

Torbay Childcare Sufficiency Report 2019

Executive Summary

Overview

The Childcare Act 2006 places duties on all local authorities to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). As part of these duties Torbay Council is required to report annually to elected Council Members on how this duty is being met and to publish this report to make it accessible for parents.

Just over 5% of the Torbay population are aged under 5 years old and may require a childcare place. The full report demonstrates 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 have sufficient capacity to accommodate all children who need a place, although parents may not be able to access their first choice of provider.

Following a drop in the birth rate in the local area, Torbay Council needs to now work closely with the childcare market to ensure that there is not a resulting oversupply of places. An oversupply could have a detrimental effect on the childcare market, especially the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector (including childminders).

Key Changes in 2019

The number of early years children has dropped, meaning that the peak in birth rates which the local area experienced between 2011 and 2014 has plateaued and those 'bulge' numbers are now being experienced in the primary school sector (years R, 1 and 2). The childcare market is now experiencing a shift in demand where there are adequate childcare places available, meaning that parents can be more selective in their approach to finding childcare and thereby creating a more competitive market.

The entitlement to 30 hours funded childcare for children from working families is entering the third year and is now fully embedded. Reports from parents are overwhelmingly positive and the offer is now considered to be business as usual instead of something new.

A common topic of concern from parents relates to holiday childcare for early years and school age children. The parent consultation in 2018 highlighted this issue which is still resonating in 2019. Therefore it is important that the highlighted concerns related to a lack of appropriate and affordable holiday childcare are addressed to accommodate working families who struggle to find affordable and appropriate childcare for 12 weeks of the year.

Achievements in 2019

Provider engagement continues to be excellent with 100% of the Torbay providers offering funded places for up to 30 hours per week for their children, depending on their entitlement. This is compared with a national average provider engagement figure of around 80%.

Take up of the early years funding entitlements remain stable with take up of 2 year funding entitlement at 74%, compared with a national take up figure of 68%. Take up of the universal 15 hours for 3 and 4 year olds also remains above national average at 95%. The take up of the extended entitlement has been extremely high with several terms being over 100% due to cross-border migration with Devon residents.

Future

To ensure that Torbay Council continues to meet its sufficiency duty it will:

Continue to assess sufficiency data and carry out agreed actions to ensure a comprehensive approach to planning sufficient early years and childcare provision in the local area

Continue to monitor the quality of childcare in Torbay and respond accordingly if providers achieve a requires improvement or inadequate grade

Continue to market and promote the free early education for two, three and four year olds to maintain and where necessary increase take-up of places and hours.

Embed the actions listed in the 2019 Sufficiency Action Plan into the Education and Early Years Strategic Plans

Pay particular attention to the holiday childcare market with a view to improving access to holiday childcare for working families.