

Meeting: Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

Date: 18 November 2024

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Early Years Sufficiency Duty Report

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

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to provide an overview 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.

3. Progress

- 3.1 At the time of submission, the report establishes that there are sufficient early years childcare places to meet the requirements for funded children in Torbay. However, occupancy levels have increased across Torbay and this can be attributed to the introduction of the new 15 hours funded entitlement for 2 year olds of working families which started in April 2024.
- 3.2 Increased demand will continue across Torbay with the introduction of further new entitlements for children under 2 years whose parents/carers are entitled to the expanded 15 hours entitlements, from 9 months old. This new entitlement began in September 2024 and has not been calculated into this report. Further work will continue to be undertaken

during 2024/25 to understand the ongoing supply and demand for the new entitlements. In September 2025 these new entitlements for children from 9 months to 3 years will double from 15 hours to 30 hours.

- 3.3 The recruitment and retention issues that are affecting the early years sector is evidenced within the report with over 25% of respondents stating that staffing levels have impacted on their capacity and the places they can provide. Ongoing engagement with the sector and wider partners during 2024/25 will continue to develop the early years workforce.
- 3.4 No formal complaints have been received from parents/carers who have not been able to find suitable funded childcare.
- 3.5 The parent survey suggests, from the responses received, that 73% were able to access their full entitlement at their chosen provider. While this is an indication that some families have not been able to access their full entitlement at their chosen provider, they may have been able to access this through another provider. Response rates to the survey were very low and therefore may not provide a true reflection across Torbay. Further engagement with parents/carers is planned for 2024/25 to look at demand in the lead up to the full expansion of provision in September 2025.
- 3.6 The report indicates that for most wards children travel outside of their home ward to access childcare. For Torquay and Paignton this migration is contained within the Town, however the data shows for Brixham over half the children attend provision in another town.
- 3.7 The quality of provision in Torbay remains high with 94% of providers rated good or outstanding.

4. Recommendation(s)

- 4.1. That members of the Sub-Board note the content of the report and actions within it.