

**Report to:** EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

**Date:** 8 March 2022

**Reporting Officer:** Tim Bowman, Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)

**Subject:** **CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

**Report Summary:** The following report outlines the outcome of the Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2021. The report includes an analysis of the supply and demand for childcare within the borough collated during 2021 and any changes from the previous year e.g., whether any new provision has been established or childcare closures. These changes can indicate any change in the stability of the childcare market in the borough. The report sets out how the childcare market is assessed and where there is a need for additional places details any actions recommended or taken for this to be achieved.

**Recommendations:** The Board is recommended to:

1. note the content of the report including the recommended actions set out in section 3.4 of this report;
2. approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Report 2021 for publication on the Council’s website as required by statute.

**Corporate Plan:** The report supports two elements of the Community Strategy - Prosperous and Learning Tameside

**Policy Implications:** There are none arising from this report.

**Financial Implications:** Early Year’s education is funded from ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant. The funding is based on update of provision in the borough, the reduction in numbers has been reflected in the DSG allocations for 2022/23 as outlined below.

**(Authorised by the Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)**

DSG Block	2021-22	2022-23	Decrease	% dec
Early Years	£17.494m	£16.965m	£-0.529m	-3.02%

**Legal Implications:** The Council has a number of statutory duties in relation to the provision of early years education provisions which are set out in section 2 of the Childcare Act 2016 and sections 6, 7, 7A, 9A, 12 and 13 of the Childcare Act 2006.

**(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

The purpose of this annual report is to provide the council with the necessary data to ensure that those duties are being met and to provide Members with the opportunity to review the provisions and ensure that they are delivering best value and good outcomes.

**Risk Management:** The risk of not complying with the statutory duty identified in the report is balanced by regular analysis and assessment, which does

take place, as described in the report.


**Access to Information:**

**NON-CONFIDENTIAL**

**This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.**

**Background Information:**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Jacqueline Nurney, Early Education Funding and School Organisation Manager:

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities sets out the outcome for securing sufficient childcare, which is to ensure that parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and delivered flexibly in a range of high quality settings. In order to carry out this statutory duty the council needs to carry out an annual sufficiency audit that includes all types of early years providers located within the borough who provide childcare services to families.
- 1.2 The guidance is not prescriptive on the method of reporting but indicates that, as part of the process local authorities should collate an annual report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty.
- 1.3 The report sets out how the childcare market is assessed and where there is a need for additional places details any actions recommended or taken for this to be achieved.

## **2. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY**

### **2.1 Context**

The report includes the supply and demand for childcare within the borough and any changes from the previous year e.g., whether any new provision has been established or childcare closures. These changes can indicate any change in the stability of the childcare market in the borough.

- 2.2 The childcare sufficiency report is compiled by the Early Years Funding Team using a range of information to assess supply and demand. The primary source of information is the assessment from previous years available on the Council's [website](#), which is updated annually. Information from parents and carers is obtained through enquiries to the Families Information Service and collated to give an assessment of where demand is greater than supply. Other primary information used includes annual birth rate information, national census data; information on the local economy and school readiness. Information on the supply of places and numbers and types of providers is generated through the Early Years Funding Team and the Families Information Service. All of this is considered within the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, analysed and recommendations made.
- 2.3 It includes a more detailed analysis of places for free early education places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and Out of School clubs, which includes places available at the time of the snapshot, the take up of places and the number of vacancies available within each ward within the borough.
- 2.4 The Board received a report at its January meeting on school place planning for the borough. This report concluded that birth rates in the borough have fallen significantly in the last two years and this will inevitably impact early provision before impacting schools. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for 2022 will need to reflect the potential for the need to reduce places and potential impact on viability for some providers as the falling population numbers move through the year groups.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The 'Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2020' was approved at the Education and Attainment Board, March 2021 and the attached report provides an updated position on the assessment of childcare sufficiency during 2021.

- 3.2 The data indicates that the childcare market in Tameside has remained stable and despite a small reduction of places in certain sectors, overall the number of childcare places available across the borough has increased since the previous assessment, which impacts positively on parental choice.
- 3.3 The report provides a number of recommendations but these are based on the data provided during the assessment, which for some providers is voluntary. It is worth noting that not all providers within Tameside who offer childcare services contributed to the audit therefore a full assessment of all childcare available was not possible.
- 3.4 The report does not highlight any major gaps in provision within the borough based on the data available during the snapshot period. However; it does provide brief recommendations for action, which include:
- To continue to work with all our childcare providers to improve the quality of the annual data provided, to inform on the assessment of childcare available for all age ranges. In addition, to use this data to monitor the longer term impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and how this affects childcare sufficiency. This will be achieved by supporting providers to provide accurate and timely information as this forms the basis of the assessment and the ability to analyse the market place.
  - Continue to monitor the number of 2 year places across the borough to address any identified gaps. To follow up on the actions identified which will inform any future place creation required. This will be achieved by data analysis, collecting termly data on 2 year eligibility, take up and monitoring progress and any trends. In addition to work collaboratively with Families Information Service to capture information to assist with the collation of the report.
  - Review place take up of 30 hours and analyse any trends or shifts in the market place and the sufficiency of the number of places available. Achieved by Data Analysis using termly headcount data, monitoring take up and any trends.

### 3.5 **Covid 19**

The attached childcare sufficiency report was collated using data and information provided in 2021 and in 2020, during the second year of the pandemic.

- The government planning guide provides information and support for all Schools and Early Years Providers, which is regularly updated. Tameside Council is working closely with the sector to support schools, colleges and childcare. During the collection of data to inform the 2021 childcare sufficiency it has taken account of the current situation where possible and whilst childcare was able to remain open throughout 2021: the effects of the pandemic were still felt, with staff shortages due to self-isolation and lower levels of take during the lockdown in spring 2021.
- monitor the impact of Covid 19 on the long term landscape and sustainability of the childcare market
- to identify any gaps in provision brought about by changes to the childcare market

- 3.6 Approval of the attached Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2021 is requested and for the board to approve this report for publication on the Council's website. <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/childcare>

## 4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 As set out at the front of the report.