Sandwell
Childcare Strategic Action Plan

2018/19

‘Securing Sufficient Affordable Quality Childcare for Parents/Carers in Sandwell’
**Vision and Objectives**

**Our Vision**

"To work in partnership with childcare providers, schools and other key partners to deliver high quality, sustainable childcare that meet the needs of local parents/carers."

**Objectives**

- To facilitate the childcare market to ensure sufficiency of childcare
- To support childcare providers to be sustainable and of high quality
- To support the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old free early learning
- To provide information to parents and childcare providers
- To support the needs of parents with children with special educational needs and disabled children to access high quality childcare
**Introduction**

The Childcare Act 2006 clarifies in legislation the vital role Local Authorities should play as strategic leaders in facilitating the childcare market.

All Local Authorities must do what is ‘reasonable practicable’ to take action to fill gaps in provision identified by its Childcare Sufficiency Report and meet the needs of local families.

Securing sufficient childcare does not mean that the Local Authority provide childcare themselves (although they may do so in certain circumstances). The local authority role is one of market facilitation and support across the sector to ensure that childcare provision is sufficient to enable parents to:

- Take up or remain in work or
- To undertake education or training which could reasonable be expected to assist them to obtain work


The Childcare Sufficiency Report will be made available at [http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200298/early_years_and_childcare/331/childcare_sufficiency_assessment](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200298/early_years_and_childcare/331/childcare_sufficiency_assessment)

The Childcare Strategic Action Plan will be reviewed quarterly by the Early Years Strategic Group.
Key Finding of Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

The 2018 Childcare Sufficiency Report analysed the demand for childcare; mapped the supply of childcare and identified gaps in childcare provision within the borough. The findings were approved by Cabinet in July 2018.

The recommendations were:

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.

2. Aim to improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by working intensively with them and in particular those that deliver early education funded places.

3. To increase the number of pre-schools in Tipton and Wednesbury; as well as the number of childminders in Wednesbury to provide more choice and flexibility.

4. To encourage the take up of Childcare Element of Tax Credit in Wednesbury as this town has the lowest take up.

5. To work with schools and existing providers in Wednesbury South ward to address the need for more holiday provisions.

6. To encourage new and existing childcare providers in Friar Park, Langley, Wednesbury North, Wednesbury South and West Bromwich Central wards to deliver childcare for children whose parents work irregular working hour’s pattern.

7. To work with the schools that has no access to out of school care: Jubilee Park (before and after school) in Great Bridge ward and St Martins (after school) in Tipton Green ward.

8. To increase the take up of the free early learning for 2 year olds using a wide range of direct and indirect marketing. Specifically targeting the following wards which has a low take up of the entitlement: Abbey; Blackheath; Cradley Heath and Old Hill; Friar Park; Great Barr and with Yew Tree; Greets Green and Lyng; Hateley Heath; Langley; Newton; Princes End; St Pauls; Smethwick; Soho and Victoria; Tividale; Wednesbury North and Wednesbury South.

9. To monitor the termly take up of the 15 hours for 3 and 4 year olds against the places available, prioritising the wards where the take up exceeds number of places: Bristnall, Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Great Barr with Yew Tree, Langley, Wednesbury South and West Bromwich Central. Currently some neighbouring wards have capacity which could meet additional demand. Additional capacity could be achieved by encouraging existing and any new providers to offer funded places flexibly.
10. To monitor the termly take up of 30 hours for 3 and 4 year olds against the places available, prioritising the wards where the take up exceeds number of places: Bristnall, Great Barr with Yew Tree and Wednesbury South and where the surplus places is minimal West Bromwich Central. Currently some neighbouring wards have capacity which could meet additional demand. Additional capacity could be achieved by encouraging existing and any new providers to offer funded places flexibly.

11. To prioritise the following wards which have been identified as having multi-childcare need, in order to reduce the barriers to accessing childcare: Bristnall, Cradley Heath, Friar Park, Great Barr with Yew Tree, Great Bridge, Langley, Wednesbury North, Wednesbury South and West Bromwich Central.

The Childcare Strategic Action Plan will set out how we will achieve the recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report.

**Strategic Links**

The plan will be carried forward by various partners, which includes the Quality Early Years and Childcare Team who provide Information, Advice and Training to childcare providers.

The Family Information Service (FIS) who provide Information Advice and Assistance to Parents/Carers and monitor the take up and demand for childcare across the borough.

Research Sandwell support with providing demographic information and analysis of information/data collected.

Children Centres support with consultation and provide information on help with childcare costs and develop childcare services that meet the needs of parents/carers.

The Planning Department provide information on new and planned housing development.

Job Centre Plus provides information on childcare barriers, support with developing links with employers to identify childcare issues and provide information on help with childcare costs.

The Childcare Strategic Action Plan supports the government initiatives such as Unlocking Talen, Fulfilling Potential the government social mobility policy which reasserts a commitment to tackle child poverty at it source.

