

18 March 2014		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Childcare Sufficiency		
Report of: Sue Green, Strategic Leader Early Years, Families and Communities		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton – Director of Childrens Services		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To update members on the results of the analysis of early education and childcare sufficiency in the Borough and the priorities for future development.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory duty that all local authorities in England are required to undertake, as set out in the Childcare Act 2006, s11. Essentially it is an exercise whereby the demand for types of local childcare is compared to its availability.

The growth in the Borough and the extension of the early education offer for two year olds means that the provision of sufficient early education and childcare remains a challenge. The number of 0-4 year olds living in Thurrock continues to grow at a faster rate than the national average and close work with the Pupil Place Planning Team will ensure that new places are developed alongside new school places where this is possible.

The introduction of the early years entitlement for two year olds has been successful to date and officers are meeting regularly to address any barriers to achieving the challenging targets. This programme plays a crucial part in the overall work to narrow gaps in attainment and reduce inequalities.

Thurrock is behind the national average for the take up of early education for three and four year olds and the data analysis carried out will now inform planning to address this. However, the limited provision of capital funding for early education is a prohibitive factor.

As new developments create additional housing and movement into the area, close work with the Planning Team and the Pupil Place Planning Team will be needed to ensure we meet both the existing and the increased demand.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 That members note the findings of the report and the challenges that this presents.**
- 1.2 That the significant increases in early education places for two year olds are noted.**
- 1.3 That members agree to this information being used as part of the pupil place planning process.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory duty that all local authorities in England are required to undertake, as set out in the Childcare Act 2006, s11. Essentially it is an exercise whereby the demand for types of local childcare is compared to its availability, i.e. this is to consult on profiling the supply of childcare and to secure early education places offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year for every three and four year old child in their area until the child reaches compulsory school age (the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday).
- 2.2 The Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities from the Department for Education September 2013 is for English local authorities on their duties under sections 6, 7, 11 and 13 of the Childcare Act 2006.
- 2.3 The Childcare Act 2006 sets out the statutory duties for all local authorities in England. There are a number of key sections pertinent to this report, these are:
 - Section 6 which places a duty on English local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents.
 - Section 7 which places a duty on English local authorities to secure early years provision free of charge as set out in the Act.
 - Section 11 which places a duty on English local authorities to assess childcare provision
 - Section 13 which places a duty on English local authorities to provide information advice and training to childcare providers
- 2.4 The statutory guidance was recently updated to include new elements relating to early years provision for two year olds from lower income families. It sets out a changed role for local authorities to enable them to focus on identifying and supporting disadvantaged children to take up their early education place.
- 2.5 The revised guidance also sets out:
 - what outcomes different measures are seeking to achieve
 - What is a legal duty required by legislation; and
 - What local authorities should do to fulfil their statutory responsibilities

- 2.6 This report focuses on the following local authority duties
- Early education places for two, three and four year olds
 - Securing sufficient childcare
 - Information to parents
- 2.7 The research which informed this assessment report was conducted during the period September - November 2013 and was undertaken by 2 surveys; a parental demand survey and childcare provider survey. 15 network childminders support with the delivery of Early Years Education and we work with childminders through mechanisms such as childminder forums rather than survey responses, so network childminders are not included in this data exercise.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2013 takes into account significant changes in Government policy with amendments to the Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. In this statutory guidance from September 2013 new elements are included relating to early years provision for two-year-olds from lower income families and the provision of information and changes to the welfare benefits system.
- 3.2 The results in the National Census 2011 show the population of Children age 0 – 4 years in Thurrock has risen by approximately 20%, almost 7% higher than England, and with future significant housing developments in Thurrock indicate an ever growing demand for childcare.
- 3.3 There are currently 123 early education providers across schools and the private and voluntary sector in Thurrock offering 7822 childcare and early education places. This represents an increase of 313 places since the 2012 annual childcare sufficiency assessment.
- 3.4 The research which informed this assessment report was conducted during the period September- November 2013 and was undertaken by 2 surveys; a parental demand survey and childcare provider survey. National statistics were also analysed to give comparative data on take up of places and population growth. It should be noted that parents do not have to take up the offer of early education and access to education does not become compulsory until the term after a child's fifth birthday.

