

EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ambitious Scrutiny Panel – 11 November 2013



Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare and access to funded early education places for all 2, 3 and 4 year olds in their authority.

Regular childcare sufficiency assessments are carried out to gauge parental demand and the accessibility of funded places across the city.

Places for eligible 2 year olds

The introduction of the free entitlement to 15 hours of early education for eligible 2 year olds from September 2013 has placed additional demand on childcare provision in Plymouth.

A two year old capital development programme was agreed by elected members in October 2012, to ensure there was sufficient time to expand the childcare market to cater for a new cohort of children entering into the system. A detailed needs analysis was carried out and it was estimated that places for 270 children were needed to cater for the September 2013 target of 696 children. This was after extensive work was carried out with the sector to encourage them to rearrange existing provision to cater for more 2 year olds, increasing the number of places available to 430. However there were still identified gaps that could only be filled by capital developments. A total of £1.7m has been allocated to the development programme, demonstrating the commitment to ensuring our most vulnerable children have the best start in life.

The shortage of places was identified in the North West and South West of the city, where the majority of children who would be eligible for the free entitlement (based on FSM criteria) will live, based on analysis of live birth data. The following projects have been identified as key to ensuring there is enough provision in the right areas:

- Barne Barton
 - Phase 1 - A 36 place (for 72 children) nursery is planned on the Barn site due to be operational from April 2014. This is to meet the demand for 2 year old places, but also to fill an identified gap in this area for 3 and 4 year old places. As the population of this neighbourhood increases the 3 and 4 year old places at Riverside School are full, and families have to access their free entitlement in neighbouring wards e.g. St Budeaux.
 - Phase 2 – additional places will still be required especially in 2014, so a second nursery is to be planned in collaboration with the community as part of the delivery of their neighbourhood plan.
- Marlborough Primary School
 - Places for 16 children created
- Mount Wise Primary School

- Places for 16 children created
- Ham Drive Nursery School
 - Building work due to start to create places for up to 30 children
- Ernesettle Community School
 - Places for 24 children to be created
- Morice Town Primary School
 - Places for 20 children already created
- High Street Primary School
 - Places for 24 children created.
- Four Woods Children's Centre
 - Building work to start in 2014 to create places for 24 children
- Noah's Ark Nursery at Stonehouse
 - Building work will create places for 40 children.

Additional places are also planned for Whitleigh at the Wood View campus and at Wise Owls on the Woodfield School site. These projects are in the early planning stages. Additional capacity will also be required in Honicknowle which will be addressed by the re-development of Knowle Primary school, incorporating Stepping Stones Nursery.

Some of the projects outlined above are to assist in building additional capacity for the projected 2014 target of 1400 children when the eligibility for 2 year olds is extended.

Many of the development projects have been located in schools who are taking two year olds for the first time. Intensive support has been provided by the Early Years' Service to deliver training on child development, support for Ofsted registration, and visits to settings already successfully taking 2 year olds and advice on appropriate resources for younger children.

Summary: There will be enough early years' provision to meet the free entitlement for eligible 2 year olds on completion of the capital development programme.

Places for 3 and 4 year olds

Childcare sufficiency assessments have identified only one area in the city where there are insufficient places for 3 and 4 year olds to access the free entitlement or additional childcare in their immediate locality. This is in the Barne Barton neighbourhood, which is now being addressed through the 2 year old programme.

However there are some nurseries particularly within maintained nursery Schools and classes who are unable to fill the places for 3 and 4 year olds. The PVI sector has responded to this by re-organising their space to take eligible 2 year olds, and by providing flexible sessions that meet the needs of working parents.

Both Nursery schools in Plymouth (Ham Drive and Plymbridge) have significant vacancies particularly in the autumn term, which puts a strain on budgets as funding is based on participation rather than capacity. Consideration needs to be given to developing a more flexible model which incorporates 2 year olds and allows different patterns of attendance. Nursery classes that are not full in the autumn term are already responding to this issue by taking 2 year olds – this includes High Street, Marlborough and Ernesettle.

Where maintained nursery classes are full or sustainable it is often a result of offering parents a more flexible approach. For example accessing the 15 hours free entitlement over one or two days with the opportunity to buy additional sessions to support working patterns of parents. The traditional morning or afternoon only sessions do not always meet the needs of parents, and they will often go to a PVI setting that offers greater flexibility.

Summary: Parents have considerable choice in the city of where their child can access the 3 and 4 year old entitlement in high quality provision. Successful, sustainable provision is adapting to the extended offer for 2 year olds and offering increased flexibility to parents in patterns of attendance.

Jo Hall

Senior Adviser Early Years & Childcare

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