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**CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REVIEW 2015**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
  - (a) inform members of the findings of the 2015 Childcare Sufficiency Review; and
  - (b) set out the Local Authority's 2015-16 Childcare Sufficiency action plan (please see **Appendix A**, page 13).

**Summary**

2. The Children and Families' Act, 2014 has changed the local authority's statutory duty regarding childcare sufficiency. Local authorities still have a duty to ensure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable; however, instead of conducting a large scale sufficiency assessment every three years with annual reviews in the intermediate years, local authorities now have a statutory duty to 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and make this report available and accessible to parents'. (Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2014, Department for Education, page 18).
3. Factors which affect childcare demand include the number of parents in work in the Borough and data shows an improving picture on most economic indicators. Darlington is now above its pre-recession levels as well as comparing well against national averages. The Borough has seen an increase in the employment rate, average residents and work based pay as well as reductions in Job Seekers' Allowance claimants and unemployment rates. Also, the availability of appropriate family housing is an issue affecting childcare demand. In 2013-14 housing completions have increased slightly and there is house building or consultations in progress regarding potential developments across the Borough.
4. Supply data shows that in 2014-15 the education and childcare market in Darlington which consists of maintained nursery schools, academy and maintained nursery units, private day nurseries, playgroups, childminders, breakfast, after school and holiday clubs has been fairly stable.
5. In 2015 there was no budget available for childcare sufficiency so it was not possible to conduct valid, reliable parental demand research as in 2008 and 2011. However, a more simplified childcare demand questionnaire has been distributed

via People and Families' Information Support (PFIS) and the PFIS unmet demand list has also been utilised.

6. This parental feedback has shown that, as in 2008 and 2011 there is:
- (a) unmet demand for affordable, after-school and holiday childcare/activities for all age groups and older children (over 8 years) in particular; and
  - (b) unmet demand for affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare for children and young people with disabilities (up to the age of 18 years).

In addition, the cost and flexibility of childcare has been highlighted as a significant barrier for parents in Darlington.

### **Recommendation**

7. It is recommended that :-
- (a) Members note for information the findings of the 2015 Childcare Sufficiency Review; and
  - (b) Members note for information the Local Authority's 2015-16 Childcare Sufficiency action plan and monitor this annually. (please see Appendix A, page 13).

**Murray Rose**  
**Director of Commissioning**

### **Background Papers**

- (i) The Department for Education's Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2014
- (ii) Darlington's 2015 Childcare Sufficiency Review
- (iii) The Childcare Act, 2006
- (iv) The Children and Families' Act, 2014
- (v) The draft Childcare Bill, 2015-16
- (vi) Family and Childcare Trust '2015 Childcare Costs and Sufficiency Survey Questionnaire for English Local Authorities'
- (vii) Family and Childcare Trust '2015 Holiday Childcare Survey', July 2015.

Nicola Davies: Extension 2803

S17 Crime and Disorder	The report is about the 2015 Childcare Sufficiency Review and will not impinge on the duty on the authority to prevent crime and disorder in the Borough.
Health and Well Being	Good quality early education and childcare for children from birth to 14 years old and 18 years old for those young people with a disability, will assist in improving the health and well being of Darlington's 0 to 14/18 population.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	There are no specific proposals within the report that impact on diversity issues. All providers must meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 when delivering education and childcare.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	All children aged 0 to 14 years/18 years for those young people with a disability will benefit from being able to access high quality, education and childcare in the Borough.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	A delay in the information being reported to elected council members will delay the report becoming available to parents as required by the Department for Education's Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2014.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Access to high quality, affordable and reliable education and childcare will improve the quality of life and the health and well being of children and young people in the Borough and will also enable their parents to access or maintain training or work opportunities.
Efficiency	There may be some resource issues for the Early Years Team in supporting settings to plug the out of school childcare gaps which have been identified.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

#### Background

8. In March 2014 the Children and Families' Bill received Royal Assent and became the Children and Families' Act, 2014. This Act repeals Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 whereby Local Authorities in England had a duty to assess sufficiency of childcare provision at least every three years. However, the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2014 which is still current childcare guidance, states that Local Authorities must 'secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children)'.
9. In order to do this, Local Authorities are required to assess the local childcare market, taking into account the demand for specific types of providers, in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists; the state of the local labour market and; the quality and capacity of childcare providers, including their funding, staff premises, experience and expertise. Local Authorities must then report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and make this report available and accessible to parents.
10. The report should include specific reference to the sufficiency of childcare for disabled children, children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit; children with parents who work irregular hours; children aged two, three and four taking up early education places; school age children; and children needing holiday care. The report should also include information about the supply and demand of childcare for particular age ranges of children, and the affordability, accessibility and quality of provision; and details of how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.
11. In 2008 and 2011 Darlington Local Authority conducted full Childcare Sufficiency Assessments and there was a budget in each of these years to undertake in depth parental demand research, ensuring that a full gap analysis comparing demand with supply could be conducted. However, in 2015 there was no budget for childcare sufficiency, resulting in minimal demand research and so a full gap analysis has not been possible as part of the 2015 review.