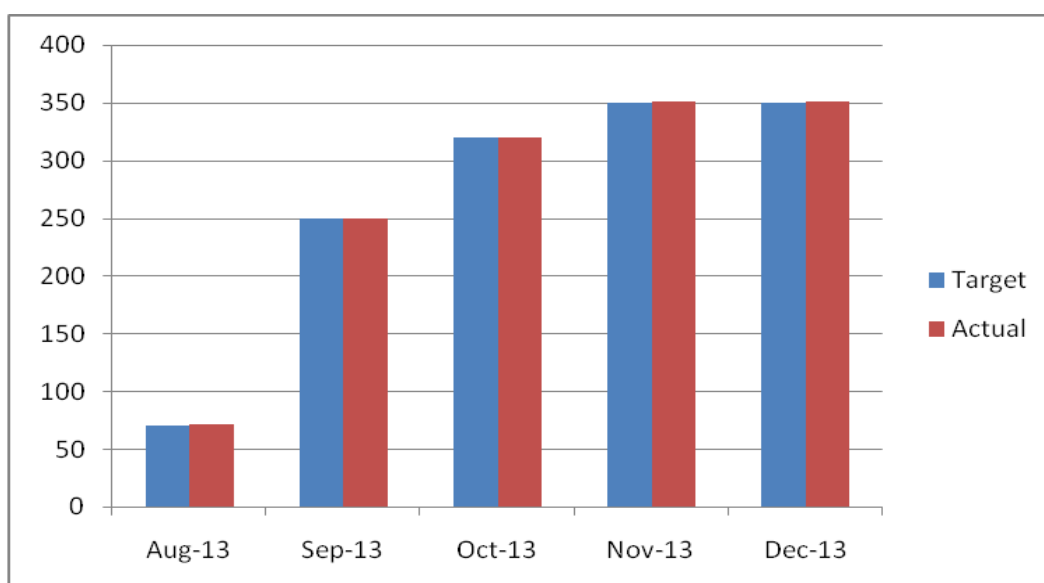
3.5 Early Education Places for Two, Three and Four Year Olds

- 3.5.1 Since 2001 the number of children aged 0-4 years has increased by approximately 20% almost 7% higher than the England average and 8% higher than the East of England average.
- 3.5.2 Population estimates are used to calculate the number of children living in each ward, these are based on live birth data and do not always take account of movement into the Borough, however they provide a best fit to use when planning the development of places. This data is released nationally and the

most recent data is just over twelve months old so provides a better basis than the 2011 census data.

3.6 Two year olds

3.6.1 There is not a universal entitlement to early education for all two year olds and in line with national policy this is currently restricted to low income families. There are national targets to ensure that the places accessed increases to meet the needs of eligible families, these set the initial increase from 70 children in March 2013 to an estimated 443 children in March 2014, this has since been increased to 635 children. This increases to 1009 children in September 2014. The number of eligible two year olds accessing early education is increasing month on month in line with challenging targets set to support this. The table below shows the progress with this. It is not possible to provide a national comparison as data is not currently collected, however the targets set are being met.



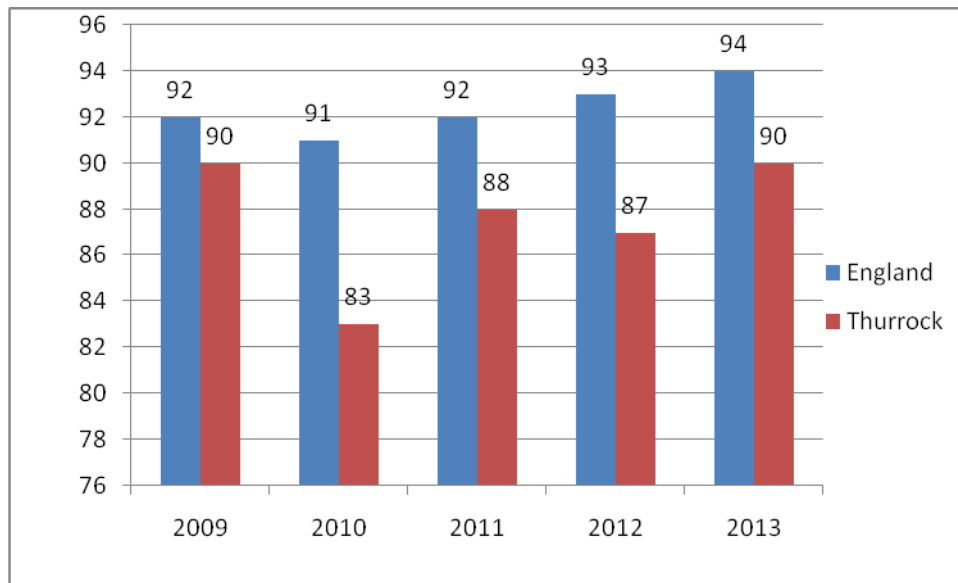
Comparison of actual take up against targets (two year olds)

3.6.2 The increase in places due in September 2014 to 1009 is supported by the provision of small capital grants to providers, to increase the number of places available however it is recognised that in areas where there is a shortage of places for three and four year olds as outlined below, this presents an additional challenge.

