

EARLY YEARS REVIEW

Report of the Children's Services and Education
Scrutiny Sub-committee

March 2010



Contents	Page
Introduction and background	2
Key evidence considered	2
Background	
Free Early Education Offer (FEE)	3
Single Funding Formula (SFF)	3
Types of pre- school education and day care settings	4
Focus of the review	5
Context and summary of views	
Central government	5
Local authorities	5
Children	5
Parents, families and carers	6
Settings	6
Findings	
Responding to flexible offer	
Settings: present and planned offer	8
Proposed response to the flexible offer	8
Economic issues	9
Impact of change on provision	9
Parents	9
Developing a policy around part time and full time places	10
Parents	12
The impact of the SFF on admissions	12
Increasing the uptake of the FEE by disadvantaged; stressed and vulnerable groups	12
Summary of recommendations	14
Appendices	16

1. Introduction and background

1.1 The children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee decided in September 2009 to do a review of early years. The review principally looks at the delivery of the free early education offer and the impact of a new funding regime, the Single Funding Formula (SFF), on this provision. The review also addresses take up of the early education offer, how the early education offer fits in with wider subsidised day care provision and lastly considers how this could be best targeted.

1.2 Members of the sub-committee chose this as a review topic for a number of reasons including:

- Concern about the possible negative impact of the Single Funding Formula on the economic sustainability of settings and therefore their ability to deliver the early education offer;
- Anecdotal stories of a lack of provision in East Dulwich;
- A plethora of evidence that good early education can positively impact on children's emotional, social and cognitive development;
- Concern with take-up of free early education places by families and whether the provision of nursery care meets the needs of children and families;
- Concern that more disadvantaged and vulnerable families were not accessing the Free Early Education offer.

2. Key evidence considered

2.1 Key evidence we considered included:

- Review of documents produced by officers at the request of sub-committee members;
- Review of existing local authority documents;
- Five settings were visited: Ivydale Nursery School; 1st Place Children's centre; Robert Browning Nursery School; Kintore Way Nursery School (based in a children's centre) and Puddleducks (private nursery). *[Reports for visits are separately written up and available];*
- One to one interviews with two parents. *[Reports for visits are separately written up and available];*
- Consultation with parents through attending the Parent Participation Forum. *[Report attached as appendix].*

2.2 The Parent Participation Forum (PPF) builds on the work of local forums and partnerships where parents play an active part in decision-making and consultation, to create a Southwark-wide early years forum for parents. The forum is developed and supported to feed into and contribute to the planning and development of services for children, young people and families. The forum particularly relates to and responds to the priorities and targets originally set by the 0 – 6 sub partnership, and Children's Centres Development programme. The group meets monthly. Membership currently runs at 45 parent members, of whom 90% are bi-lingual.

Background

3. Free Early Education Offer (FEE)

- 3.1 The FEE is the government funded early years provision that every child should be able to access. All three and four year olds are currently entitled to 12.5 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year. This applies until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). The early education can take place in nurseries, play-groups, pre-schools or with qualified child-minders.
- 3.2 All settings receiving government funding to provide free early education to three to five year olds must:
- be included in the local authority directory of providers;
 - help children progress towards the 'early learning goals' set out in the early years foundation stage;
 - be inspected regularly by Ofsted.
- 3.3 This means that a child should get a good quality early years education, regardless of which type of setting they attend.
- 3.4 The early years foundation stage emphasises learning through play to develop cognitive skills and children's confidence, emotional and social well being (ref.1).

4. Single Funding Formula (SFF)

- 4.1 The single funding formula affects the delivery of the free early education offer in a number of ways. Originally the SFF was scheduled to be fully implemented by September 2010; however in January 2010 the government decided to delay its implementation for most local authorities and Southwark will be delaying full implementation by a year.
- 4.2 The guidance requires local authorities to plan for four interrelated changes:
- Introduction of funding based on children's 'participation' rather than 'places';
 - Development of a single formula covering all settings;
 - Extension of the free entitlement from 12.5 hours to 15 hours per week term time only;
 - Ensure, as far as possible, that parents have flexibility in using the services.
- 4.3 All non-maintained school settings are already funded on the basis of participation so this change is less likely to adversely impact on these settings. However nursery schools and children's centers are more likely to experience a negative impact as they are currently funded by 'places'. Buffer funding is planned to help alleviate some of the consequences.

4.4 Following discussions with all sectors working in early years Southwark has concluded that the following factors should be taken into account when developing a formula:

- Basic hourly rate;
- Social deprivation supplement;
- Staff qualification supplement.

4.5 The following delivery patterns that form the Core Offer (FEE) have come from the findings of the pathfinder local authorities. These authorities have found these patterns to be popular with parents and deliverable by providers within the national limits designed to protect child development:

3 hours a day over 5 days of the week
5 hours a day over 3 days of the week

4.6 Currently the department for children, schools and families is consulting on two additional models:

6 hours + 6 hours + 3 hours over three days of the week
9 hours + 3 hours + 3 hours over three days of the week

Delivery of any model should not go ahead without assessment of parental demand and local provider capacity to deliver

5. **Types of pre- school education and day care settings**

Pre-school playgroups	Generally take children aged 3-5. Most offer half-day sessions, not all are open all week. Usually non-profit making and run by volunteers. Many parents involved.
Day nurseries	Take children under 5 for whole working day. Run by local authority, voluntary sector, private companies, employers or individuals.
Child-minders	Child-minders look after children under 5 and older children out of school hours. Usually in child-minder's own home. Local authority determines number of children
Private nursery	Take children aged 2-5. Offer full or half day sessions, sometimes including school age children.
Children's Centres	Provide a range of activities for children and families including daycare and nursery provision
State nursery schools	Take children aged 3-4 during school terms and normally offer 5 half day sessions a week.
State primary schools	Take children aged 3-4. Open during term time and offer five half-day sessions a week.
Reception classes	Take children aged 4-5. Some children start off with half day sessions and build to full time.