#### Social Issues during 2014-15 and beyond

12. The most obvious factors which will affect childcare demand in the Borough are the number of families with children in the area and this in turn, is dependent upon local employment opportunities and available, appropriate housing.
13. Although the recession has had a significant impact on Darlington's economy, on most economic indicators Darlington is now above its pre-recession levels as well as comparing well against national averages. Recent trends (2012 -2014) show an

improving picture, with an increase in the employment rate (which is now 72 per cent compared with the North East average of 68.5 per cent), average residents and work based pay as well as reductions in Job Seekers' Allowance claimants and unemployment rates. For example, by May 2015 the number of Job Seekers' Allowance claimants resident in the Borough as a percentage of the working age population was 2.8%, compared with 4% in May 2014, 5.7% in January 2013 and 5.9% in January 2012 (Data source: Nomis, May 2015). Also, the unemployment rate fell from 10.5% (Jan 2012–Dec 2012) to 7.9% (Jan 2014– Dec 2014).

14. The productivity of jobs within the borough (measured by Gross Value Added per hour worked) has decreased by 6.7% over the period 2012 – 2013 (the most up-to-date data available). This suggests that either (or a combination of both), people are working longer, less productive hours or that the jobs lost within the local economy represent higher value added employment. It is likely these lost jobs attracted a higher salary and so this could impact on a local family's ability to pay for childcare. Also, the number of part-time workers in Darlington is increasing, between 2008 and 2014, the proportion of part-time to full-time workers has altered from 23 and 77 per cent to 30 and 70 per cent respectively (The 'Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Resident Analysis', Nomis website, accessed 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015).
15. Darlington's business base continues to be characterised by a smaller number of large businesses (with more than 1,000 employees) and a relatively large number of smaller businesses. Darlington currently has approximately 4,892 businesses including sole traders. Gross disposable household income per head in 2013 has risen by £497 on the 2012 figure to £14,911, this rate compares well with the North East figure of £14,927 per head, although nationally the figure is £17,559. Darlington's workplace based earnings have risen by 4.5% between 2012/2014 to £480 per week, such improvements to earnings keep Darlington above the regional average but below the national level.
16. Regeneration projects are evident throughout the Borough of Darlington, for example, Central Park has seen the opening of Business Central in April 2015, establishing essential high-quality accommodation for new and growing small and medium sized businesses. 2015 will also see the opening of the National Biologics Manufacturing Centre, a ground breaking development by the Centre for Process Innovation that will position Darlington as a national and international centre for the biologics and bio-pharma industries. Future developments include possible further investments in Central Park by Teesside University in the National Horizons Centre and the Centre for Process Innovation in the Factories of the Future. These developments will all act as catalysts for the creation of new jobs, particularly in the Biologics, advanced manufacturing and sub-sea sectors. Within the town centre, the Department for Education has re-located to the Feethams area, safeguarding jobs within the Borough. Work will be completed on a major leisure development incorporating a multi-screen cinema, hotel and bars and restaurants that will create new jobs and additional town centre footfall. Plans are being drawn for investment in Darlington's edge of town industrial and employment areas with strategic infrastructure installed to enable growth in the North West, Central and Eastern Growth Zones. Finally, plans will be developed for investment in Bank Top station to improve it as an economic driver for the whole of Tees Valley and to exploit

opportunities from strategic investment to decrease journey times to London (source: Economic Regeneration Team).