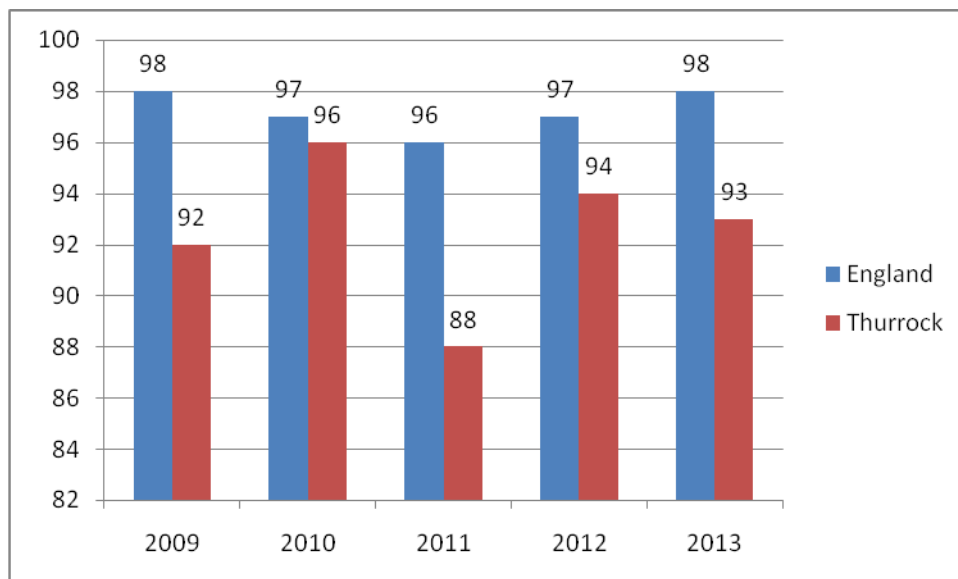
3.7 Three and four year olds

3.7.1 In order to assess take up of three and four year old early education places a comparison with national take up rates is necessary. Data based on the 2013 Department for Education annual statistical release on the provision of early education for children under five shows that 92% of three and four year olds are accessing funded early years education this compares to 96% nationally.

3.7.2 In order to support the development of new places this is further broken down into data for three and four year olds.



% three year olds accessing early education 2009 – 2013



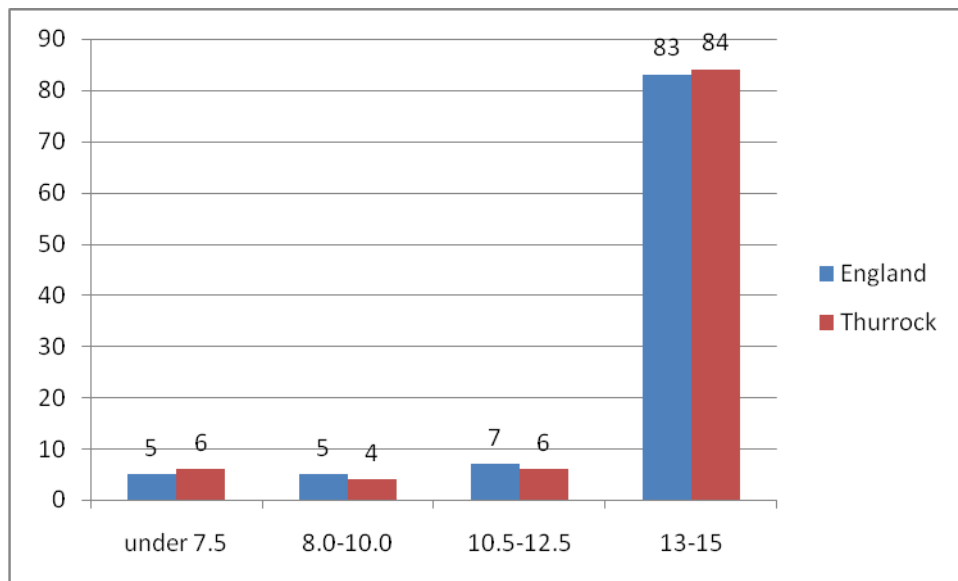
% four year olds accessing early education

3.7.3 Current performance shows that although the number of early education places accessed by three and four year olds has increased in 2013 the % gap between local and national performance remains.

