

Early Years Childcare and Education; key current issues

CYP Scrutiny – March 8th 2021



Early Years Childcare and Education in Haringey

Haringey's childcare and early education offer is delivered across a landscape that encompasses primary schools, nursery schools, children's centres, childminders, and private, voluntary, and independent sector providers. The sector plays a fundamental role in:

- Improving outcomes for all children – making sure gaps in attainment, access, and outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups of children are minimised
- Making available affordable and accessible childcare – supporting employment and pathways into employment for all residents
- Creating community capacity – growing community wealth through a localised offer meeting a range of local needs
- Building inclusive neighbourhoods – offering children and families with emerging developmental, disability and special educational needs support and respite

Type of provision	Number
Children's Centres	4
Childminders	186
Independent Schools	14
LA Nurseries	1
Nurseries	70
Nursery Schools	3
Playgroups	13
School Nurseries	56

Early Years Childcare and Education in Haringey

- The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on the Council to ensure there is enough childcare within its area for working parents, parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).
- In discharging this duty, the Council must undertake a childcare sufficiency assessment every three years, with an update to the lead member provided on an annual basis.
- Haringey's latest Childcare Sufficiency Report and Action Plan 2019-2022, was published in November 2019.
- An Annual Childcare Sufficiency update report will be taken to Cabinet in March, reflecting an assessment of Haringey's childcare market towards the end of 2020.

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- The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have been felt throughout the childcare sector, nationally, regionally and locally.
- During 2020, the importance of childcare provision was highlighted through its prioritisation for opening.
- The continuation of the free early education funding to LAs, and subsequently nurseries, throughout the pandemic has been part of the government's strategy for supporting the early years sector.
- During the Autumn term of 2020, we undertook a stocktake to understand the impact of the pandemic on providers of early education and childcare, as well as for their service users.
- A robust assessment of the future supply and demand for childcare is challenging as changes to family circumstances and a large increase in Universal Credit claims affecting the affordability of childcare for many households.
- The overall decrease in population across London during the course of the pandemic, currently standing at approximately 700,000 households.

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Take up of the 2,3 and 4 year old entitlement.

- To date, children's levels of attendance in early education and childcare settings have not reached 2019/20 levels locally or nationally.
- The table below gives an indication of the comparative changes seen in participation.

Spring term 2020

- 2-year-olds: 744
- 3- and 4-year-olds: 4021

Spring term 2021

- 2-year-olds: *587
- 3- and 4-year-olds: *3551

*These figures are provisional. Final take up numbers will be known at the end of the spring term.

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Emerging issues for our early years providers include:

- A decrease in demand in paid-for childcare owing to changing working environments/situations.
- Concerns from providers about their economic stability due to the decrease in demand across the borough, and more acutely in some wards.
- The impacts for childcare businesses when the Government furlough scheme comes to an end – both for their own workforces and for parents who may no longer be in work.
- They are working on lower capacity, smaller bubbles having a financial effect on the childcare business.
- Settings that are open and have staff isolating have hired agency staff which are expensive.
- Once furlough comes to an end some providers will consider redundancy if take up numbers do not increase.
- Extra costs related to cleaning materials and PPE.

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Emerging issues for parents and carers include:

- Concerns, fears or worries amongst some parents about their child/children taking up a childcare place when risk of transmission and infection remains high.
- Higher proportion of families claiming Universal Credit and able only to take up funded entitlement hours.
- Changing needs following lockdown, furlough scheme, redundancies and prevalence of working from home.
- Parents/carers of children with SEND, particularly affected by reduction in access to suitable childcare, including out of school and holiday.
- Increasing need for flexible childcare.
- Building the engagement amongst our most vulnerable children.

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Key areas of focus for 2021 include:

- Continue to track the changing demographics
- Increase the take up of the two year old funding
- Increase the take up of the 3 and 4 year old early education funding.
- Work with providers that are most at risk due to falling numbers
- Consider financial support for settings that serve areas of deprivation and policy priorities and where there is clearly a sufficiency need
- Social media marketing strategies to increase participation of childcare and monitor impact
- Ensure key partners are involved in supporting childcare sufficiency