17. When we look at the local housing market, the net number of additional dwellings (completions minus demolitions) had been steadily declining from a high of 580 in 2007/08 to 205 in 2010/11 but this figure increased in 2013-14 to 280 new housing completions signed off by Darlington Borough Council and the National House Building Council. However, this figure does not include housing developments signed off by private, independent inspectors where figures look higher, indeed, during the period 2014-16 on three of the Borough's strategic housing sites, at Lingfield Point, West Park and Central Park new houses are being built. If we take the figures for the next five years up to 2018/19, in excess of over 2,000 new houses in many wards across the Borough are either being built or are in the process of being consulted on (source: Economic Growth Team, Indicative Housing Delivery Programme). However, planned dwellings only become a reality if there is confidence in the housing market that families have sufficiently secure employment to enable them to obtain mortgages and purchase properties.
18. Other factors having an impact on parental ability to pay for childcare and childcare demand are the changes to income support for lone parents which have gradually been phased in between November 2008 and April 2011 and the inclusion of lone parents of children who are aged five from May 2012 (the age limit was previously seven). This has gradually created a decline in the claimant figures – in August 2008 there were 1,400 lone parent claimants in Darlington as opposed to 1,180 by August 2011 and 1,010 by November 2014 (Nomis website). Other additional factors which will affect a family's ability to pay for childcare include the freezing of work age benefits, tax credits and local housing allowance until 2020 and the reduction of the household benefit cap to £20,000 from April 2016. This is compounded by the fact that 'over the last Parliament the cost of a part-time nursery place for a child under two has increased by 32.8 per cent. A family paying for this type of care now spends £1,533 more this year than they did in 2010, while wages have remained largely static. ('Childcare Costs Survey, 2015', Family and Childcare Trust).

## **Childcare Supply**

19. Darlington Local Authority had a target of 288 funded places for two year olds to be provided by September 2013. By working with the private and voluntary sector 292 funded places for two year olds were made available by September 2013. In December 2013 Darlington was given a figure of 634 eligible children expected in the Borough by September 2014.
20. By Autumn 2014 494 places were available in local private day nurseries, playgroups and with childminders and at Borough Road Nursery School and Red Hall Primary. By January 2015 an additional 44 places were created at George Dent Nursery School and Gurney Pease Academy and by June 2015 another 68 places were available within Mount Pleasant Primary, with two childminders and in Pierremont and Cockerton Playgroups. By September 2015 another 40 places will open at St. John's Academy, bearing in mind the loss of two childminders and a closing playgroup from the list, this takes the number of places available to 639

compared with the DfE target of 634. In the Autumn term 2015 there is the possibility that a local playgroup based in a sports centre may be able to increase the number of places they can offer slightly but this project is still being developed. Also, potentially new providers to the borough are provided with information about free childcare for two year olds. To ensure sufficiency of places and choice and diversity for parents, it is good practice to create places over and above the DfE target because places are fluid i.e. childminders in particular can move on and off the provider list, depending upon their personal circumstances, with little notice.

21. Although capital funding has been used to create places in the more disadvantaged areas of the Borough because a large number of private day nurseries are providing places, many of them situated in the west end of town, supply is geographically spread fairly evenly across the Borough. Of the 57 settings, schools and childminders providing funded places for two year olds 47 are Ofsted rated 'outstanding' or 'good', 2 'require improvement' and are receiving intensive support from the Early Years Team (these providers were 'outstanding' or 'good' when they were accepted on to the scheme), 7 are awaiting their Ofsted inspection following registration and 1 is 'met'.
22. Darlington Local Authority introduced the full national eligibility criteria in April 2014, six months earlier than required by the DfE. In April 2015 an on-line two year olds eligibility checker was introduced on to the Council's web pages which enables parents/carers, professionals, childcare settings and schools to assess a child's eligibility for a free childcare place for those children who meet the low family income criteria. This has made the whole process easier for parents by significantly reducing the number of steps involved, however, support is still available via the PFIS and the Early Years Team for those parents who require support in accessing a place or for those children who have specific requirements.
23. During the period June 2014 to June 2015 an on-going marketing campaign has been undertaken locally in order to increase participation rates in the scheme. Families meeting the Free School Meals and the DLA criteria are included on a termly list released by the Department of Work and Pensions, these families are sent a postcard informing them about the free childcare offer. Children's Centre staff also utilise this list to contact families who are not accessing their entitlement and provide appropriate support. Marketing during this period has also included regular adverts/articles in the 'Darlington Together' borough wide magazine, Facebook advertising, posts on Twitter, an article in the Education Direct magazine, advertising in the Northern Echo, advertising on local bus tickets, bus stand adverts, an article in the e-newsletter for local businesses, an article in the Council house residents' newsletter, posters and leaflets which are distributed to schools, providers, professionals including health visitors and Jobcentre Plus and other interested stakeholders, information included in the birth packs, adverts on Star Radio and a radio interview, information streamed on to display screens in the Dolphin Centre, libraries and in the Customer Contact Centre, free DfE video screen advertising in medical centres, GPs, chemists and in the DfE building, People & Families' Information Support outreach to Children's Centres, at Darlington by the Sea event, at the Community Carnival, National Play Day, Dolphin Centre, school parent groups, parent and toddler groups, at swimming

lessons during school holidays and information sessions with the social work teams, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Mobile Advice Co-operative.