The Childcare Strategic Action Plan supports the Local Authority Vision 2030: Ambition 4- Our children benefit from the best start in life and high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.
Supporting Childcare Providers and Parents

We want to ensure that all childcare is of good quality, so that it meets the needs of children and parents, and that parents can have confidence in using childcare.

To achieve this, the Local Authority through:

The Quality Early Years and Childcare Team will:

➢ Provide access to sustainability funding and advice on other funding stream will be made available to the childcare providers. Access to start up funding and advice, guidance and support will be made available to new and existing childcare providers.

➢ Provide advice, guidance and support to all childcare providers to ensure they provide high quality provisions and comply with Ofsted requirements. The team will support providers to undertake Quality Assurance Accreditation and implement inclusive practice.

➢ Provide Information, advice and guidance in meeting the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and support with Ofsted registration. (Early Years, Childcare Registers - Compulsory and Voluntary)

➢ A training support programme has been developed to support practitioners with continuous professional development and to ensure that their knowledge base is current and up to date.

The Family Information Service will:

➢ Provide detailed, accurate and up to date information and assistance to parents/carers and professionals.

➢ Continue to support parents with their parenting role. This will include providing information on childcare providers, working tax credits, other support available for childcare costs, the early year’s free entitlement and other services that they may need to access. The service will consult with parents to ensure that we provide them with the range of information they require and in a way that best meet their needs

➢ Work with parents in the community to support them in finding suitable childcare that meet the needs of their family. The Family Information Officers will prioritise those families that have children with a disability; parents new to the area or country, lone parents and parents who are experiencing difficulty in finding childcare in their area.

➢ Continue to be keep providers informed through various channels such as newsletter, mail shots, and website and regular meetings on changes within the sector. Providers will be consulted to ascertain how the Local Authority can best meet their needs.
➢ Continue with a strong emphasis on marketing opportunities to promote the service to ensure that childcare providers are able to fill their vacancies and that parents are aware of the support available with their parenting role.

The Local Authority will continue to work with Jobcentre Plus to support parents back into work and to provide information on help with childcare cost and careers in the childcare sector.

A joined up approach will be adopted to ensure that childcare providers and The Quality Early Years and Childcare Team work collaboratively to ensure sufficiency of childcare.

**Supporting Childcare for Special Educational Needs and Children with Disabilities (SEND).**

It is well documented that children with SEND experiences far greater difficulties in accessing childcare.

The Local Authority will:

➢ Encourage new and existing providers to offer more childcare places to SEND children and will deliver a comprehensive training package to enable providers to offer appropriate care and support.

➢ Continue to provide Family Information Officers who will prioritise the parents of children with disability to support them in finding suitable childcare.

➢ Work in partnership with the SEN Team and other agencies to help secure the childcare needs of parents with children with disabilities.

**Free Early Learning and Care for 2, 3 and 4 year olds**

The Free Early Learning for Two Year Olds (ELT) is a targeted offer aimed at the most disadvantaged 2 year olds in the borough.

The Early Learning for Two’s (ELT) is free early learning and childcare for children age 2 years old from the term after their second birthday. It is for 15 hours per week for 38 weeks, which can be taken flexibly.

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to, free early learning also known as Nursery Education Funding (NEF) the term following their third birthday. It is for 15 hours per week for 38 weeks which can be taken flexibly.
Some three and four year olds are eligible for up to 30 hours (1140 per annum) of free early education from the term after their third birthday. This is a targeted offer and families must meet the criteria set out by the Government.

The Local Authority will:

➢ Market and promote the free early learning to eligible families
➢ Work with existing and new providers to develop places to meet the two year old target.

**Facilitating the Local Market**

The childcare stock in Sandwell needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the market is not de-stabilised. It is important that current providers are supported to move into areas that are not well served and that new providers are encouraged to enter the market and that a range of support is available to assist them in doing so.

The Local Authority will address the gaps in the market by:

1. Sharing the recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report with existing childcare providers and other agencies.
2. Working in partnership with providers and other agencies to secure sufficient childcare.
3. Providing Information on funding that is available to support the creation of new places and to support sustainability of existing providers.
4. Assessing all funding applications through a Grant Panel process which will give due regard to the findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Report.

The Local Authority will only provide childcare as a last resort - where no other provider has offered to do so.

**Complaints**

Parents and carers have a right to complain to the Local Authority if they are unable to find suitable childcare, the Local Authority has a legal duty to do what is ‘reasonable practicable’ to secure sufficient childcare.

If parent/carers are unable to find suitable childcare they will be referred to a Family Information Officer who will work closely with them to identify suitable childcare. However, if the matter remains unresolved the parent can then
make a formal complaint to the Local Authority, details are available on:
http://www.laws.sandwell.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/contact-the-council/customer-
services/complaints/#procedure

**Monitoring and Review**

The Early Years Strategic Group will meet termly to monitor and review the
progress made against the Childcare Strategic Action Plan.