6. **Focus of the review**

6.1 The review decided to focus on policy development around four areas:

- Delivering the flexible offer;
- Developing a policy around part time and full time places;
- The impact of the SFF on admissions;
- Increasing the uptake of the FEE by disadvantaged, stressed and vulnerable groups.

Context and summary of views

7. **Central government**

7.1 The government childcare strategy has two main aims;

- Promotion of high quality childcare and provision of the early years offer in order to affect positive child development;
- Providing childcare so parents can work in order to combat poverty and deprivation.

8. **Local authorities**

8.1 Southwark Council has a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare of good quality that is flexibly delivered to meet the needs of children and families. Local authorities produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years. Southwark did this in February 2008 and this was supplemented by further work in December 2008.

9. **Children**

9.1 Research shows that children from the age of three benefit from good quality early years provision. To obtain these benefits it is essential that the provision is delivered to a high standard. High quality early years education impacts positively on children's cognitive, emotional and social development and the impact is particularly measurable on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. High quality care is associated with well trained and educated staff. It can be delivered in a number of settings; what matters most is the development of nurturing relationships and a stimulating environment that promotes learning.

9.2 There is some research showing some moderate adverse affects to children's emotional and social development when children spend too long in centre based day care (ref 2)

10. **Parents, families and carers**

10.1 The sub-committee considered three main sources of information; Southwark Childcare Sufficient Assessment and Gap Analysis which interviewed parents; two telephone interviews and attendance at the Parent Participation Forum.

10.2 The main concerns for parents are:

- Increasing flexibility
- Reducing the number of providers an individual family has to use
- Assistance with transitions and admission
- Affordability
- More availability of nursery provision
- More provision for disabled children
- Provision located closer to home

10.3 Other issues are:

- Use of informal childcare is high; family members are the most popular choice
- Inflexibility of employers is one of the biggest barriers
- A significant number of parents do not want to use childcare
- Satisfaction with childcare is generally quite high; as choice goes up satisfaction increases

11. **Settings**

11.1 Summary of how the settings responded to the issues the review is focusing on:

Name/Type of setting	Impact of SFF	Current offer	Admission criteria	Actives to reach disadvantaged families
Ivydale State Nursery School	Neutral	Morning or afternoon FEE	Criteria for places is given to Looked after children Children with special needs Children with a sibling at the school; Nearest maintained Nursery Class or Nursery School.	Home visits

Name/Type of setting	Impact of SFF	Current offer	Admission criteria	Actives to reach disadvantaged families
1 st Place Children's Centre with charity status	Positive	Full time or part time places incorporating the core FEE with wrap around care	<p>A List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looked after children - Children with disabilities - Parent and child live in the catchment area - Sibling attending 1st Place <p>B List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teenage parents in education - Children from lone parent - Training or studying - Starting or returning to work - Using working Tax Credit - Working in the Aylesbury Area 	Outreach Range of family activities
Kintore Way Nursery School in state maintained Children's Centre	Negative	Full time or part time places incorporating the core FEE with wrap around care	<p>Priority for places is given to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looked after children - Children with special needs - Siblings - Nearest nursery - Balanced mix of ages <p>Criteria for full time nursery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerable families - Children with special needs <p>Extended wrap around care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerable families (safeguarding) - Parent/carer working or studying 	Outreach and range of family activities
Robert Browning State primary schools	Slightly Negative	Moring or afternoon FEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looked after children - Siblings - Catchment area - Children with special needs – if appropriate funding can be accessed 	Word of mouth and toddler group planed
Puddleduck Private Nursery offering FEE	Slightly Positive	Full time or part time places incorporating the core FEE with wrap around care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are able to match children to places - length of time on the waiting list - referrals from Social Services - siblings and family 	Outreach via Children's Centre

Findings

Responding to flexible offer

12. Settings: present and planned offer

12.1 Present offer:

Nursery schools

The two maintained Nursery Schools we visited offered part time only places term time only; either morning or afternoon for 2.5 hours.

Morning	LUNCH	Afternoon
9.15am – 11.45am		1.15pm- 3.15pm

Children's centres

Children's Centres (Kintore Way Nursery and 1st Place) offered part time for 2 or 3 days a week or full time 5 days a week using these options:

Kintore Way

Wrap around breakfast club	Nursery school	Wrap around after school care
8.15 am – 9.15am	9.15am – 3.15pm	3.15pm - 5.45pm

1st Place

Wrap around	Nursery school	Wrap around
8am – 9am	9am – 5pm	5pm – 6pm

Private nursery

The private nursery offers full time and part-time places

Puddleducks

Full and part time : 8am - 6pm

Proposed response to the flexible offer

- 12.2 The two maintained nursery schools visited offered part time only places term time only; either morning or afternoon for 2.5 hours and they will increase this to 3 hours. One would like to offer full-time place but needs consent from the local authority to do this. The other nursery is considering the possibility of offering part time places over 2 or 3 days but this would need capital investment to provide lunches.