24. Take-up data by Autumn 2014 when the full eligibility criteria had been in place for six months showed the number of filled, funded two year old places had risen from 50 to 380. By June 2015 with the introduction of the on-line eligibility checker, more places being implemented in schools and greater parental awareness this figure has increased to 448 filled places ie 71 per cent of eligible children in the borough are in a free childcare place: of the 448 children, 349 are in a private day nursery, playgroup or with a childminder (78 per cent) and 99 children are in schools (22 per cent). When assessing take-up rates it is important to note that, some parents have commented they feel a child who is in the term following their second birthday is too young to access this place, some parents would prefer to delay access until their child is an older two year old. There is no feedback from parents to suggest that they are unable to access a place. Patterns of take-up are interesting, they show that particularly when looking at the Working Tax Credit families, parents are willing and able to travel to access their free childcare place, with places in provision in the west end of town being accessed by children from across the borough.
25. When looking at sufficiency of Free, Flexible Entitlement (FFE) places for 3 and 4 year olds, Darlington has historically had a strong private and voluntary childcare sector. Currently, our three and four year olds access their FFE in 19 private day nurseries (out of a total of 19), 11 playgroups (out of 12), with 14 childminders (out of 96), in two nursery schools and in 17 nursery units. Also, take-up of nursery FFE in Darlington, as with most other local authorities is high, as although nursery education is not statutory, the offer is universal and has been up and running for nearly twenty years. Data indicates that in Darlington in January 2015, 97 per cent of three and four year olds were accessing a free 15 hour a week place (data source: DfE First Statistical Release, published 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015). Darlington does import and fund a small number of children from other local authority areas but historically, the number of children we import is fairly equal to the number of children we export to bordering local authority settings. This figure compares with an average of 99 per cent across the North East local authorities, the average figure in England is 96 per cent.
26. The Government's new Childcare Bill which is expected to become law in Spring 2016 includes a duty to implement an increase from 15 to 30 hours a week of free early education and childcare from September 2017 for those eligible 3 and 4 year olds whose parents want this. The fine detail of the duty is not yet available but local authorities have been told that around 600,000 families nationally will be eligible and two parent families and lone parent families must be working a minimum of eight hours a week to qualify, this includes self-employed parents/carers. Of the 980 3 and 4 year olds who accessed early education in Darlington in the private, voluntary and independent sector in June 2015, 473 children (48 per cent) were attending the provision for more than 15 hours a week and 216 of these children (22 per cent) were accessing 30 hours or more a week. This is relevant when place planning because not all eligible children will need their place extending, some of them will already be accessing a place in the private and voluntary sector for longer than their current weekly entitlement of 15 hours, as will

eligible 4 year olds in reception classes. Preparation work will begin in Autumn 2015, following a DfE review of the cost of childcare, when local authorities should have more detail about the duty.

27. There are no indications via the People and Families' Information Support unmet demand list or the web page childcare questionnaire that the current supply for FFE places for three and four year olds in the Borough does not meet demand. However, this is an area which will need to be monitored as providers have increased the number of places they are able to offer for funded two year olds, we must ensure that these children are able to seamlessly move on to their FFE after they turn three years old.
28. In 2014-15 the number of private day nurseries in the Borough has increased from 18 to 19 with a new setting opening in Area 1 and no providers closing. During 2014-15 one playgroup closed in Area 1 but this was due to low numbers of children attending so this is unlikely to have much of an impact on the local childcare market. This leaves 12 playgroups in Darlington, 11 of which offer early education. During the same period, after school clubs have remained static at 23, breakfast clubs have stayed at 15 and holiday clubs have remained at 23. Childminder 'churn' is fairly low at present. In summary, Darlington's childcare market in 2014-15 has remained fairly stable. In addition, the 2014-15 number of average monthly enquiries received by Darlington People and Families' Information Support has dropped compared to 2013-14, and the number of unmet childcare enquiries has remained fairly stable, perhaps suggesting that although the market is not growing there has not been a surge in unmet demand.
29. The childcare market in Darlington can also be assessed in terms of quality by using Ofsted gradings. For most sectors of the childcare market, the percentage of providers obtaining at least a 'good' Ofsted grading has increased between 2014 and 2015. In June 2015 the Ofsted gradings given to the various settings in Darlington were as set out below:

Ofsted Gradings (source: PFIS as at June 2015)

2014 Ofsted 2015 Ofsted	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not met with actions	Total
Private Day Nurseries	17% 20%	55% 62%	12% 9%	11% 0%	5% 9%	0% 0%	100%
Holiday Clubs	12% 10%	50% 60%	16% 10%	12% 0%	10% 20%	0% 0%	100%
Out of School Clubs	17% 13%	55% 61%	18% 9%	8% 4%	2% 13%	0% 0%	100%
Playgroups	0% 0%	77% 93%	23% 7%	0% 0%	0% 0%	0% 0%	100%
Childminders	7% 9%	56% 49%	25% 10%	1% 0%	11% 30%	0% 2%	100%

Childcare providers who only work with children from the end of Early Years Foundation Stage are registered on the childcare register. They are expected to meet the requirements relating to people, premises and provision and make a declaration that they will do so. They are inspected to ensure they are still complying with these requirements and are judged as either meeting the requirements of the register or not meeting the requirements i.e. 'Met' or 'Unmet'.

