

Children's Trust

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA ITEM

Tuesday, 27 July 2010

9.30 am

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Barking

		Presented by	Time allocated	Pages
10.	Delivering Childcare Sufficiently	Rikki Damsgaard	-	1 - 5

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Barking & Dagenham
Partnership

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Report to: **Children's Trust**
 Meeting date: **27 July 2010**

Delivering Childcare Sufficiently

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Introduction/Summary:

- 1.1 The report outlines the local authority's duty to firstly assess and secondly deliver sufficient childcare within its area. Sufficiency is defined as meeting the needs of local parents who require childcare in order to enable them to take up or remain in work or undertake training or education that will lead to work. This report looks at the key components of the assessment and identifies preliminary childcare market gaps.
- 1.2 At the Board held on ? June 2010 a request was made for an update on the local authority's sufficiency duty.
- 1.3 No issues to be noted.

Recommendations: Recommendation 1: To note the content of this report.

Purpose: For information

National Indicator: NI118

Circulation: Trust members, senior advisors, advisors and guests. This document should be treated as Private and Confidential.

Consultation: Head of Integrated Family Services and Corporate Director of Children's Services

Background papers: Childcare Act 2006

1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 outlines the legal responsibility of local authorities to firstly assess and secondly secure sufficient childcare within their local area and be the strategic leader in facilitating the childcare market.

The act particularly focuses on facilitating good quality, sufficient, sustainable, accessible and flexible childcare that is responsive to parental needs. This is to be achieved in partnership with the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors.

2. Issues

- 2.1 To enable publication by 31 March 2011, the draft refreshed assessment has to be ready by the end of December 2010 to enable wider consultation on the complete report. Between now and December, the demand and supply sections have to be kept up to date and current and in addition surveys have to be completed. An action plan will be developed to outline how the local authority will seek to narrow identified market gaps.

3. Content of assessment and further work

- 3.1 The aim of the local authority's childcare sufficiency assessment is to identify gaps in the childcare market and plan how to address these in consultation with parents/carers (including parents/carers with children with additional needs), childcare providers, neighbouring local authorities, schools and the wider community. Needs of working parents have been considered and so will the need for free early education places for 3 and 4 year olds.

Sufficiency is defined as meeting the needs of local parents who require childcare in order to enable them to take up or remain in work or undertake training or education that will lead to work. The Act places a particular emphasis on providing sufficient childcare for tax credits claimants and families with children with additional needs.

- 3.2 The local authority's first childcare sufficiency assessment was completed in 2008 and a refresh of this assessment is to be completed by the end of March 2011.

- 3.3 The refreshed childcare sufficiency assessment will have 3 parts:

1. Analysing and assessing demand
2. Mapping supply
3. Mapping supply to demand

- 3.3.1 In analysing and assessing current and future demand of childcare in Barking and Dagenham the profile of residents in the borough has been analysed and an overview of the borough provided. This includes looking at the geography of the borough, socio and economic characteristics such as population and child population, ethnic diversity, languages, deprivation, work trends and income and family composition.

- 3.3.2 The second section of the report looks at and maps current childcare supply in the borough, which includes childcare for children under the age of 5 and for children aged 5 and above.

- 3.3.3 The third section of the report maps potential and current demand to supply by triangulating demand and supply with consultation results from parent/carer surveys, surveys with children, survey with childcare providers and employers' survey.
- 3.4** At present, childcare demand and supply sections have been completed. Many of the consultations have also been completed and preliminary findings (gaps) are as follows:
- 3.4.1 *Affordability*
- 3.4.2 The average prices for childcare in Barking and Dagenham are within the Government's guidelines for affordable childcare and do not exceed the threshold for claiming the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. Many Barking and Dagenham families earn below national income levels and should therefore qualify for support through the tax credit system. The take up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit in Barking and Dagenham is above the England average and has increased year on year for the last 3 years.
- 3.4.3 Although the prices of most types of childcare in Barking and Dagenham are lower than those recorded for outer London, parents are still referring to cost as a main barrier to accessing formal childcare. 75.6% of parents stated that they thought that childcare is too expensive, however, 55.5% also said that childcare in Barking and Dagenham is good value for money. Prices for holiday provision for school aged children are higher in Barking and Dagenham than outer London averages.
- 3.4.4 Children from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families use more hours of childcare per week and therefore have higher average weekly childcare costs.
- 3.4.5 *Suitability/accessibility/inclusion*
- Childcare services for children under 5 were assessed to be accessible to children with additional needs. However, the level of accessibility in out of school provision in the borough was lower and more parents of children with additional needs felt that staff and premises were not suitable for their children or were unable to cater for the particular needs of their children.
- 3.4.5 *Time and flexibility*
- 3.4.6 Childcare provision for children under 5 is typically open from 7.30am or 8am to 6pm or 6.30 pm Monday to Friday. In many childcare settings, times are flexible and no major need for further flexibility or different times of operation for this age group has been expressed.
- 3.4.7 Childcare provisions for children aged 5-11 (16 with additional needs) are usually open between 3pm and 6pm or 6.30pm. During holidays this provision is available between 8am and 6pm or 6.30pm.
- 3.4.8 When consulting children in this age range on the times that they attend out of school care, it was evident that they were satisfied with the time spent in out of school care. Some children even stated that they wanted to spend more time at their out of school provision than they do currently.
- 3.4.9 A percentage of parents stated that they would like to use childcare before 8am and after 6pm - 52.9% wanted childcare before 8am and 41.2% wanted childcare after 6pm.