Morning	LUNCH	Afternoon
9.15am – 11.45am	Provided	1.15pm - 3.15pm

13. Economic issues

- 13.1 Settings that offered part-time places tended to offer Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday with Wednesday as an optional day or they juggled places according to need. They also offered some variation in hours. This seemed complex but manageable. The private nursery said parents purchasing additional hours was key to remaining economically viable and offering the FEE.
- 13.2 Teacher led early years education is more expensive to provide than wrap around care so some providers adapt their staffing to suit.

14. Impact of change on provision

- 14.1 Two nurseries expressed concerns that expanding nursery and day care provision might put pressure on the more traditional morning or afternoon term time provision.
- 14.2 They thought these slots were beneficial to the children as they were not so tired and that it allowed more children to access a pre-school place and smooth the transition to reception class in primary schools. A number of settings were concerned that some parents preferred this pattern but might get squeezed out if settings moved to a longer day pattern.

15. Parents

- 15.1 Parents that the sub-committee gathered views from wanted more flexible provision that fitted in with their work or family life. The prevailing view was that slots of 2.5 hours were too short and a comment was made that this hardly left time to take the bus home and then return again. Parents seemed to prefer the longer slots. 5 hours, 6 hours & 9 hours were mentioned as preferred options.
- 15.2 Some parents were using a number of providers for different siblings in different locations and finding the travelling stressful for their children.
- 15.3 They welcomed the child-minder option to expand provision and offer flexibility.
- 15.4 Providers thought that some parents may well want the more traditional morning or afternoon offer and this may suit children well; particularly morning provision. More consultation work would need to be done to see if other parents wanted this pattern. The parents we spoke to all preferred the longer pattern.

Recommendations:

1. Provision of the FEE in longer days of 5 or 6 hours may meet most parents' needs better. The maintained sector may need capital investment to provide additional space for providing lunch etc; permission from the council to vary hours and assistance with changes to staffing.
2. Provision of nursery education alongside wrap around care means that parents can combine their FEE and then purchase additional care in order to work or study. It may be worth considering this as an option for maintained sectors.
3. Investment in the child-minder option to deliver FEE will expand provision, offer flexibility and be welcomed by parents.

16. Developing a policy around part time and full time places

- 16.1 Settings have different status (voluntary, private, maintained) and benefit from different levels of state support. All the settings we looked at benefit from some state support because they have agreed to deliver the FEE. The level of state support varies across settings; some settings such as private nurseries only get help with their capital programs and through network and learning opportunities. Others settings such as children's centres get more intensive state support and this directly subsidise the fees they charge to parents for additional hours of care they offer families over and above the Free Early Education offer.
- 16.2 These places are often desirable because the fees are more affordable than in those in the private sector.
- 16.3 This is a summary of the priorities used by all the different settings visited to set their criteria for admission:

All prioritise	Some prioritise	Most prioritise
Looked after children Siblings at the nursery	Children with special needs/disabilities Parent and child live in the catchment area or nearest nursery	Teenage parents in education Lone parents Using working tax credit Working locally Balanced mix of ages Parents working or studying Starting or returning to work Training or studying Vulnerable parents Safeguarding

- 16.4 Responding to looked after children and families in crisis. Settings said they wanted to be able to respond to families in crisis; whether or not this was a formal policy, as well as the needs of looked after children. Nurseries said that they needed to leave some spare capacity and this had an economic cost.
- 16.5 Although most settings prioritise children with special needs or disabilities some settings had particular expertise in this area; 40 % of Kintore Way children have special needs. Other settings found the slow assessment process a barrier.
- 16.6 Occasionally children with high level special needs will have a statement in place on entry. More typically, this is not the case and the process of assessment is initiated after admission. Such children (those on the autistic spectrum for example) often require high levels of support which goes well beyond that which is funded through the Early Years Action Plus.
- 16.7 A statement is sometimes issued in the child's final term in nursery provision and the attached funding is only provided from the date of issue. The nursery setting has had to provide statement level support from admission but is only reimbursed for a small part of that time.
- 16.8 Inclusive settings which welcome children with special needs are therefore financially disadvantaged every time they make provision before the issue of a statement even though the place could not be sustained without it.

17. **Parents**

- 17.1 When parents were asked who should get priority for part time and fulltime day care places (which may incorporate the FEE depending on age) they said:
- Everybody should get access; early education is important for all children.
 - Low income families should get priority. They particularly picked out working families with a low disposable income and emphasized that the assessment of income should not be rigidly applied and not exclude those who were ineligible for income support.

Recommendations:

4. Ensure settings can maintain spare capacity to respond to families in crisis and looked after children.
5. Backdate support funding for children with special needs to the start of their time in nursery, for children who later receive a more extensive statement.
6. Prioritise part time and full time daycare places for parents with a low disposable income who are working or studying.

18.

The impact of the SFF on admissions

18.1 There were two main potential adverse impacts noted:

- Nursery schools had concerns that the counting of 'participation' happened early in the term so impacted on gradual transitions. They would like parents to be able to reserve a place even if they fully took it up later in the term.
- There are particular difficulties for nursery schools in children's centres where they also provide day care. The present set-up makes a smooth transition very economically difficult and this is anticipated to get worse by the move to a single point of entry to primary schools in January

Recommendations:

7. Give urgent consideration to providing adequate transition funding for children moving from daycare to nursery school in relevant Southwark Children's Centres so that affected children who are not '3 enough' still receive adequate funding to sustain a place.
8. Allow parents to be able to send a child to nursery gradually even if they don't fully 'participate' until later in the term.