30. Other methods of analysing the childcare market include looking at how accessible and affordable provision is. Geographically, the Borough of Darlington is not a huge area and unless parents are looking for a parent and toddler group or a playgroup within walking distance, if they can, parents will travel to access childcare. However, the cost of childcare has been highlighted by parents in this and previous reviews as either being a barrier to accessing childcare altogether or as being a barrier to accessing as much childcare as they would like. In Spring 2015 the average cost of a full-time place (50 hours a week) in a private day nursery in Darlington for a child under two years of age was £178.15, this compares with a North East regional average of £193.36 and an average in England of £214.31. The average weekly cost of a child attending an after school club in Darlington for 15 hours is £51.25, this compares with a North East regional average of £49.67 and an average in England of £47.91. The Family and Childcare Trust has concluded that over the last 12 months 'part-time nursery costs have increased in England, with an average increase of 5.5 per cent, part-time childminder prices have risen by an average of 3.5 per cent but the costs of after school clubs in England have fallen by 1 per cent'. (source: local data – PFIS & national data - 2015 Childcare Costs Survey, Family and Childcare Trust). It is clear that childcare costs are a recognised issue nationally.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

### **Parental Demand for Childcare**

31. Darlington People and Families' Information Support gather feedback on parental experiences of the local childcare market from the postal or on-line 'Have your say' questionnaire. Between June 2014 and June 2015 119 questionnaires were completed. Of these 119 responses:
- (a) 9 stated that local childcare is not available at the times when it is needed;
  - (b) 10 said that childcare is not available in a convenient location;
  - (c) 3 thought that childcare is not of a good standard;
  - (d) 23 parents explained that childcare is not affordable;
  - (e) 12 stated they have been unable to take up employment or training due to a lack of childcare;
  - (f) 19 responses have had problems accessing breakfast, after school or holiday club places for their child;
  - (g) 5 parents have had problems accessing childcare /activities for their child or young person with a disability;
  - (h) 3 parents have had problems accessing a funded place for a two year old;
  - (i) 1 responses stated problems accessing a nursery place for a 3 or 4 year old; and
  - (j) 49 parents or carers said their childcare needs will change over next 12 months.

32. It should be noted that because participants were not randomly selected for inclusion, the number of responses were relatively small, prospective parents were not questioned and the questionnaire was simplistic to enable a faster response rate, the results cannot be treated as a reliable, valid indicator of parental satisfaction with the childcare market or an indicator of future demand. However, perhaps the most interesting element of the feedback was the comments from parents which highlight the main themes of parents not being able to afford childcare due to other pressures on family budgets, issues with access to holiday and out of school provision (historically, there has been minimal parental demand for overnight or weekend care in Darlington) and issues with access to suitable childcare and activities for children and young people with a disability. For example, comments included:

*interested to know if there is much childcare provision for children moving into Year 7'*

*'Only childcare available is roughly between 7am and 6pm, if you're a nurse you do 12 hour shifts and can't get childcare. Also if you have two children it's too expensive to use childcare if you're on minimum wage and what do you do in the school holidays?'*

*'Totally flexible childcare based around school times doesn't exist, having to pay when your child is not there is not acceptable and having more than 2 children makes childcare unaffordable'*

*'Finding school holiday clubs is difficult'*

*'Wrap around care in or very close to my child's school is not fully available- independent care is expensive'*

*'The cost of childcare outweighs many peoples salaries. Employers are not flexible and it leaves very little reason for many women to return to work full-time'*

33. The average number of monthly childcare enquiries to Darlington People and Families' Information Support in 2014-15 was 13, this compares with 22 in 2013-14 and 31 in 2012-13. One explanation apart from the obvious fact that families who lose income into the family home may no longer be able to afford to pay for childcare, could be that even parents entering the employment market are opting to maximise their income by using relatives and friends to provide informal childcare or by exercising 'shift parenting' to cover atypical work patterns. Another possible explanation for the decrease in the number of childcare enquiries could be linked to the gender bias towards women in public sector employment. Recent cuts in the public sector workforce have led to a disproportionate number of jobs lost amongst women, who are then much less likely to continue to access paid childcare.

