

Schools Forum

19th September 2017

Early Years Capital and Revenue update Report

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to update Schools Forum about the current position on the supply of places for two year olds. It details initial plans for expanding sufficiency in 4 wards. The report also seeks clarity on Schools Forum's position regarding the request to convert remaining funds for sufficiency of places for 3 and 4 year olds that require the extended offer, if there is clear evidence of need.

2. Background

2.1 The local authority has a duty to provide:

- sufficient places for eligible two year olds, 15 hours for all 3 and 4 year olds and 30 hours for children of working households
- information to parents so that they are aware of their entitlements

The local authority is also responsible for:

- closing the gap in attainment between disadvantaged and non disadvantaged pupils
- supporting parents in the process of accessing a place for their child

2.2 Ensuring take-up of two year old places is an important part of Walsall's priority to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non disadvantaged children. In 2016, Early Years Profile data evidenced that only 55% of children eligible for free school meals reached their age related milestones (GLD) compared to 68% of children who were not eligible (13% gap in attainment). In addition the gap in attainment between the most and least deprived children was 21%.

2.3 Currently there are over 2000 children eligible in Walsall but only 64% take up. That means that over 700 eligible children and families, in Walsall, are not accessing early learning and care to improve their outcomes. Although ensuring sufficiency and choice in each ward is not the whole solution it is an important part in promoting take up. The other priority is ensuring that Health Visitors, Children's Centres, Early Help Teams and all frontline services promote the offer and support families to access it.

2.4 Schools Forum (14th October 2014 and 13th January 2015) agreed that £2,200,000 from the Designated Schools Grant along with £183k capital carried forward from 2014/15 would be used to create further places for two year olds. In addition £1.2m revenue funding would be carried forward into 2015/16.

2.5 In January, 2017, a report was submitted to Schools Forum giving information about the 30 hour/ extended offer of early learning for working parents and seeking permission that some of the remaining financial resource can be used to support this. The report stressed that the priority for spend would be on the sufficiency of places for two year olds, as disadvantaged

children, in Walsall, continue to achieve less well by the age of five and beyond. It went on to say that only when there is evidence of sufficiency for 2 year old places will consideration be given to capital investment to support place creation for the 30 hour/ extended offer.

3. Progress and Current Status

3.1 By March 2015, 67% (1473 children) of the 2199 eligible two year olds had accessed their free education. 404 new places had been created and some children accessed existing places through day-care, childminders and schools, in particular where children's centres became part of school provision.

3.2 Following a further needs analysis in March 2015, schools in target areas were approached to create the remaining 33% places (726). 12 schools and 1 private provider responded and were approved. This created a further 436 places.

3.4 By March 2016, a decision had been made to let the market settle whilst building up a clear picture of supply, take up and demand again overall and at ward level. This involved working in partnership with the Early Help Quality and Audit System lead to put processes in place for information gathering from all providers and data collation systems. By March 2017 providers were imputing data into the new Tribal system. By June 2017, data was available for analysis.

3.5 Plans were already in place to utilise some of the capital investment for the reconfiguration of Children's Centre's to create more places to two year olds. This was achieved by offering surplus building to the private childcare sector, through the councils tendering process.

2 Year Old Data July 2017

Ward	Total Number of Part Time 2 year old Places available (Childcare)	Total Number of Part Time 2 year old Places available (Schools)	Total Number of Part Time 2 year old Places available	Total 2 year olds requiring a place	Number of spare places available	% of spare places available
Aldridge Central & South	120	32	152	58	94	62%
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	142	32	174	58	116	67%
Bentley & Darlaston North	246	56	302	178	124	41%
Birchills Leamore	294		294	248	46	16%
Blakenall	194	132	326	246	80	25%
Bloxwich East	10	72	82	128	-46	-56%
Bloxwich West	140	64	204	123	81	40%
Brownhills	116	56	172	98	74	43%
Darlaston South	322	140	462	203	259	56%
Paddock	86		86	59	27	31%
Palfrey	196	64	260	207	53	20%
Pelsall	114	48	162	49	113	70%
Pheasey Park Farm	162		162	31	131	81%

