

# PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

31 July 2014

## CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

Report of the Interim Director for People

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| STRATEGIC AIM: | <b>Creating A Safer Community For All<br/>Meeting the health and well being needs of our<br/>community</b> |
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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) 2013-14 for approval subject to being published in August 2014.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **That Scrutiny notes the contents of the report and directs any comments to the Director for People.**

2.2 **That Scrutiny recommends COUNCIL to approve the report for publishing in August 2014.**

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Rutland County Council has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to secure 'so far as is reasonably practicable', sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of working parents/carers, or parents/carers undertaking education or training that will lead to work. This is the statutory definition for childcare sufficiency; however the Council will be looking to define a localised baseline under priority 3 of the CSA action plan.

3.2 A mandatory requirement of the act is to complete a childcare sufficiency assessment (CSA) which assesses the supply of and demand for childcare in the local authority area and identifies gaps in provision. Recommendations from the CSA and subsequent annual reviews are used to develop an action plan, which details the actions that will be taken by the local authority and its partners to fulfil their market management obligations.

3.3 This is supported by a CSA working group that has representation from the People and Places directorates and partners from Early Year's services.

#### **Key Findings**

3.4 The assessment of childcare sufficiency is a research task that requires the collation of information from a wide variety of sources. The findings from the

work undertaken to complete this assessment are shown below with recommendations given within the conclusion of this report. (Refer to Appendix A for the full CSA report)

- 3.5 Rutland has a strong and committed childcare workforce with generally high levels of quality and standards. We provide choice and flexibility within reasonable standards but parental consultation has highlighted they require more choice and flexibility (particularly during terms 5 and 6 as there appears to be less choice/services available).
- 3.6 The local childcare picture is reflective of national issues with parents/carers nationwide reporting that current childcare is not flexible enough to fully meet their needs to enable them to access employment or increase their working hours.
- 3.7 One of the roles of the Family Information Service (FIS) is to provide information, advice and assistance (IAA) to parents seeking childcare. Consultation showed that that 41% of parents know about the FIS but do not fully utilise the support available. Specific promotion about the childcare element requires ongoing development to ensure that families can make fully informed choices and easily access any available support.
- 3.8 There are currently sufficient childcare places when considering the county as a whole, however anecdotal evidence indicates that a small number of parents/carers are finding it difficult to access “free early years funded” childcare appropriate to their needs within specific localities, most notably Oakham.
- 3.9 The expansion of 2 year old funding with ongoing changes to legislation and increasing levels of financial support will place additional pressure on the existing childcare market in the coming years.
- 3.10 The predicted rises in local population will add to the demand for childcare which is likely to lead to further insufficiency if steps are not taken to increase or adapt the current provision offered.
- 3.11 Comments from the consultation with parents found that some parents reported difficulties in accessing suitable childcare. In addition, childcare was reported as lacking in certain key areas such as specialist childcare for disabled children, holiday childcare or childcare outside of normal working hours. These can be compounded by times available, cost and location of current childcare provision.

### **The 2013/14 Rutland CSA Refresh, Summary Report and Action Plan**

- 3.12 To inform the CSA report, parental consultation was undertaken in February 14 with widespread promotion. A total of 53 responses representing 94 children were received. In addition, the annual ‘Early Years Census’ (EYC) was conducted with childcare providers in January 14 which aimed to look at disparity between parental demand and childcare vacancies. Headline messages and recommendations from the refreshed CSA can be broken into 4 areas and are as follows;

### Information, Advice and Assistance'

- A. There needs to be a continued, childcare focused promotion of the 'Family Information Service' (FIS) to ensure parents and professionals working with parents are aware of the information, advice and assistance that is available for them.
- B. Changes to legislation and the financial support available to families should be promoted through both targeted and wide spread local campaigns as it becomes available.

### Data collection and monitoring

- A. Establish a process to monitor fluctuations within the local childcare market based upon evidence gained from sources e.g. FIS enquiry data and the Early Years census.
- B. To use the information collected to create a database giving 'baseline' information to support future monitoring and strategic planning of childcare provision in Rutland. This will ensure there is sufficient provision to meet the statutory responsibility to deliver early education to 2, 3 and 4 Year olds who qualify for a funded place. This will also include younger children whose parents wish them to attend a high quality early years provision delivering the 'Early Years Foundation Stage'.

### Increasing the availability of childcare places that will meet families needs

- A. There needs to be an increase in promotional work to encourage more child minders into the childcare market with an aim to meet the more flexible demands of parents. The 'Child minding Agency' supported by Rutland County Council, will be well placed to provide more integrated working and help to match parents with child minders.
- B. The key findings and wider research undertaken as part of the local authority's childcare sufficiency work should be shared with existing and potential childcare providers to encourage service development based upon identified needs.

### Strategic Direction

- A. Report to elected Council Members annually based upon findings of the analysis of current Childcare Provision on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient Childcare in Rutland, identifying issues and priorities for development.
- B. Make the report available and accessible to parents and others with an interest in the Childcare Market, e.g.) housing providers.
- C. Write an action plan to support the implementation of the issues and priorities for development.

## 4. CONCLUSION

4.1 There are currently sufficient childcare places when considering how small the county is as a whole. However from the parental consultation and anecdotal evidence a small number of parents (approximately 35% which is down from 2013/14 figure of 51%) experience difficulties in accessing provision, indicated in the following areas:

- A. Free early years funded childcare appropriate to their needs within specific localities, more notably Oakham.
- B. Flexible hours particularly before and after school hours.
- C. Provision for older children and disabled children.

4.2 The action plan previously written for the 2012-13 CSA has been refreshed to take account of the recommendations that are made in the 2013-14 refreshed report. The Lifelong Learning team within the People Directorate will take the lead in implementing the recommendations from the CSA with the action plan. (Refer to Appendix B)

## 5. RISK MANAGEMENT

| RISK                   | IMPACT | COMMENTS   |
|------------------------|--------|--|
| Time                   | M      | The schedule has changed from an academic year to tax year to align with other authorities. The report needs to be published in a timely way so that recent quantitative and qualitative collection is meaningful.                         |
| Viability              | L      | We have identified resources to ensure the action plan can be delivered with targets achieved.   |
| Finance                | L      | There are no financial implications linked to the implementation of the action plan.   |
| Profile                | H      | We have a duty to report annually to elected council members on the sufficiency of childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to childcare providers, key partners and parents and carers.                                |
| Equality and Diversity | L      | The CSA action plan will take into account any equality and diversity issues and addresses these. There is a key focus to improve childcare provision for older and disabled children. An 'Equality Impact Assessment' has been completed. |

### Background Papers

Appendix A – CSA Report 2013-14  
Appendix B - CSA Action Plan 2013-14

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A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.