

<b>Meeting Title</b>	Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report Title</b>	Delivery of the national childcare reforms for the early years entitlements for children under 5 years of age and wraparound childcare provision for school aged children
<b>Meeting Date</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2024

<b>Corporate Director(s)/Director(s):</b>	Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People Nick Lee, Director of Education
<b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	Councillor Cheryl Barnard
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## Headline Detail

The announcement of the national, large-scale, childcare reforms in the Chancellor’s Spring Budget 2023 are designed to support early education and help parents with childcare so they can return to work more easily. The development of these transformative reforms are a national requirement and an extension to the LA’s statutory duties, they are not optional.

In addition to ensuring the continued delivery of the existing early years entitlements, the key deliverables of these reforms are to ensure:

- Working parents of 2 year olds being able to access 15 hours childcare from April 2024
- Working parents of children aged 9 – 23 months being able to access 15 hours childcare from September 2024
- Working parents of children aged 9 months to primary school age being able to access 30 hours childcare from September 2025
- All primary school aged children being able to access before and after school provision, from 8am to 6pm, during term time, from September 2026

All aspects of delivery programmes related to these agendas will be risk managed, to assess likelihood and impact, with actions built in to mitigate against negative risks.

**It is essential that we utilise this national policy with a local “One Council” approach in the broadest sense. This is an opportunity for Nottingham to establish a solid childcare and early education infrastructure. Our grassroots expectations for this infrastructure, underpinned by the fundamental principle of incorporating the needs of children with SEND, should support parental choice for working parents, local employers and the local economy. It directly links into Early Help and Family Hub priorities and collaborative working with our schools and private, voluntary and independent childcare providers, who also support the wider family.**

## **Progress to Date**

Taking the lead in the delivery of these reforms, the Early Years Team have:

- Refreshed childcare sufficiency supply and demand data to identify priority wards for targeted development.
- Supported schools and childcare providers in the private, voluntary and independent sector to deliver the 15 hours childcare provision from April 2024 for working parents of 2-year-olds, with over 700 local 2 year olds accessing this new entitlement in the city during Summer Term 2024.
- Undertaken preliminary work with schools and providers around existing wraparound provision. This will be accelerated during the 2024-25 academic year following a national shift in the timescales for this reform, which now expects that parents should see an expansion in the availability of wraparound care from September 2024.
- Initiated support to schools and childcare providers for the further expansion of the early years entitlements due September 2024 and September 2025.
- Been instrumental in securing the capital and revenue funding available to support the reforms and making the funding available to the sector.

## **Associated Financial Information**

These reforms have been supported through the provision of additional finance to the LA;

- c£491k of capital funding to support the creation and expansion of early years entitlement places and wraparound childcare places. Approval to disseminate this to the sector under a grant application process is currently going through PLT and Capital Board approval processes.
- Revenue funding for early years entitlement places is being provided through Dedicated Schools Grant funding. This is ordinarily based on January Census data but due to the introduction of two new entitlements in 2024, this is being based, for this year only, on two additional data submissions in Summer and Autumn 2024.
- c£1.759m revenue funding for wraparound childcare places available over the next 2 financial years. Costed Delivery Plan, approved by the Section 151 Officer, is currently with the Department for Education's Delivery Partner, Childcare Works, for final approval.
- Anticipated that by the end of Summer 2024, a package of available capital and revenue opportunities will be established and open to applications from schools and childcare providers.
- Any grant funding awarded will not exceed the amount allocated to the LA and awarding processes will ensure clarity that any additional or ongoing costs, over and above any agreed grant award, will be the responsibility of individual providers, not the LA.

## **Summary of Issues**

Delivery of these national childcare reforms to date has been managed through re-aligning priorities within the existing Early Years Team. However, there are a number of issues that could present challenges to the successful ongoing delivery of this work:

- Tight timescales on implementation, particularly the acceleration in the timescale for wraparound places from September 2024. Whilst we can deliver some 'quick wins' by formalizing existing arrangements, the majority of new wraparound places will be delivered during the 2024-25 academic year.

- Significant and large-scale data returns, not all scheduled or expected, required from government, the complexity of which often requires tasks being reprioritised at short notice, the engagement of time and expertise of other departments and LA authorisation from relevant senior finance personnel, in order to meet short deadlines.
- Critical work with colleagues around understanding processes linked to Dedicated Schools Grant allocations, including setting annual provider hourly rates for early years entitlement places based on budget allocations, liaison with, and approval by, Schools Forum and necessary sector consultation periods. From 2024-25, there is also the expectation of a new requirement for LA's to inform childcare providers of early years funding rates for the forthcoming financial year within 8 week of the LA budget allocations being announced.

**Recommendation(s):**

1. To utilise this national policy with a local "One Council" approach to establish a solid childcare and early education infrastructure in the city, engaging priorities of wider teams and fostering collaborative working to ensure a comprehensive offer to all of our youngest children and their families, ultimately improving outcomes for our citizens.

2. For officers to be identified to support the championing and embedding of this work cross-divisionally, ensuring Corporate Directors and Executive Members are updated accordingly and necessary support is available to inform and update the Section 151 Officer of required approvals.

3. To ensure ensure the national allocations and funding formula are applied affordably within the LA and to the sector in a thorough and financially robust and transparent way to ensure required deadlines are met.

**1. Background**

- Details of the LA's statutory duties to secure free early years provision for all eligible children to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for working parents can be found in [The Childcare Act 2006](#) (updated 2016).
- The latest national overview on the childcare reforms can be found in a letter sent to all Directors of Children's Services, dated 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024, from Susie Owen, Director for Early Years, Childcare, Families and Analysis and Sophie Taylor, Director for Vulnerable Children's Strategy and Educational Engagement, at the Department for Education (attached).