19. Increasing the uptake of the FEE by disadvantaged; stressed and vulnerable groups

- 19.1 According to Southwark's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, 87% of parents use the FEE offer but this includes schools and this may be lower for children aged 3. The Day Care Trust concluded that nationally disadvantaged children are less likely to take up childcare. In 2004 only 31% of the lowest income families accessed formal childcare versus 52% of the highest income families.
- 19.2 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the Gap analysis both suggested that the evidence indicated that the needs of disabled children and their families were not being met effectively. The report recommended that further information be gathered to more accurately understand the barriers faced by this group.
- 19.3 One of the providers the sub-committee visited had teenage parents from the 'Care to Learn' scheme, however a number of providers said that they did not have a high uptake from this group and they were not using services. One provider did indicate a specialised group meeting in Chumleigh Gardens of young parents. The Gap analysis did not gather data on this group specifically.
- 19.4 Parents want more help with admissions and transitions; both into early years and into primary school. They want more communication from nursery schools about places once they have applied. Two parents commented that they made applications and heard nothing back for many months and then one received a call the week before term started and the other on the day the

nursery place became available. They valued the home visits and wanted more providers to offer one to one slots prior to their child joining the nursery. A comment was made that discussing their child's needs was difficult to do in a classroom in a 15 minute slot. They wanted more support for transition to primary school. There were concerns about the single point of entry plans for primary schools.

- 19.5 Children's centre employ outreach workers and Puddleducks works in partnership with the local outreach worker to reach out to parents.
- 19.6 The Parent Champions Project produced by the Day Care Trust promoted peer to peer networks to reach the most disadvantage groups through the use of word of mouth. This increased the uptake of the formal childcare. (ref 3)
- 19.7 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment demonstrated that in 2008 63% of providers had an average of 3 vacancies. Only Dulwich had a demonstrable need for more provision; however parents living in Bermondsey and Borough & Bankside were most likely to have concerns over provision. There appears to be a gap between what is on offer and parents' perception of choice.

Recommendations:

9. Consider if extra work needs to be done to gather the views of parents of disabled parents to understand more about the needs of this group.
10. Consider children's centres acting as hubs to promote good practice around meeting the needs of disabled children.
11. Consider linking up outreach workers from children's centres to work with other local providers to reach out to disadvantaged parents to promote take up of early education (FEE).
12. Consider using the Day Care Trust Parent Champion Project toolkit; particularly to reach target groups such as families with a disabled child, teenage parents, BME groups etc to promote take up of early education (FEE).
13. Concentrate on giving more family support around admission and transitions particularly through more regular, sustained and sensitive communication including home visits where appropriate.

20. Summary of recommendations

Recommendations:

1. Provision of the Free Early Education offer (FEE) in longer days of 5 or 6 hours may meet most parents' needs better. The maintained sector may need capital investment to provide additional space for providing lunch etc; permission from the Council to vary hours and assistance with changes to staffing.
2. Provision of nursery education alongside wrap around care means that parents can combine their FEE and then purchase additional care in order to work or study. It may be worth considering this as an option for maintained sectors.
3. Investment in the child-minder option to deliver FEE will expand provision, offer flexibility and be welcomed by parents
4. Ensure settings can maintain spare capacity to respond to families in crisis and looked after children.
5. Backdate support funding for children with special needs to the start of their time in nursery for children who later receive a more extensive statement.
6. Prioritise daycare places for parents with a low disposable income who are working or studying.
7. Give urgent consideration to providing adequate transition funding for children moving from daycare to nursery school in relevant Southwark Children's Centres so that affected children who are not '3 enough' still receive adequate funding to sustain a place.
8. Allow parents to be able to send a child to nursery gradually even if they don't fully 'participate' until later in the term.
9. Consider if extra work needs to be done to gather the views of parents of disabled parents to understand more about the needs of this group.
10. Consider children's centres acting as hubs to promote good practice around meeting the needs of disabled children.
11. Consider linking up outreach workers from children's centres to work with other local providers to reach out to disadvantaged parents to promote take up of early education (FEE).
12. Consider using the Day Care Trust Parent Champion Project toolkit; particularly to reach target groups such as families with a disabled child, teenage parents, BME groups etc to promote take up of early education (FEE).
13. Concentrate on giving more family support around admission and transitions particularly through more regular, sustained and sensitive communication including home visits where appropriate.

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Councillors:

Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)
Councillor Nick Vineall (Vice-chair)
Councillor Jelil Ladipo
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Jonathan Mitchell
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Veronica Ward

Education representatives:

Reverend Nicholas Elder
Jane Hole
Colin McKenzie Elliot
Sharon Donno

SOURCES

Research and information

- 1 Early years foundation stage
<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83972>
- 2 Centre for excellence for early childhood development. Bulletin; March 2004
<http://www.excellence-jeunesenfants.ca/documents/BulletinVol3No1March04ANG.pdf>
- 3 Parent Champions Project , day care trust , August 2007–March 2008
Project Highlights
<http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/parent-champions.html>
- 4 Making a Big Difference case study 11: Working with reception classes in Southwark
<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/180275>

Local authority documents

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment February 2008
Gap analysis December 2008.

Evidence (attached)

Consultation with Parent Participation Forum (PPF)

Summaries from telephone interviews with local parents about Early Years arrangements

Early Years Site Visits

Visit 1: 1st Place
Visit 2: Ivydale Nursery
Visit 3: Kintore Way Nursery School
Visit 4: Robert Browning Nursery School
Visit 5: Puddleduck Nursery

EARLY YEARS REVIEW**Consultation with Parent Participation Forum (PPF)**

Location: 1st Place Children and Parents' Centre, Chumleigh Gardens, Burgess Park. SE5 ORN.

