:

- 85% of respondents were able to access their full early years entitlements
- 93% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that childcare providers were in the area they wanted e.g. close to work, home etc.
- There was a 50/50 split regarding affordability. For those who responded that it was applicable to them half felt that childcare was affordable, and half felt it was unaffordable.

Through the summer term we will continue to work with providers to ensure they are working within updated guidance on consumable charges to parents/carers and not making these charges a condition of accessing funded places.

3.7 No formal complaints have been received from parents/carers who have not been able to find suitable funded childcare.

4. Recommendation(s)

4.1. That Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board note the content of the report.