34. Between June 2014 and June 2015 there have been 9 recorded cases of unmet childcare demand, the corresponding figure in 2013-14 was 5 and in 2012-13 it was 9. The nature of the unmet demand is linked to finding childcare for children with a disability or additional needs, a lack of childminders in areas of the Borough and childcare to cover shift patterns of work, outside of normal working hours.

35. Clearly, the main issues for parents are the need for local childcare to be flexible, the cost of childcare, access to holiday and out of school provision and access to suitable childcare and activities for children and young people with a disability. The picture regarding unmet childcare demand in Darlington is still not that different from the national situation, as the Family and Childcare Trust highlight ‘nationally there have been growing gaps in provision since 2014 and we are concerned that the problem of insufficient childcare provision is getting worse not better.’ (Childcare Costs Survey, 2015, Family and Childcare Trust).
36. Given continuing economic austerity and the CSA findings, the priorities for the Local Authority particularly with regard to children who are aged 5 to 14 years or 18 years for young disabled people, continue to be to:

- assist childcare providers/ activities to be sustainable;
- work with settings and other interested stakeholders to continually improve the quality of care and make settings/ activities more inclusive; and to
- provide parents with up-to-date information about financial assistance towards childcare costs, including any available tax credits.

**Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan**

**Childcare Sufficiency Targets:** Improve access to out of school and holiday childcare/ activities, particularly for children aged 5 to 14 years or 18 years for disabled young people & to ensure that all childcare/activities are inclusive.

The 2011 CSA research was based on the 9 Benchmarks of Childcare Sufficiency:

- ❖ number of places (B1)
- ❖ accessibility of places (B2)
- ❖ range of places (B3)
- ❖ quality of places (B4)
- ❖ flexibility of places (B5)
- ❖ access to sufficient knowledge & information about places (B6)
- ❖ affordability of places (B7)
- ❖ inclusivity of places (B8)
- ❖ sustainability of places (B9)

Gap identified by 2011 CSA & subsequent reviews	2015-16 Objectives	2015-16 Actions	Responsibility & timeframe	Outcome
<p><b><u>Benchmarks 1, 2 and 3</u></b></p> <p><u>Maintained Nursery Schools / Units</u></p> <p>Supply is sufficient to meet the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds at present.</p>	No action required.			

<p><u>Day Nursery Provision</u></p> <p>Overall volume and location for this type of care is sufficient across the Borough.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>			
<p><u>Childminders</u></p> <p>Small gaps in some areas (particularly Area 1) for day/sessional care indicated by parents but occupancy is relatively low therefore additional sessions are not required.</p>	<p>Support childminders to improve their quality and sustainability.</p> <p>Enable childminders to keep u-to-date with new regulations.</p> <p>Support childminders to advertise their services.</p>	<p>* Continue to provide support from the Early Years Team regarding quality and sustainability.</p> <p>* Provide support from PFIS to advertise childminder services.</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers, Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Increase the number of childminders in the Borough offering good quality, inclusive, sustainable care.</p>
<p><u>Pre-School Playgroup Provision</u></p> <p>Gaps exist between parents' ideal use and current supply, however, provision has closed recently due to low occupancy rates.</p> <p>Overall volume is sufficient.</p>	<p>Support playgroups to improve their quality and their sustainability.</p> <p>Enable playgroups to keep u-to-date with new regulations.</p> <p>Support playgroups to advertise their services.</p>	<p>* Continue to provide support from the Early Years Team regarding quality and sustainability.</p> <p>* Provide support from PFIS to advertise playgroup services.</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers, Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Increase the number of playgroups in the Borough offering good quality, inclusive, sustainable care.</p>
<p><u>Funded Places for Two Year Olds</u></p> <p>Ensure that there continues to be a sufficiency of funded places in the DWP highlighted</p>	<p>Support private and voluntary childcare sector to improve their quality, sustainability and marketing and offer funded places, including the 'stretched offer', particularly</p>	<p>* Continue to provide support from the Early Years Team regarding quality and sustainability.</p> <p>* Provide support from DBC to enable the termly</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers, Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, Commissioning Projects Officer, PFIS, Organisational Planning, Finance - ongoing up</p>	<p>A continuation of sufficiency of funded places for two year olds.</p>

