

# SCRUTINY PANEL

20th September 2018

## RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT REPORT 2017 - 2018

### Report of the Director for People

Strategic Aim:	Creating a brighter future for all	
Exempt Information	No.	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr D Wilby, Portfolio Holder for Education	
Contact Officer(s):	Gill Curtis Head of Learning and Skills	email: <a href="mailto:gcurtis@rutland.gov.uk">gcurtis@rutland.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 01572 758460
Ward Councillors	N/A	

### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Panel:

1. Notes the priorities for maintaining childcare sufficiency in Rutland as identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan (Appendix A).
2. Provides feedback on actions planned by the Learning and Skills Service to maintain capacity within the childcare system.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report aims to provide the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel with assurance that there is currently sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents and carers and that the Learning and Skills Service is undertaking a range of planned activities to manage the market and maintain sufficient capacity within the system.
- 1.2. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to complete an annual report which assesses the sufficiency of childcare in the local authority area and identifies gaps in provision. The assessment must also consider whether sufficient childcare is available to meet the needs of disabled children. This assessment must be published on the County Council website

## **2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1. The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area. Working with providers from private, voluntary, independent childcare sectors, academies and local authority maintained schools, the local authority aims to create a strong, sustainable and diverse childcare market that meets the needs of Rutland parents and carers.
- 2.2. Rutland County Council evaluates available childcare spaces through completion of the Annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which reflects the DfE Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities September 2014. Updated guidance, which takes account of the Childcare Act 2016, was released in March 2017 and came in to effect from September 2017; this informs Rutland's Annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
- 2.3. Rutland Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017-18 is based on information gathered and evaluated by Rutland County Council's Early Years' Service from September 2017 – March 2018. All relevant data is used to compile the report and inform recommendations in relation to the sufficiency of early years and childcare provision in Rutland and informs the Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan 2018-19
- 2.4. Whilst the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to ensure there is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of parents who require childcare, in Rutland the focus is not just about childcare sufficiency but also aims to:
  - make sure this childcare is accessible and affordable so that parents have the opportunity to take up or remain in work or to undertake education or training to obtain work.
  - make sure it is of consistently good quality so that it benefits the child and contributes to the child's readiness for school
- 2.5. When considering capacity and sufficiency of childcare, it is important to separate early education and childcare for under 5's from childcare provided either as 'wrap-around' or 'out-of-school/ holiday care'. Wrap-around care refers to childcare that is offered in addition to the school day and may consist of before or after-school clubs or holiday clubs; this may be offered regularly throughout the year or as sessions focused on a specific area such as a summer holiday sports event.

### **Early Years Childcare**

- 2.6. As an outcome of the Childcare Assessment, it has been identified that, at the time of the assessment, there was sufficient Early Years childcare. However, it must be noted that the majority of parents and carers identified themselves as from the Oakham area. It is recognised that this does not offer a sufficiently robust evaluation of parental views of availability and therefore the Learning and Skills Service will undertake a more pro-active approach to gathering parental views. This will include arranging with early years settings and schools out of the Oakham area to hold face to face discussions with parents to gather views.

Additionally, opportunities will be explored with larger businesses, including Rutland County Council, to increase the response from working parents.

- 2.7. The introduction of the 30 Hour Extended Entitlement (30HEE) September 2017 has not identified the need for additional childcare places. This is because a majority of the children accessing the 30 HEE were already accessing nursery provision. At 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (2 weeks in to the new arrangements) there had been 177 successful parent applications for the Extended Entitlement; at a similar point in 2018 the number of successful applications has risen slightly to 191.
- 2.8. The Early Years Provider Hub software, Open Objects, has been available to the Early Years' Service since the autumn and provides a process to accurately allocate funding. The release of a new module (August 2018) within Open Objects will enable the Early Years' Service to maintain a more up to date picture of sufficiency across Rutland in real time, and enable a more responsive approach to any potential pressures.
- 2.9. It is recognised nationally that the introduction of the 30HEE has the potential to reduce income for childcare providers because, prior to this being introduced, parents were often being charged at a higher rate than is received through the government funding.
- 2.10. The Learning and Skills Service is working with Early Year providers within a Schools Forum sub-group working party to support the viability of provision across Rutland. The group aims to identify ways to deliver cost efficiencies and explore options for increasing income. Additionally, Rutland County Council Economic Development Team is supporting early education businesses in identifying additional funding opportunities such as government backed small business loans or grants where these would be appropriate.
- 2.11. Two new early years provisions are due to open this autumn. The development of a robust business proposal, which identifies financial sustainability of provision as well as high quality early education, has been key within the activity in determining suitable providers.

#### **Wraparound and Holiday Childcare:**

- 2.12. The Learning and Skills Service has gathered information outlining wraparound and holiday childcare provision across Rutland. As an outcome of revised methodology, a more systematic approach to gathering information on the wraparound care available has been developed. Information, particularly related to holiday childcare, is now regularly updated on the Rutland Information Service (RIS) website.
- 2.13. Plans to address issues or concerns identified through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment are included in the Action Plans within the Report. Additionally, a

focused programme is currently being developed by the Learning and Skills Service to further extend childcare options across Rutland which will commence within the coming financial year. The intention is for high quality wraparound and holiday care to be available to meet parental need with the intention to expand availability across Rutland.

### **3. CONSULTATION**

- 3.1. Consultation is undertaken annually through the Parental Childcare Assessment Survey.

### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1. The childcare assessment is a statutory requirement and therefore if it was not undertaken the Council would not be undertaking its statutory functions and could be open to legal challenge.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and subsequent planned actions are included within the annual Learning and Skills budget; there are no further financial implications anticipated.

### **6. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places specific duties on the local authority to secure sufficient childcare and to carry out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
- 6.2 Failure to secure any shortfall in childcare provision highlighted by the CSA would render the Council liable to a challenge that it was not meeting its statutory duties under the Childcare Act 2006.

### **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed.

### **8. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. No community safety implications have been identified through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

### **9. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Rutland County Council has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to secure 'as 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.

## **10. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1. Under the Department for Education's (DFE) '*Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*', local authorities should report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents.
- 10.2. This report provides elected members with this information and identifies that, at the time of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment being completed, there were sufficient places available. Routine assessment and reviews will continue be undertaken by the Learning and Skills Service to ensure sufficiency is maintained and, should a potential pressure be identified, positive action will be taken with existing and potential providers to minimise the impact on parents and carers.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1. There are no additional background papers to the report

## **12. APPENDICES**

- 12.1. Appendix A – Rutland County Council Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report 2017 - 2018

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