

Progress Report on the Implementation of the 30 hrs Early Years Entitlement

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson

Division and Local Member: All members

1. Summary

- 1.1. At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 9th December 2016 where the Committee considered a paper on the capital bids that had been made to the EFSA to support the implementation of the 30 hpw entitlement it was agreed that given the requirement to deliver 30 hpw funded places for 3 and 4 year olds from the 1 September 2017 was a statutory requirement it would be appropriate for the Committee to receive an update on the progress being made to meet the Council's statutory responsibility.

This report provides the requested updates on the capital projects that were approved by the EFSA to support sufficiency of places for the 30 hours agenda. This report also aims to inform members of the progress of the early years commissioning team's 30 hours strategy.

- 1.2. Capital funding and support strategies to the early years sector aims to help create sufficient childcare places for the 30 hours extended entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds in Somerset and supports the Somerset's Children and Young People's Plan 2016-19 (CYPP) seven improvement programmes including "Promoting healthy outcomes and giving children the best start in life".

The CYPP links to the Education target in the County Plan 2016 -2020. Sufficiency of early year's places for 3 and 4 year olds is also a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 and 2016.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Scrutiny committee are asked to note the progress being made in of preparing for the introduction of the new extended entitlement (30 hours) which comes into effect from 1st September 2017, to note the risks of not being able to meet our statutory responsibilities in this area and the mitigation being put in place to manage them.
- 2.2. Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress being made to deliver the capital projects that have been approved by the Education Funding and Skills Agency (EFSA) to contribute to the extended entitlement (30 hours) for three and four year olds in Somerset from September 2017.

3. Background

- 3.1. **30 Hour Places for 3 and 4 year olds**

The Childcare Act 2016 discharged a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient places for the extended entitlement of 30 hours childcare for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. The government has recognised that capital funding will be required to support the delivery of this offer through the creation of additional capacity in the sector and new processes required to ensure that parents applying for funded places were eligible.

3.2. 30 hours strategy implementation

The Childcare Service is now live and parents across the country can now apply for their 30 hours entitlement. This is not via the LA, but direct to the government via www.childcarechoices.gov.uk. The statistics for Somerset of successful applications received weekly from the DFE are confidential, but indicate a high success rate for parents in the county.

A 30 hours strategy has been created for the implementation of 30 hours. This covers:

Communications: the SCC website has its own page for 30 hours for both parents and providers. The Parents page for Somerset available at www.somerset.gov.uk/eye30. The Providers page for Somerset available at www.somerset.gov.uk/eye30provider

Purdah has restricted a national campaign from national government. Somerset County Council will be launching a simultaneous social media and leaflet campaign by the end of June 2017 to target the general public.

Sufficiency: A county sufficiency report will be released by September 2017 and includes supply and demand estimates for 30 hours for the county.

As of 31st May 2017, 280 providers out of 496 that accept the entitlement have registered as offering the 30 hours spaces (56%). This is approximately 3902 spaces. Offering spaces is not mandatory and providers voluntarily register online at www.somerset.gov.uk/eye30provider with the Local Authority as offering the extended entitlement, so there may be more providers that will be offering spaces. Proactive exercises to establish this are being carried out in June and July 2017.

It is not mandatory for providers to offer the 30 hours spaces, therefore the Local Authority must use supportive strategies with the sector to achieve sufficiency. The early year's team has a positive relationship with its providers in terms of communications, and there has been positive feedback from the sector about how all staff has kept them up to date with important information and events.

ICT and claiming the entitlement: Somerset County Council early years were also successful in their bid for Digital accelerate funding from the EFSA, and have received £20,689.30 towards implementing IT solutions for ECS checking for the 30 hours free childcare entitlement.

These funds have been used to add functionality to the Somerset Choices website, to purchase a Capita One module that enables providers to check 30 hours codes online, and to support migration to an online claiming portal for the county.

SEND; early years provider evenings have promoted the Local Offer as well as briefing providers about the introduction of the Disability Access Fund for early years.

Business support for early year's providers; SSE improvement team were commissioned to deliver business support workshops to early years providers. As of 31st of May 2017, 271 providers have attended these with a positive response from evaluations.

Early Years communications and provider evenings have focused on clear messages about the 30 hours, and what business planning is needed to prepare.

Action for Children is also hosting an event on the 13th of June 2017 to promote partnership working between childminders and schools.

3.3. Capital Bids

Expressions of interest were sought from the early year's sector; these were advertised through various communication channels and through Schools Forum. Applications were scored against the EFA criteria set out in the application guidance. The six projects put forward scored the highest scores at shortlisting and are most likely to meet the tight timeframe to be ready to deliver 30 hour spaces in September 2017. The final six projects are a combination of both Local Authority led bids and private providers

Somerset submitted six projects for consideration by the Education Funding Agency on 31 August 2016 using a standard application form designed by the EFA. These were all approved in December 2016, and the total capital funding awarded to Somerset was £1,515,027.31.