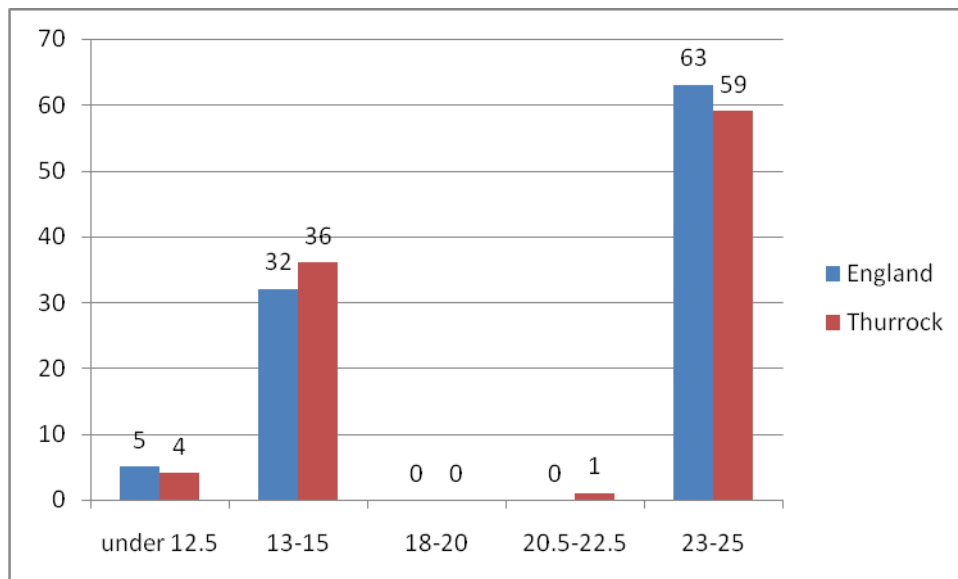
3.7.4 The increasing numbers of children aged 0-4 years in the area and against the national average present significant challenges with regard to the expansion of places. A detailed analysis shows that there are key areas of the Borough where development is needed and this information is used to plan and support the creation of new places. The main areas where development

is currently needed is Grays Riverside, however the requirements for additional early education places for two year olds alongside the restrictions on using only good and outstanding providers as graded by Ofsted mean that there is the need to develop places across the Borough as outlined in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

3.7.5 An analysis of take up by hours was also undertaken to ensure that we were broadly in line with national take up, this takes account of parental choice and also in line with national provision, many four year olds are able to access over the minimum entitlement of 15 hours per week as they are in school.



% children accessing per average hours (three year olds)



% children accessing per average hours (four year olds)

3.7.6 This analysis shows that the hours offered to three and four year olds accessing early education is broadly in line with the national position and that the main challenge is to increase the % of children accessing to bring us closer to the national average of 93% for three year olds and 98% for four year olds.

3.8 Securing sufficient childcare

3.8.1 Many parents require childcare over and above the funded provision for two, three and four year olds. This can be for childcare for babies aged 0-2 years and also for longer full day care from 8am – 6pm to facilitate working patterns or access to training. Consultation with parents shows that this is provided through a mix of Ofsted registered childcare or through informal childcare usually through Grandparents or other family members. The main reasons cited for the use of informal childcare are parental choice and affordability.

3.8.2 For parents using Ofsted registered childcare full time, the cost is on average £97.00 per week for children under two years old and £92.50 per week for children over two years old, this is lower than the England average however still represents a significant percentage of family expenditure. This provision is funded by the parent directly or for eligible low income families the cost is supported by Working Tax Credits which can provide up to 70% of the costs.

3.8.3 In Thurrock 14.7 % of families access Working Tax Credits, this is slightly below the national average of 15.6% however we are one of the few local authorities in the region where take up has increased over the last two years. The promotion of Tax Credits is ongoing through the Family Information Service.