Pleck	88		88	226	-138	-157%
Rushall-Shellfield	78	40	118	62	56	47%
Short Heath	4	24	28	62	-34	-121%
St Matthew's	204		204	175	29	14%
Streetly	144		144	14	130	90%
Willenhall North	54	32	86	89	-3	-3%
Willenhall South	144	16	160	156	4	3%
Out of Borough				49		
	2858	808	3666	2519	1196	33%

3.6 Although there is currently enough provision overall (3666 places for 2519 eligible children) at ward level there is limited provision in 4 areas: Bloxwich East, Pleck, Short Heath and Willenhall North.

3.7 In Bloxwich East there are only two school providers (Lower Farm and Millfields) and some childminders offering two year old places. There is no private provider. In Pleck provision is only available in 3 settings (Alumwellies, Banana Moon and Emmanuel) and only 1 childminder. In Short Heath there is only one school group provider and two childminders. There is also no private provider. In Willenhall North there is only one school providing for two year olds along with a number of childminders. There is no private provision.

3.8 An action plan is in place to invite existing and new providers to apply for funding to develop places in the 4 areas identified above. This will result in sufficient places for two year olds in each of the wards with a choice of provision for parents to include schools, day-care and childminders. This will then give Walsall a better opportunity to increase take up. With increased take up, schools and settings then have opportunities to work with 2 year old children on a 1:4 ratio and in particular work with families too. This in turn will lead to children's greater progress and a narrowing of the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non disadvantaged children.

3.9 Take up data has also been collated and analysed. It demonstrates that currently the percentage of eligible children in a place is 1249 out of 1939 from the last DWP list (64%). Places where there is high take up include: Browhills, Aldridge Central and South, Rushall- Shellfield, Paddock and Pelsall. Places where there is low take up include: Pheasey Park Farm, Short Heath, Willenhall South, Streetly, Palfrey and Bloxwich West. Plans are underway to improve take up. A multi-agency commitment is necessary. This includes accountability and monitoring for key services such as Health Visiting and Children's Centres.

4. Financial Implications

Capital to Create 2 year Old Places - DSG reserve		
Allocation of £2,383,116	£	Use of fund
Expenditure - 2015/16	1,102,359	Phase 1 and 2 capital projects creating 404 plus 726 places

Expenditure - 2016/17	60,000	Phase 1 and 2 capital projects creating 404 plus 726 places
Expenditure - 2017/18 - P5	51,674	Phase 3 (Children's Centre configuration) creating at least 64 places
Balance	1,169,083	

2 Year Old Trajectory - DSG reserve		
Allocation of £1.2m	£	Main use of fund
Expenditure - 2015/16	462,526	Resource provision, market the offer to families, transitional fund
Expenditure - 2016/17	67,428	Transitional Fund, market offer to families, Quality Audits
Expenditure - 2017/18 - P5	- 1,940	Improving provision through Achievement for All, market offer to families
Balance	683,386	

4.1 Figures in the above table are based on actual spend to date shown on the Local Authorities accounting system. There may be a slight variation to figures reported in the last update to School Forum. This is due to previous figures being based on schemes that had been committed and were subject to change before the final invoices were paid.

4.2 Trajectory fund has been utilised to improve the quality of provision for two year olds. Some of the fund has been used to provide all schools and settings with an Infant and Toddler Environment Review. In addition the fund has paid for Achievement for All to support maintained schools that had not provided for 2 year olds previously. The fund is also used for marketing the offer to families.

4.3 All capital and revenue spend continues to be subject to approval through the Capital Sub Group which places clear parameters around the allocation of fund to ensure value for money. Records are available including the Application Assessment Record which is a summary of the applications and evidence of whether the criteria for approval have been met and the Current Status Report that details all Capital and Revenue spend linked to each projects as well as the progress of current projects.

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