Visit date: Tuesday 23 February, 12 noon - 12.30pm

Members present: Cllr Barrie Hargrove, CSE scrutiny sub committee chair.

PPF contact: Kate Miranda
Parent Participation and PPEL Coordinator
Children's Services Department
Sure Start Children's Centres Development Team

Officer support: Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny project manager

Introduction to Parent Participation Forum (PPF)

The aim of the group is to build on the work of local forums and partnerships where parents play an active part in decision-making and consultation, to create a Southwark-wide early years forum for parents. The Forum is developed and supported to feed into and contribute to the planning and development of services for children, young people and families. The Forum particularly relates to and responds to the priorities and targets originally set by the 0 – 6 sub partnership, and Children's Centres Development programme. Delegates from the PPF feed information to and from the Early Years Strategic Partnership. Members are trained as Parent Mentors and Advocates, Project Evaluators, and contribute to the development of information and materials for Southwark parents. The group meets monthly, chaired by Kate Miranda, Parent Participation and Parents as Partners in Early Learning Coordinator. Membership currently runs at 45 parent members, of who 90% are bi-lingual.

Questions asked:

1. How easy do you as parents & carers find it to take up the early education offer?
Are there any problems?
2. Can you find the right days and times at the moment and what times and days would work best for you?
3. Who do you think should get priority for full time / part-time day-care places?

Comments in response to the questions:

How easy do you as parents & carers find it to take up the early education offer? Are there any problems?

A number of parents commented that it is not very easy to get a place. One parent applied to 5 or 6 nurseries and only got one place.

Another parent who lives in Bermondsey applied a year ago and was not offered a place and there was no communication.

A parent from Peckham applied but nobody kept her updated and complained that she had to keep chasing and then found out only a week before.

Another parent said that they applied but received no communication and then received a call on the same day the place became available. There was concern that this was not enough notice but worry from parents that they might lose the place if they did not take it up immediately.

If a child is still in nappies it can be hard to find a place.

There was a conversation about waiting list information; however your number can go up as well as down so this can be confusing.

There was some confusion and difficulty about providing proof of identity. A parent had a relative not claiming benefits and with no tenancy who struggled to get a place for their child. It was unclear what their status was and other parents/outreach workers advised that a letter from the home office would secure a place.

Several parents were struggling using two or more providers and with traveling time between a nursery and a school. This can be stressful and also make it difficult to get to school on time.

One father used two nurseries; near the home and near the place of work.

Another parent was refused a place because they had taken their older child out of the nursery.

A parent had their child in full time under 3 daycare but when their child turned 3 the full time place ended

Other parents commented that nurseries don't seem to know themselves if you can go from part time to full time or if they can continue with their place.

A few parents welcomed home visits for 30 minutes to 1 hour and felt this was much better than trying to talk about a child's needs in 15 slots at school.

The move to primary school was worrying a lot of parents considerably. The single point of transfer was generally welcomed but there was concern that children would get less schooling and also there was some confusion about it.

A parent commented that her child was tri lingual and wanted setting to value this and feel confident that children could master several languages. Children's heritage language is as important as English.

Can you find the right days and times at the moment and what times and days would work best for you?

Parents commented that Schools had fixed times: 9 - 12 or 1 - 3 and that these times do not really help much; there is hardly enough time to get home before you have to turn around and come back.

More flexibility is wanted.

A parent commented that they find the times difficult. She worked full time for two

long days on Monday and Tuesday.

Provision should fit in with part time working patterns.

5, 6 or even 9 hour slots were preferred.

However 15 hours is not enough time for many parents.

Parents understood that there were plans to deliver the FEE through child minder networks and welcomed this for both increasing flexibility and increasing the amount of provision.

Who do you think should get priority for full time / part-time day-care places?

Everybody should get this as good to start early.

Those on a low disposable income who are working or studying. This should be flexibly considered and not just for those people whose incomes are so low that they qualify for income support.

People who are looking for work should also get access.

Summary

The main concerns for parents are:

- Increasing flexibility to longer days (5,6 & 9 hours) so this can fit in with part time work and family life
- 15 hours is not enough time for some families
- Reducing the number of providers an individual family has to use
- Assistance with transitions and admission
- Day care should be prioritized for working and studying families with low disposable income and those looking for work
- More availability of Nursery provision
- Concerns about continuity of full time and part-time places when a child turns 3
- More and earlier communication about availability and allocation of both FEE places and full time and part time daycare places
- Early years provision should be available for all

Early Years Review

Summaries from telephone interviews with local parents about Early Years arrangements

Telephone interviews were held with two Southwark mothers with Early Years aged children who, due to work commitments, were unable to meet with councillors at the proposed times. They found it easier to speak during their lunch break, responding to the questions listed below.

Interview 1.

Ms A has a professional career and works full-time in a job that typically requires 60 working hours weekly. She has a 2 year old son, whom she is raising on her own. Having moved to London from overseas, she has no network of family members on hand to help with childcare.

Ms A has opted to employ a nanny, as this arrangement suits her long work hours. She conveniently found the nanny through a 'flyer' at her workplace, before she had started to look for childcare alternatives. She therefore has not enquired about places with Southwark Early Years providers.

Ms A requires additional care for her son when the nanny is on leave however - and she is currently looking to the Council for assistance in finding appropriate provisional childcare.