3.9 Information to Parents

3.9.1 The main provision of information to parents is through the Family Information Service which is promoted on the Thurrock Council Website and also provides outreach advice and sessions in places such as Children's Centres, Health Clinics and local Parent and Toddler Groups. The service continually evaluates the service it provides and recently it has been pivotal to the increased take up of two year old early education places by providing outreach targeted to areas of low take up.

3.9.2 Parents surveyed were asked of their awareness of the Family Information Service and on average over 50% were aware. The service is also developing a directory of support available through the Early Offer of Help for both professionals and parents. The number of enquires and visits to the website has increased from 44,939 in 2012 to 71,337 in 2013 and this service is being developed to provide further information on support and services for families.

4. CONCLUSION:

4.1 The population growth in the Borough and the extension of the early education offer for two year olds means that the provision of sufficient early

education and childcare remains a challenge. The number of 0-4 year olds living in Thurrock continues to grow at a faster rate than the national average and close work with the Pupil Place Planning team will ensure that new places are developed alongside new school places where this is possible.

- 4.2 The introduction of the early education entitlement for two year olds has been successful to date and officers are meeting regularly to address any barriers to achieving the challenging targets. This programme plays a crucial part in the overall work to narrow gaps in attainment and reduce inequalities.
- 4.3 Thurrock is still behind the national average for the take up of early education for three and four year olds with 92% take up against an England average of 96%. The data analysis carried out will now inform planning to address this however, the limited provision of capital funding for early education is a prohibitive factor.
- 4.4 As new developments create additional housing and movement into the area, close work with the Planning Team and the Pupil Place Planning Team will be needed to ensure we meet both the existing and the increased demand.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The research which informed this assessment report was conducted during the period September 2013 and was undertaken by 2 surveys; a parental demand survey and childcare provider survey.

5.2 Parental Demand Survey

- 5.2.1 200 parents were consulted – via either a face-to-face interview or completed a survey located at a childcare provision in Thurrock about the subject of childcare within Thurrock. 10 surveys were undertaken in all of Thurrock's 20 electoral wards. On analysing these responses it has become evident that not all parents lived or accessed their children's childcare in the ward that they completed the survey in; resulting in uneven responses in each locality and all data has been analysed taking this into account.

5.3 Childcare Provider Survey

- 5.3.1 An electronic questionnaire was distributed to all 62 Ofsted registered private, voluntary and independent Day Nurseries, Preschool's and Out of School childcare providers located within Thurrock. The questionnaire focused on the changes of trends they have been observed in the past year (since the 2012 annual refresh Sufficiency Assessment), the impact of the increased early years provision for two-year-olds, future priorities, sustainability and the changes introduced in the new guidance Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities published September 2013 with regards to Quality and Training.
- 5.3.2 42 providers completed the surveys. 15 network childminders support with the delivery of Early Years Education and we work with childminders through

mechanisms such as childminder forums rather than survey responses, so network childminders are not included in this data exercise.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

6.1 The following corporate priorities are supported through this proposal:

- create a place for learning and opportunity.
- build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities
- improve health and wellbeing

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Telephone and email: **01375 652466**
kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk

Funding for early education is provided via the Dedicated Schools Grant, and is adjusted according to take up, therefore there is no cash disadvantage to increasing the number of available places. There has been a small allocation of Capital funding to support the growth in places, which has all been committed to projects. However with the large increase in need for additional places, the demand cannot be met within current available provisions and therefore consideration to the capital growth may be required in the future.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Telephone and email: **07971 316599**
lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory duty that all local authorities in England are required to undertake, imposed by the Childcare Act 2006. This report asks that its contents be noted and information in it used in the pupil place planning process.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**
Telephone and email: tevans@thurrock.gov.uk

The analysis of early education access by ward will enable officers to plan to increase take up. Officers should also complete an analysis of key groups to support their planning and further increase the positive impact of early education provision. Targeting of the two year old early education programme has ensured that those most in need of support receive it and that families

with the lowest income levels in the Borough are able to access early education and childcare, this is further supported by the work to increase take up of Working Tax Credits.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

National Statistics on the Provision for Children Under Five Years of age (2013)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-in-england-january-2013>

2012 year population estimates (Office for National Statistics)

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

N/A

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Sue Green – Strategic Leader Early Years, Families and Communities

Telephone: 01375 652340

E-mail: sggreen@thurrock.gov.uk