<p>areas of the Borough to cater for 40% children.</p> <p>Need to increase the number of funded two year olds places offered by childminders and support the schools to offer places to two year olds.</p>	<p>those in or serving the DWP highlighted areas.</p> <p>Support private and voluntary providers offering places to two year olds to also offer FFE for 3 and 4 year olds.</p> <p>Ensure prospective good quality providers are encouraged to offer services in the highlighted areas to reinforce sufficiency of places and give parents choice and diversity.</p> <p>Support academy and maintained schools who are in or serving the highlighted areas, to meet the target of a sufficiency of places and provide good quality, flexible (including the 'stretched offer'), inclusive funded places for two year olds and FFE for three and four year olds.</p>	<p>headcount for funded children to be undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continue to advertise funded places.</li> <li>* Continue to keep parents, providers and other interested stakeholders up-to-date regarding the offer.</li> </ul>	<p>to September 2016.</p>	
<p><u>Holiday Care</u> (in day nurseries/schools/holiday clubs/childminders)</p> <p>Parents indicate significant gaps with demand being more than 3 times current supply, however, occupancy very low</p>	<p>Build on the infrastructure developed by the Holiday Childcare Pilot, 'Aiming High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Maintain links with existing holiday childcare pilot providers (in particular those</li> </ul>	<p>0-11 Development &amp; Commissioning Manager, Childcare Development</p>	<p>Availability of inclusive holiday places for older children.</p>

<p>with provision perceived to be age inappropriate for older (11 to 14 year olds/18 year olds with a disability) age groups (<i>53% of provision is in day nurseries so for 11-14 year olds demand is 10.5 times current supply with only 29% occupancy</i>).</p>	<p>for Disabled Children' and D-CATCH to ensure that fully inclusive holiday places are available for older children, to meet considerable unmet demand.</p>	<p>who cater for children aged 11 and over), Sports Development Team, Groundwork and venue providers and ensure they are aware of considerable demand.  * Ensure parents have access to timely, up-to-date information about inclusive holiday places (particularly for older children) via the PFIS, schools, Children's Centres, mail outs, providers and other media.  * Ensure parents have access to income maximisation sessions via Children's Centres.  * Monitor unmet demand.</p>	<p>Officers, Commissioning Project Officer, PFIS Manager - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	
<p><u>After School</u> (in day nurseries, out of school clubs, childminders but not including reliable school activities)  Childminder market for after school is sufficient (apart from small pockets in Area 1), however, there are significant gaps for other provision with demand being 2.7 times current supply. Parental feedback suggests choice restricted by lack of reliable provision in schools.</p>	<p>Meet the considerable unmet demand for regular, reliable after school activities on school sites.</p>	<p>* Monitor unmet demand and where possible, identify providers to 'plug gaps' for example, if schools are able, speak to the Governing Bodies or have discussions with local after school clubs or holiday providers who might be more age appropriate.</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers, PFIS, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Met demand for after school care on school sites.</p>

<p><u>Breakfast Club</u> (in schools, day nurseries, childminders) There is over capacity across the Borough and therefore no need to increase sessions, however, parents indicate there is a small gap for sessions for 11-14 year olds/ 18 year olds with a disability.</p>	<p>Close the minimal gap across the Borough for 11-14/ 18 year olds with a disability.</p>	<p>* Monitor unmet demand for breakfast provision for older children via PFIS and where possible, identify providers to 'plug gaps'.</p>	<p>* Childcare Development Officers, PFIS, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Improve access to breakfast clubs/ early morning 'safe place to be' for 11-14 year olds/ 18 year olds with a disability.</p>
<p><b>Benchmark 4</b> 49% of parents reported the quality of childcare to be high. Disabled parents were more likely to have negative perceptions of quality of care (16%) compared to parents without a disability (11%). Parents with a disabled child are also more likely to have negative perceptions of quality (23% compared with 10% for parents without a disabled child). Holiday clubs display highest 'churn' (change of customer) at 28%, closely followed by childminders at 27%. Parents suggested areas for improvement are communication about a child's progress (18%), extended opening times (11%) and increased flexibility (10%).</p>	<p>Improve the quality of care/education in settings.</p>	<p>* Monitor the outcome of Ofsted inspections. * Monitor reasons for childcare places either not being taken up or previously leaving a childcare place via PFIS, to find out whether quality has been a barrier.</p>	<p>Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, Childcare Development Officers, PFIS, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Improved quality of care /education in settings.</p>

<p><b>Benchmark 5</b></p> <p>Only 44% of parents agree that childcare in Darlington is available on the days needed and 19% feel care is not available at the times needed. Groups who have most difficulties around lack of flexible childcare arrangements are disabled parents, parents of a disabled child, families where one or more parents work nights or outside the standard working day (7:30am until 6:00pm), parents of children aged 11 years onwards and lone parents.</p> <p>Unmet demand exists in all types of care for earlier and later opening, especially for day nursery and after school clubs. Demand for overnight care is extremely low and supply is limited, requests should be assessed for this type of care on a case by case basis. Demand for weekend care is also relatively low.</p>	<p>Improve flexibility within the childcare sector for parents and employers.</p>	<p>* Monitor reasons for childcare places either not being taken up or the leaving of a childcare provider ('churn'), particularly with regard to day nurseries and after school clubs, to find out how many cases are due to lack of flexibility.</p>	<p>Commissioning Projects Officer, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Greater access to more flexible childcare places for parents.</p>