Ms A has also already had contact with the Council and Council services through participating in activities for Early Years children. She is impressed by the multitude of free activities, which both she and her nanny have accessed for her son. Ms A receives updates from the Council on activities tailored to son's age group and finds this very effective. Southwark officers have also twice visited her home to ensure that it is child-proof, according to her son's age and mobility. The first visit was free of charge.

Interview 2.

Ms B found it difficult to find cost effective childcare provision that was suitably close to where she lives. She initially hoped to enrol her daughter at the Coin St nursery near Waterloo Station, but the waiting list was too long. (She later heard of a mother who had enrolled her child at Coin St when she was 3 months pregnant, in view of the list's length.)

Ms B therefore looked at 4 other nurseries in her area, none of which seemed appropriate: she found them either too expensive or the premises too unpleasant/dirty.

She also spoke with other mothers; researched for alternative providers on the internet and used networks such as the Riverside Parents' Association. She could not easily find a single source on the web of co-ordinated information about the various alternative providers and options.

She did consult the Southwark council website which has a list, but didn't find this particularly useful. She suggested, for example, that it would be handy to access reviews from other parents about the childcare providers they use, and that it would

be very helpful to have one website location that co-ordinated all the relevant local information.

The childcare provision that Ms B finally arranged is split between her husband, who is currently looking for work following redundancy, and a relative. She would have preferred her daughter to have been with other children and so to have attended a nursery for at least 2 or 3 days. It makes no economic sense however, for her to use a nursery, when the costs are over £50 to £55 per day. As an alternative, Ms B arranges for her child to attend a different activity each day with other children. Some of these are organised by council services and are subsidised or paid for by Sure Start.

She would have preferred to use a nursery, but as outlined, found those in her area either unsuitable or unaffordable.

Starter questions for meetings with parents of Early Years children:

1. Have you obtained an Early Years place for your child in a setting of your choice?
2. If your child does not have a place of your choice, why is this?
 - A) There are currently no vacancies at your preferred setting(s)?
 - B) The place(s) of your choice are too far from your home?
 - C) Your preferred provider does not offer the length of hours or combination of days that you require?
 - D) The costs for childcare at your preferred setting are too expensive for you?
 - E) You are unable to find a provider who can cater for your child's special needs
 - F) Other reasons
3. To what extent did you find the steps for finding and securing your child's place straight forward?
4. How far in advance of requiring an Early Years place, did you start to look for one, - and did this give you adequate time to find a vacancy with a preferred provider?
5. To what extent was your search for an Early Years place assisted by the Council and/or by information from the Council?
6. How do you generally view the provision of Early Years education and care for your child? What aspects are you pleased with, - and what aspects would you most wish to improve:
 - A) the quality of the education / care
 - B) the costs
 - C) the standard of the premises and facilities
 - D) the proximity of the centre / nursery / childminder to your home
 - E) the availability of a place at the times and on the days you need them
 - E) the provision for children with special needs
 - F) other aspects

Early Years Site Visits

Visit 1: 1st Place

Location: Burgess Park

Visit date: Friday, December 11 2009

Members present: Cllr Eliza Mann

Children's Centre contact: Nicki Howard, Centre Director

Officer support: Rachael Knight

Summary of notes taken:

Activities / services provided

As a children's centre, 1st place has a considerable span of activities, including as follows:

- provision of activities for close to 1200 children – e.g. music and movement classes
- 51 day care places
- training for parents
- access to health visitors
- support and networking for childminders – and to parents seeking childminders
- on-site midwifery services
- on-site services from the British school of osteopathy
- vocational training for parents to become qualified childminders and daycare/ childcare workers
- English courses for parents and childminders with English as a second language
- support for parents taking their first steps back to work from maternity leave

General background

- 1st Place is a registered charity run by a board of trustees which largely comprises parents. It is one of 21 children's centres across the borough (all to be in place by March 1010), and serves an area with the borough's highest population density.
- The centre was established following a local Sure Start programme in the area that was initiated approximately 5 years ago. At the time there was very little provision for child care in the area other than from childminders. Parents were consulted about their priorities and indicated that they wanted a range of high quality provision, including support for parents.
- The centre is funded through a combination of Sure Start funding; money from parents and revenue from hiring out space in the building. If Sure Start funding was to vanish, activities would have to be reduced, but the centre could still operate on a completely self-sustained basis. All other children's centres in the borough are run by the council.
- There are 125 staff members, and 25 different languages are spoken at the centre.

Admission and number of places

- There are currently 700 families accessing services / activities at the centre, and 70 of these have children accessing childcare.
- The waiting list for childcare is over 200 for full-time day care. Typically these families that are unable to obtain a place arrange care from a childminder.

Admission criteria

A List

- Looked after children
- Children with disabilities
- Parent and child live in the catchment area
- Sibling attending 1st Place

B List

- Teenage parents in education
- Children from lone parent
- Training or studying
- Starting or returning to work
- Using working Tax Credit
- Working in the Aylesbury Area

A child receives one point for each of the criteria categories, and parents are asked to provide relevant evidence prior to admission.

Parental engagement

- There are many parents employed by the centre, who were previously unemployed, as well as many childminders who have received training at the centre to improve their English and/ or to obtain proper childcare qualifications. Such courses impact the quality of care inside and outside the centre.
- Volunteering at the centre has also been very popular, as have courses to help parents re-enter the job market.
- Outreach is being planned to families in the local Chinese communities, as there are proportionately very few Chinese families accessing the centre.
- A fathers' group is held on Saturdays.
- Encouraging young parents to attend the centre has proved difficult – there is low take-up of the generic activities. There is however a teenage parents project run by the council in the Chumleigh Gardens extension.