3.410 *Age range*

3.4.11 It is evident that there are low levels of childcare in Barking and Dagenham for all age groups compared to outer London figures. However, vacancy rates in most localities also indicate that provision is available across the borough. A shortage of free early education places for 3 and 4 year olds was found.

3.4.12 An additional gap identified is provision available for children over the age of 11, where formal provision levels are very low. However, alternative activities are available for this particular age group such as extended services in schools.

3.4.13 *Type*

3.4.14 When asking parents about the type of childcare they would like to use, pre-school provision was the most popular option with home based childcare being the least popular option.

3.4.15 Generally, the availability of pre-school provision is low, which means that the need for this type of provision may not be met.

3.4.16 54.5% of eligible respondents to the parent/carer survey take up the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds with a further 10% not knowing if they do. Families with low incomes are less likely to take up the free entitlement.

3.4.17 *Location*

3.4.18 All wards have childcare in the form of group care and/or childcare provided by childminders. Provision is available for 0-11s in every ward in the borough.

3.4.19 The main mode of transport to childcare provision was listed as by foot.

3.4.20 However, early indications show that for children under the age of 5, there are gaps in the market in the wards of River and Valence.

3.4.21 At present there is no after school or holiday provision located in the ward of Goresbrook. However, most schools are covered by out of school childcare providers that are either based on or pick from the school site. There are 3 schools that have no childcare provision.

3.4.22 80.8% of parents/carers surveys stated that childcare is well located.

3.4.23 *Level of provision*

3.4.24 Levels of childcare provision are lower than the outer London average across the borough. However, there is still spare capacity of childcare across most age ranges. There is a lack of free early education places for 3 and 4 year olds. This is true for the whole of the local authority, but is particularly true in the wards of Abbey, Gascoigne, Longbridge, Eastbury and Thames (West and South West localities).

3.4.25 In addition, availability of childcare places for children under 2 is low.

3.4.26 59% of parents/carers surveyed, were of the opinion that there was not enough childcare in the borough. This was particularly true for parents in the wards of Abbey, Gascoigne, Thames and Londbridge. However, when asked 95% of parents/carers stated that their current childcare arrangements meet their needs.

3.4.27 *Sustainability*

- 3.4.28 With lower than outer London average prices, childcare providers in Barking and Dagenham have a lower turnover than providers in other outer London areas. This could have an impact of a childcare provision's sustainability.
- 3.4.29 However, when surveyed the majority of childcare providers mentioned that the levels of fees they charge do allow them to be sustainable. Factors that affect sustainability mentioned were high running costs such as premises costs and high staff costs. The percentage of childminders that feel that their current levels of fees allow them to be sustainable are lower than group care providers. Reasons for not being able to charge sufficient fees include high costs but also fear that parents will choose alternative childcare.

3.4.30 *Quality*

- 3.4.31 Ofsted inspection grades highlight good quality childcare in group care in Barking and Dagenham compared with the rest of the country. Outstanding and good inspection results are higher than the national averages for group care. Inspection grades for home based childcare were previously Red Amber Green (RAG) rated 'red', but following a review of support for childminders, this rating has recently improved, which means that quality is now rated 'amber' for home based childcare.
- 3.4.32 When looking for childcare, parents/carers sited quality as the most important factor when choosing childcare. Poor quality was also one of the main reasons stated by parents when saying that their childcare needs were not being met. Other important factors when choosing childcare were listed as safety and security, qualified staff, atmosphere and cost and charges. When asked, 88.7% of parents/carers stated that they thought that the quality of childcare available in Barking and Dagenham is high.

3.4.33 *Awareness*

Throughout this assessment, lack of awareness of childcare services has been prevalent. Many parents/carers are not fully aware of services available to them. Most parents/carers (39.1%) found out about childcare services from their local children's centre followed by the Internet (19.8%), while 13.2% found out about services from the Family Information Service (FIS).

- 3.5** When the refreshed childcare sufficiency assessment has been completed, an action plan will be drafted, which will detail how the local authority plans to narrow the identified market gaps.
- 3.5.1 A final copy of the assessment will be available by the end of December 2010 and will be circulated for wider consultation during January 2011.
- 3.5.2 The action plan will developed during February and March 2011 with publication of the final assessment by 31 March 2011.

Ends.

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