<p>Between 8 and 18% of parents need to change their childcare arrangements once a month. Employer feedback shows that more than 1 in 10 local companies say childcare is a barrier to staff recruitment, 9% say it causes problems with staff retention and 16% say childcare problems impact on work performance.</p>				
<p><b>Benchmark 6</b> 30% of parents reported that they do not feel fully informed about the childcare options available to them. Top sources of information were: internet, school, friends and relatives.</p>	<p>Increase in parental awareness of the PFIS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Monitor PFIS/ Service Directory website to ensure information is inclusive ie available in different languages and formats.</li> <li>* Ensure relevant parents are aware of the Brokerage Service.</li> <li>* Continue with PFIS outreach sessions in places where parents meet eg schools, doctors' surgeries, Jobcentre Plus</li> <li>* Look at alternative forms of marketing/becoming more visible/accessible as a service.</li> </ul>	<p>PFIS Manager - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Improved access to information about local childcare for parents.</p>
<p><b>Benchmark 7</b> 30% of parents feel that childcare is not affordable. Price acts as a complete</p>	<p>Improve income maximisation awareness amongst parents, especially sources other than</p>	<p>* Monitor the reasons for childcare places either not being taken or leaving of a</p>	<p>PFIS, Childcare Development Officers, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up</p>	<p>Increased parental awareness around income maximisation.</p>

<p>barrier at current market rates for between 21% and 33% of parents depending on their chosen care type, price is a significant barrier across all care types. Price sensitivity was high for after school club users (19% would use more care if the price dropped by 10%) and very high for holiday provision (32% would use more care if the price dropped by 10%). Awareness of the Working Tax Credit was high at 96% but lower for Child Tax Credit (88%).</p>	<p>tax credits.</p>	<p>childcare place ('churn'), to find out whether affordability has been a barrier  * Ensure parents have up-to-date information about income sources, especially those in addition to tax credits.  * Ensure parents are aware of any income maximisation sessions they may have access to eg at a Children's Centre.</p>	<p>to September 2016.</p>	
<p><b>Benchmark 8</b>  <u>Disabled Children &amp; Young People up to 18 years</u> - 31% of parents with a disabled child or young person say childcare arrangements are not fully meeting the needs of their child (compared with 14% for parents with children without a disability). 45% of parents with a disabled child say supply of holiday childcare is insufficient (compared with 25% of parents of children without a disability), 40% say care is not sufficiently flexible (compared with 18%) and 39%</p>	<p>Improve access to a range of good quality, flexible care for disabled children and young people (in particular holiday care).</p>	<p>* Maintain links with existing holiday childcare pilot providers, Sports Development Team, Groundwork and venue providers.  * Ensure local childcare training providers, such as Darlington College, are aware of this unmet demand  * Ensure parents are aware of the PFIS Brokerage Service.  * Ensure parents have access</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Improved access to good quality, flexible childcare provision for disabled children and young people up to 18 years.</p>

<p>say the range and choice of childcare is not good (compared with 20% of families with a child without a disability).</p>		<p>to timely information about inclusive holiday places via the PFIS, schools, Children's Centres, mail outs, providers and other media.</p>		
<p><b>Benchmark 9</b> As a result of the recession 52% of day nurseries have reported a loss of customers. 28% of childminders are concerned about the effects of embedding the Early Years Foundation Stage and 22% of day nurseries are most concerned about the Early Years Single Funding Formula. Economic uncertainty is seen as a significant challenge by 57% of day nurseries and 40% of childminders. When providers were asked how long they expect to continue trading, the figures gave rise for concern - 15% of childminders expect to cease trading in the next 12 months and a further 20% in the next 2 years - the respective figures for pre-schools were 7% and a further 14%.</p>	<p>Ensure providers have access to business support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Monitor the number of childminder vacancies and collate the number of playgroup and other sector vacancies via the bi-annual supply audit.</li> <li>* Ensure providers have up-to-date information about any parental income maximisation sessions.</li> <li>* Ensure providers have access to business support via DBC.</li> <li>* Ensure providers are aware of sufficiency gaps.</li> </ul>	<p>PFIS, Childcare Development Officers, Economic Regeneration, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2016.</p>	<p>Improve sustainability within the childcare sector which will in turn enable children and their families to access more stable childcare places.</p>