Early Years Site Visits

Visit 2: Ivydale Nursery

Location: Ivydale Primary School, Ivydale Rd, SE15

Visit date: December 17 2009

Members present: Colin Elliott

Nursery contact: Miles Smith, Foundation Stage Manager

Officer support: Rachael Knight

Summary of notes taken:

- Ivydale provides 50 part-time places (divided between 30 morning – 20 afternoon session places.)
- Some children attend for 3 terms before going to primary school, some only 2, depending on the waiting list.
- To date no children have had to have been turned away completely, but this is foreseeable with the current waiting list.

Relationship with parents

- The nursery works to establish an immediate relationship with parents, by carrying out home visits – to allay fears; introduce the child to their key worker; and gather baseline information about the child – such as asking questions about whether parents read with their children at home.
- The child is then observed over the first 6 weeks to see what level s/he is working at across the 6 areas of the curriculum. Parents are involved in the assessment, as it is recognised that they tend to know the most about their child's development. Parents are also invited back into the nursery after 6 weeks for a settling-in report.
- Some parents may find the home visit and /or the questions intrusive. If this is sensed, less emphasis is given to asking questions about parental involvement.
- Ivydale considers it very important to have good working relationships with the parents, and involves them in the nursery in several ways, - such as during the settling-in period and during trips, etc.

Admissions

- The morning sessions are preferred as the children are more active in the morning. It tends to be 'middle class' families that know this and who specify that they request the morning session on their child's application form.
- General mobility of families in the area has significantly reduced due to house prices. There are now far greater numbers of children who have attended the primary school right through from the first year to the end of key stage 2 than was previously the case. (It was earlier around 30% and is now closer to 60%.)

- Because the nursery is only able to offer part-time places, some parents arrange for childminders or other nurseries to take care of their children for the other part of their working day.
- Many children do not take up a place because they need full-time care and the parents would prefer not to have to combine a part-time place with another minder or provider.
- Ivydale is not anticipating any problems to arise from the change to the Single Funding Formula.
- How early parents apply for a place or the length of time that children are on the waiting list doesn't make a difference to when they obtain a place.
- Ivydale would like to offer full-time places. The council has 'classified' the nursery as part-time and this seems difficult to change.

Admissions criteria:

"Ivydale School adheres to Southwark Council's admission criteria. If more parents want a Nursery place for their child than is possible to provide, children will be given priority in the following order:

Oversubscription Criteria for Nursery Classes:

- i) Children in public care (looked after children);
- ii) Children with educational, medical or social needs where professional advice indicates that placement would be beneficial; this includes children with the statement of Special Educational Needs which names the Nursery Class;
- iii) Children who have a brother or sister attending the school at the time of entry;
- iv) Children for whom it is their nearest maintained Nursery Class or Nursery School."

Early Years Site Visits**Visit 3: Kintore Way Nursery School**

Location: 97 - 102 Grange Rd, London SE1 3BW

Visit date: 29.01.15

Members present: Cllr Barrie Hargrove, Cllr Veronica Ward & Cllr Eliza Mann

Children's Centre contact: Sharon Donno (Head teacher), Terri Cole (Deputy Head Day Care)

Officer support: Julie Timbrell

Summary of notes taken:**Activities / services provided**

Core offer is provision of accessible and affordable childcare as a route out of poverty. Babies are accepted from 6 months up until entering primary school. Once they are admitted to the Centre they have a place at Nursery School, there is no need to reapply. This is to reduce the amount of transitions.

The Nursery is part of a Children's Centre and provides wrap around care and a range of complementary and additional activities for families and childminders.

Admissions, waiting list, referrals

120 full time equivalent places are provided.

Long waiting list for under 3's for full time or part-time places.

There is an unmet need for baby places and concern that this is then met by unregistered childminders.

The Nursery gets referrals from Social Services for children in need, and there is funding from the Local Authority to subsidise fees for some of these families.

Teenage parents can access places through 'Care to Learn' and the Nursery accommodated two 15 year olds and 16 year old last year.

There is some additional CAP funding for working parents and those seeking work but this scheme is undergoing changes and some funding has been withdrawn.

The Nursery receive a number of formal and informal referrals for children with special needs. A very high number of children at the Centre have special needs; around 40 % and they have become locally known as a nursery that is able to accommodate these children well.

Outreach

An outreach worker is employed to encourage take up of all the Centre's activities by local families.

Admissions policy

(This is simplified)

Priority for places is given to

- Looked after children
- Children with special needs
- Siblings
- Nearest nursery
- Balanced mix of ages

Criteria for full time Nursery place is given to

- Vulnerable families
- Children with special needs

Extended wrap around care priority is given to

- Vulnerable families (safeguarding)
- Parent/ Carers working or studying

Work with other Children's Centres

They work closely with other Children's Centres and exchange good practice. The Nursery offers teacher input to South Bermondsey with a shared post. They also share and offer good practice around leadership, management and teacher functions.

Economic situation

Places are funded through a combination of fees, subsidy from the Free Early Education offer and a cross subsidy from Southwark Council as a Children's Centre.

This is essential to keep the cost of Day Care economically viable for parents. The centre has to identify the deficit of fees to service and negotiate that with Southwark Council as part of our Service Level Agreement.

In order to respond effectively to a family in crisis or an urgent need to give a place to a child in need identified by Social Services the Nursery ideally need to have some spare capacity; but there is an economic cost to this that has to be recognised.

