

Report to: Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability
Date of meeting: 27 February 2023
By: Director of Children’s Services
Title: East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty 2023
Purpose: To approve the publication of the East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty 2023

RECOMMENDATION:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty report 2023.

1 Background

1.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Duty report (Appendix 1) (formerly known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) is a statutory document. It outlines how the local authority plans to secure sufficient childcare places as far as is reasonably practicable, for parents who are working, studying, or training for employment. The report covers childcare for children from birth to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). The publication of this reports meets the local authority’s statutory duty under sections 6 and 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 (as amended) (“ the Act”).

1.2 The Act gives Local Authorities a role in shaping the childcare market. The Local Authority is committed to working with providers from the private, voluntary, and independent sectors (PVI) and the school run sector to create a strong, sustainable, and diverse childcare market that meets the needs of families and supports children’s learning through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

1.3 Local Authorities are required to secure fully funded places offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks, and up to 52 weeks for every eligible child in their area, until they reach compulsory school age (the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday). Although this is a legal duty, attendance by children from birth to age five at any early education or childcare setting is voluntary. It is not compulsory for a child to attend education provision until the term after their fifth birthday.

1.4 The Local Authority is required to report annually to elected members and publish information for families to show how it is meeting its sufficiency duty. This includes providing specific information about:

- the supply and demand for early education and childcare places;
- affordability, accessibility and quality of early education and childcare places; and details of how any gaps in provision will be addressed

2 Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report 2023

2.1 The report focuses on two key areas of the childcare market in East Sussex:

- measuring the demand for, and supply of childcare within the five districts of East Sussex, identifying gaps in the market; and
- planning how to support the childcare market to address any shortfall.

2.2 To assess the supply and demand for childcare places, the local authority compares current known capacity with predicted demand. This takes account of factors such as births, housing growth and patterns of inward and outward migration

2.3 Since April 2021, demand for funded early years childcare places has returned to pre Covid-19 levels. Take up in the number of funded places for two-year-olds in East Sussex remains consistent. East Sussex has seen a rise in the total number of children accessing a funded three- or four-year-old place, 1% above the national average of 92%. Since April 2022 we have also seen an increase of 3% in the number of families accessing the 30 hours extended offer, reflecting the increasing number of parents and carers returning to work.

2.4 Despite these encouraging figures, we have seen a number of early years providers take the difficult decision to close for viability reasons. The Local Authority is working with the childcare market to fill any gaps in provision caused by these closures.

3. Actions to date

3.1 The table below lists the key actions taken by the local authority since the Childcare Sufficiency Duty report (January 2022) was published last year, to provide sufficient childcare places to meet parental demand as far as is reasonably practicable.

Date	Communication/Action
Actions from January 2022 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued dialogue with all childcare providers • Continued support for families to find/access a funded childcare place • Collation of Headcount Data to continue to feed into updating current capacity/demand reporting • Assess impact of changes to East Sussex EY workforce – on-going • Parental consultation – Summer 2022 • Provider consultation/Focus Groups – Spring 2023

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1 In conclusion, the Local Authority has a duty to publish a Childcare Sufficiency Duty report annually. The document supports the Local Authority's statutory obligation of on-going assessment of childcare provision for children aged 0-14 years old (and up to 18 years old for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability) in East Sussex.

4.2 Accordingly, the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability is recommended to approve the publication of the East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty report for 2023.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None