

Schools Forum

30 September 2021

Early Years & Childcare 30 Hours Entitlements Place Sufficiency Update

This report relates to all school forum members and is for information and comment

Overview

The 30 hours extended entitlement offer was introduced for eligible 3 and 4 year old children in 2017. This added to the existing universal 15 hour offer for all 3 and 4 year old children and both entitlements can be accessed from the term following the child's 3rd birthday.

To access the 30 hours extended entitlement the parents / carers must meet a specific eligibility criteria, apply for a 30 code via HMRC and then, where approved, use this code at a registered early years provider to access the additional 15 hours alongside their 15 hours of universal entitlement.

The entitlement was introduced to support working families and to make re-joining the workforce more financially viable for none or part time working parents / carers.

Engagement

The 30 hours entitlement is accessed well by families in Warwickshire and below gives the take up rates for the last three years for the Summer term.

	Total Hours	Children
Summer Term 2019 – Pre Pandemic	743,823	4477
Summer Term 2020 - Pandemic	716,483	4334
Summer Term 2021 – Post lockdown 3	795,802	4704

*Based on actual take up comparisons

Although the above numbers and hours show a reduced access in Summer 2020 this is specifically linked to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown requirements rather than reducing demand for 30 places or place availability. From the Summer 2021 figures we can see again a pattern of growth in take up of both hours and children accessing a place.

Place Delivery

Warwickshire Early Education Funding directory of providers operates with an annual number of approximately 500 funded providers delivering the 2, 3 and 4 year old entitlements with on average 85% of these settings offering the 30 hours extended entitlement.

30 hour places are offered by all types of Ofsted registered provision – nurseries, childminders, preschools and out of school clubs and providers exempt from registration in the form of maintained nursery classes, maintained nursery schools and schools delivering school run early years provision. The varied offer ensures choice for parents / carers.

Challenges

Warwickshire's must consider a wide range of factors when monitoring place sufficiency requiring a flexible process and interpretation to monitor need and guide planning.

Key considerations:

- Five districts and boroughs - substantial differentiation in demographics
- Varied economic impact and work drivers based on district / borough
- Key employment sites in e.g. hospitals and food business distribution
- Financial impact for providers based on location e.g. early education funding rates are standard for all however running costs differ substantially between districts
- Take up of each entitlement varies based on demographics

Risks

The ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to add risk to place sufficiency. During the 2020/21 academic year two business surveys were issued to the sector and results to date indicate the market currently remains relatively stable however it is essential to remain vigilant. A full Autumn Audit to be undertaken in 2021 and will inform the next Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for publication in Spring 2022.

Provider changes:-

- 2021 closures = 1 full day care + 1 Term Time Preschool
- 2021 New provision = 1 full daycare + 2 Term school run provisions
- Childminders – closures and new registrations see overall numbers static

For monitoring:

- Recruitment – pre pandemic issue that continues to increase pressures – insufficient qualified practitioners with providers reporting ongoing issues with recruitment
- Possible increased demand for funded 2-year places and Universal 3 and 4-year-old hours, will there be a need for more term time only, funded places?
- Reduced demand for funded Extended Entitlement 3 and 4-year-old hours – reduced employment and increase to home working – trend does not currently support this

- Reduced demand for paid for early years childcare – job redundancy / new home working reduces need – current increased take up indicates this is less of a risk that expected
- Closure of settings – figures not currently supporting this. Long term impact of Covid-19 on place sufficiency is unknown
- Impact of local lockdowns or spikes – ongoing financial impact
- Parent / carer confidence due to Covid-19 – current growth supports increased confidence
- Early Education Funded Entitlement rates

Place Creation

To ensure a continued sufficiency of places in response to increased demand by housing, especially in the areas where occupancy levels remain high, joint working is undertaken with School Place Planning to ensure new school provision is being developed with early years premises on site.

The team continues to receive enquiries from new providers wishing to open provision across Warwickshire and regular registrations of new childminders.

Evaluation

At the current time the available information indicates a relatively stable market with sufficient availability of 30 hours entitlements places and in the main meets demand other than small areas of mild pressure in parts of Leamington Spa and Rugby.

Early Years and childcare place sufficiency for all entitlements continues to be monitored closely, with process and actions adapted on a term by term basis as required where information identifies a specific area of concern.

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