The Grant Panel will feedback to the Groups the outcome of funding
allocations that supports the creation of new places and sustainability.

The Family Information Service will feedback on the turnover of childcare
places and where this maybe impacting on the supply of childcare. They will
feedback on where Family Information Officers are experiencing difficulty in
finding childcare that meets the needs of parents.

The Family Information Service Manager will notify the group of any
complaints received regarding a lack of suitable childcare.
**Action Plan to Secure Sufficient Childcare**

An action plan has been developed based on the key findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Report.

The actions set out are intended to highlight areas of work the Local Authority and its Partners should focus on to secure sufficient childcare.

The implementation of the action plan will be monitored by on a quarterly basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Issues For Consideration</th>
<th>How this will be done/Activities</th>
<th>Success Criteria</th>
<th>Deadline For Completion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
<td>Local knowledge with regards to settings which may require support</td>
<td>A wide range of training courses will be made available. Helpline providing Information, advice and guidance. Termly sector meetings. Support visits when requested. Termly newsletter. Information sharing by emails, mail shots and telephone contacts.</td>
<td>Reduction in number of Ofsted Judgements that are Requires Improvement or Inadequate</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Level of support required Partnership working with providers</td>
<td>Focus Setting Improvement Meetings (FSIM) to identify training needs and specialist support required. Action plan developed with setting to address issues identified. Regular support/monitoring visits undertaken.</td>
<td>Number of Settings being re- inspected by Ofsted as Good or better.</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
<td>Funding available Premises</td>
<td>Raise awareness with existing providers. Signpost potential providers to view the Childcare Sufficiency Report and look at where gaps have been identified. Outreach to speak with parents on childminding as a career option and Information pack provided. Business start-up advice provided. Signpost to neighbourhood services for buildings that maybe available.</td>
<td>New settings established to meet the needs of families</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>General marketing and promotion of Childcare element of Tax Credit.</td>
<td>Outreach in the town to raise awareness with parents. Discuss with providers who are experiencing fee payment issues to encourage parents to access childcare element of Tax Credits. 0 Specific leaflet on Childcare Element of Tax Credit is distributed to parents and providers</td>
<td>The Sandwell Average is closer to the National average. The take up in the town increases.</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Premises Market Research Funding</td>
<td>Raise awareness with schools and local providers through meetings. Signpost potential providers to view the Childcare Sufficiency Report and look at where gaps have been identified.</td>
<td>Holiday Provisions increased in the ward identified</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Types of providers</td>
<td>Regular telephone calls to providers to ascertain if they are able to consider flexibility. Discussed during business start-up meetings. Discussed with providers experiencing sustainability issues. Undertake a need analysis of the demand for care. Specific marketing to target providers to deliver irregular working hours</td>
<td>More providers delivering irregular working hours</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Premises</td>
<td>Raise awareness with schools and local providers through meetings. Signpost potential providers to view the Childcare Sufficiency Report and look at where gaps have been identified.</td>
<td>Both schools have full out of care provision</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Targeted marketing</td>
<td>Adverts in a wide range of</td>
<td>Targets achieved</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>General Marketing</td>
<td>publications and facilities.</td>
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<td>DfE data</td>
<td>Outreach events.</td>
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<td>Work with Children’s</td>
<td>Door knocking.</td>
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<td>centre, Health Visitors</td>
<td>Direct mail to families who are</td>
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<td>and the voluntary</td>
<td>not engaging in the offer.</td>
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<td>sector.</td>
<td>One to one support to families</td>
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<td>to who may experience issues to</td>
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<td>access a provision.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Premises/Space</td>
<td>Inform childminders in the areas</td>
<td>More early education</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>Funding</td>
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<td>of the opportunity to deliver 3</td>
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<td>and 4 year old Early Learning.</td>
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<td>Discuss with Private and</td>
<td>capacity pressure</td>
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<td>possibility of expanding their</td>
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<td>3 and 4 year old provision as</td>
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<td>places maybe required.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Premises/Space</td>
<td>Regular contact with providers</td>
<td>More providers</td>
<td>September 2018; January</td>
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<td>that have been identified as</td>
<td>delivering the</td>
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<td>not offering 30hrs to discuss/</td>
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<td>to 30 hours free childcare in the following wards: Bristnall; Great Barr with Yew Tree; Wednesbury South and West Bromwich Central.</td>
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<td>Maintain a database of providers who are offering and how many places they are providing.</td>
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<td>11 To prioritise the wards identified as having multi-childcare needs in order to reduce the barriers to accessing childcare (Bristnall; Cradley Heath; Friar Park; Great Barr with Yew Tree; Great Bridge; Langley; Wednesbury North; Wednesbury South and West Bromwich Central).</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Prioritise the wards with the most need.</td>
<td>Priority is given in these areas to: Work with existing providers on the expansion provisions. Start-up of new provisions. Discussion with existing providers on working hours Deliver focussed outreach events on gaps identified.</td>
<td>Fewer wards with multi-childcare needs</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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