4. Progress of Capital Projects

4.1. 1. Rockets, Rockwell Green Primary School, Wellington

Relocation of Modular building from Brock House; 20 new places

LA/ PRIVATE	Original project cost submitted	Current estimated cost	Difference
LA	226,143	274,000	+ 47,857

Status: Completed

The Brock House Modular unit was moved on the 22nd of March 2017. IT and telephone, and panels on the decking waiting. DFE monitoring was submitted for the project, and a developing and extending grant has been approved by early years commissioning for resources and marketing for the nursery.

4.2. 2. Brockvale, Pen Elm, Taunton - now Penvale Lodge children's day nursery

Refurbish unit on garden centre site to create nursery; 40 new places

LA/ PRIVATE	Original project cost submitted	Current estimated cost
Private	374,699	374,699

Status: Opening date moved to January 2018

The project lead, Go Commando has parted with their partner who was to deliver the early years on site. They are now actively looking for a new partner with support from the early years team. Due to this, a scope change was submitted and accepted by the EFSA to move the completion date to January 2018.

The completion of the conversion of the building is not facing any issues and the charity is working with the owner to secure the required planning for the site access.

4.3. 3. Paddocks day nursery, Wiveliscombe

Internal remodelling of Children's Centre to expand early years; 40 new places

LA/ PRIVATE	Original project cost submitted	Current estimated cost	Difference
LA	247,703	343,000	+95,297

Status: On target for September 2017

Works will need to be carried out in phased approach as setting must stay open. More structural work that in feasibility now needs to take place, and this is reflected in increased cost

DFE monitoring submitted for the project; there is no additional funding from the EFSA and additional costs have been covered by the early years capital investment programme.

Meeting with local youth group about use of the building has taken place and draft user agreement being produced.

4.4. 4. Chuggers day nursery, Taunton

Convert first and second storey from domestic to nursery use; 34 new places

LA/ PRIVATE	Original project cost submitted	Current estimated cost
PRIVATE	551,372	551,372

Status: On target for September 2017

Grant agreement revised and signed by provider, RAEF LTD. First payment issued to provider for works completed, and being monitored by Debbie Tarry, project officer for early years commissioning. DFE monitoring has been submitted for this project.

4.5. Salmon Parade, Bridgwater

Convert former wing of former hospital at Salmon Parade to nursery- new provision; 32 new places

This is a second provision for the private provider and their current site will remain open as well.

LA/ PRIVATE	Original project cost submitted	Current estimated cost
PRIVATE	365,755	365,755

Status: Opening date moved to January 2018

The DFE have approved a change of scope for the project so that it can open in January 2018. This is due to a delay in obtaining full planning permission for the change of use, and with recruitment to secure suitable candidates for the leadership roles at the second site.

4.6. 6. Neroche Primary School, Broadway, Neroche

New nursery provision in a modular building at front of school site, and retaining provision at village hall premises; 30 new places

LA/ PRIVATE	Original project cost submitted	Current estimated cost	Difference
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LA	362,123	457,000	+94,877
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Status: On target for September 2017

Kier appointed to be contractor for the project. DFE monitoring submitted for the project; there is no additional funding from the EFSA and additional costs have been covered by the early years capital investment programme.

The school have issued a consultation to lower the age range of the school as part of establishing early years on site.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial:

The capital projects commitment from the local authority has increased by £238,031 in total, from an initial £398,843 to £585,800. This had been covered by the early year’s capital investment budget as the EFSA were clear in the terms and conditions that any additional costs were the LA’s responsibility.

Legal costs have also been incurred to the Local Authority due to the need for contracts and grant agreements to be created for private providers.

Commissioned workshops, publications and promotions have also required resources from the early year’s revenue budget. This has been mitigated by the section 33 grant for ICT implementation from the EFSA.

5.2. Statutory duty:

It is not mandatory for providers to offer the 30 hours spaces, therefore the Local Authority must use supportive strategies with the sector to achieve sufficiency. There is then, a risk that there will not be sufficient places for families to access 30 hours as providers voluntarily register with the Local Authority as offering the extended entitlement.

As the application service is now live and parents begin to book places, their demand may influence providers’ decision making on offering spaces. As more applications are registered, a clearer picture of demand will be known.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee – 09 December 2016 ‘Early Years Bid for Capital Funding to the EFA for projects to secure 30 hours funded places for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds’
<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s2353/2016%20Dec%2009%20-%20Item%207%20-EFA%20report.pdf>

6.2. Somerset Early Years 30 hours strategy 2016-17. Contact Charlotte Wilson, Service Manager Early Years Commissioning cwilson@somerset.gov.uk 01823 357386.

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

Appendix A- Parent Journey for 30 hours extended entitlement

