

# MOTION ON NOTICE



**Date of Council Meeting:** 18 September 2023

**Title of Motion:** Nursery Provision

**Motion Narrative and Action Required:**

This Council notes the importance of high quality nursery and childcare provision. It is important in terms of our youngest children's social emotional and educational development. Quality early-years provision is key to narrowing the gap in terms of educational and life chances in general.

High quality provision is also particularly important for our children with SEND (special educational needs). Quality early-years provision can help to ensure early support and intervention which is key to helping to ensure the best learning outcomes and social development and independence for these children.

Parents and carers in the workforce have to have confidence that their children are going to have consistent care that is also reliable. Childcare provision is going to be a key factor in terms of our local growth plans. Plymouth is a growing City with ambition and part of that is having a growing workforce of skilled people. Many will be parents and carers and they need to know that their child's care provision is not suddenly likely to close.

The Council also notes that the financial pressures on our nurseries have been increasing. This has become even more apparent with the cost of living crisis and inflation. In this month the average funding rates will increase for the under-fives. However, the Government's own figures show that there is a £1.8bn shortfall in the existing three and four year old offer. So a 6% increase in funding will not come anywhere near to easing the pressures on nurseries.

It is therefore not surprising that nurseries are closing - data from the National Day Nurseries Association shows there has been a 50% increase in the rate of nursery closures. In Eggbuckland ward in Plymouth Alexandra House Day Nursery very recently was nearly forced to close.

In March 2023 the Chancellor announced in his Spring Budget new reforms for childcare extending the childcare offer over a phased period from April 2024 which will include 15 hours for two year olds for eligible working parents. Through to September 2025 when it will include 30 hours free childcare for 9 month olds for eligible working parents. The increased demand for more childcare combined with the fact nurseries are closing means that the current early years policy and provision will not work without significant increased financial resources from Central Government.

This Council asks the Leader to write to the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing) David Johnston OBE MP to make him aware of the situation and its potential impact on Plymouth Families and Households with children. As well as the impact on our local economy and the economic pressures being placed on nursery providers.

**Proposer:** Cllr Sally Cresswell

**Seconder:** Cllr John Stephens