Impact of SFF

If the Nursery no longer receive 'place' funding and instead have 'participation' funding it causes a problem for toddlers moving from day-care into the Nursery School as the funding does not kick in early enough. Also they will only qualify for a part time place (12.5 / 15 hours) but may need to move to a full time place and there is no mechanism to manage this. If they have special needs there may be additional costs. At present both full time and part-time Nursery School places are free and parents only pay for additional wrap around care if they need it. To sustain a place as outlined in the present SFF arrangements would entail either the parents or the Nursery bearing additional costs to manage the transition and neither is viable.

The other additional issue is that that the impending change to a single point of entry to primary schools means that the Nursery School will have too thin a slice of time (3 yrs 3month – 4 yrs) to be sustainable.

Solutions

Participation funding starting earlier would help

A Children's Centre factor for settings that combine Day- Care provision with a Nursery School provision.

We offer a teacher led provision and this is of higher quality but more expensive. Some consideration has been given to providing different types of staffed care to reduce costs but maintain quality. For example wrap around activities and lunch does not need to be teacher led.

Early Years Site Visits**Visit 4: Robert Browning Nursery School**

Location: King and Queen St

Walworth London SE17 1DQ

Visit date: 28.01.10

Members present: Cllr Barrie Hargrove & Cllr Veronica Ward

Children's Centre contact: Early Years Coordinator Trevor Wilkinson

Officer support: Julie Timbrell

Summary of notes taken:**Activities / services provided**

The core offer is provision of part – time Nursery School places for children aged 3 – 5 years; either morning or afternoon. The Nursery places an emphasis on offering teacher led play based provision based on the Foundation Early Years curriculum.

Admissions, waiting list, referrals

There is a waiting list of around 15 – 25 which fluctuates. The nursery considers it is just about meeting demand but there could be a little unmet need.

Some referrals come from Social Services and local agencies. The School is well known in the local community and relies on informal networks to recruit. There is no formal outreach.

SEN are a priority but It can be difficult to accommodate SEN children as sometimes they do not come with funding and the nursery has to make sure that they are properly resourced and the nursery is balanced . Statements can take time.

Admissions policyPriority for places is given to

- Looked after children
- Siblings
- Catchment area
- Children with special needs – if appropriate funding can be accessed and the needs of the child can be met

Work with other settings and the Council

The Nursery goes to joint meetings of lead practitioners and other schools come and visit. Staff take up training offered by the Early Years Council.

The Council has recently indicted support and funding for a playground; we would welcome more interaction from the Local Authority and assistance with development, particularly around capital improvements.

Impact of SFF

Economic situation

The new criteria means participation is counted on the 3rd Thursday of term of transition. The Nursery has looked at the figures for funding and we will lose some funding; approximately £4,000. Without the buffer this would be much greater and leave the Nursery down around £10,000 - £20,000.

The Nursery offers teacher led provision and this is of higher quality but more expensive. They welcome the introduction of the Foundation stage and early learning but the focus on proving the practice and the assessment process can take time away from teaching and interaction with children.

The other additional issue is that the impending changes to a single point of entry to primary schools at January.

Impact of SFF on children

The counting of children this early means that the Nursery will not be able to do the more gradual transitioning that they would prefer.

Responding to the flexible offer

The Nursery will offer part – time Nursery School places for children aged 3 – 5 years; either morning or afternoon for 3 hours.

There is a possibility that the Nursery might offer two full days from 9 – 3pm; but this would mean developing new lunch facilities and changes to present staffing arrangements and explorations are only in the provisional stage.

The disadvantages are that the daily offer benefits children as they have a regular routine. A full day can be tiring for young children.

The Nursery had not considered charging for additional days to avoid children transitioning through multiple providers, but did think this was a possibility. However this could have an adverse affect on the number of part time places they could offer. Wrap around care is not being considered.

The Nursery places an emphasis on easing the transition from Early Years into the Primary reception class and views this as a very important part of its role as transitions can be difficult for children. The Nursery want to continue in this role.

They are planning to offer a toddler group to develop relationships with families and ease the transition into Nursery School.

Solutions

Participation funding starting earlier would help.

Capital investment in the School so that lunch could be provided to enable us to respond to the flexible offer.

Early Years Site Visits**Visit 5: Puddleduck Nursery**

Location: Saint Anthony with Saint Silas Community Centre, Merttins Road, Nunhead, SE15 3EB

Visit date: 12.02.10

Members present: Cllr Veronica Ward

Children's Centre contact: Carol Bromley - Senior Manager

Officer support: Julie Timbrell

Summary of notes taken:**Background**

Puddleducks has recently moved location and found much better premises which has allowed it to extend its opening hours. Formally it was open term time only from 9 - 3pm. Since September they are open from 8 - 6pm and for 50 weeks a year.

Activities / services provided

Core offer is provision of day-care, including the Free Early Education offer, for children aged 2 – 5 years.

Admissions, waiting list, referrals

There is a long waiting list. There could be unmet need for full-time places suitable for working parents. Many of the nurseries existing children and parents have part time and term time only use of the nursery but as the nursery extends their opening hours they will be less able to offer this pattern, although they intend to accommodate their present cohort. This may mean that families who want this pattern will not be so well provided for.

Some referrals come from Social Services and they keep a space available for emergencies.

They link up with the outreach worker of Ivydale Children's Centre and the health worker to promote our services locally.

Admissions policyCriteria are:

- are able to match children to places
- length of time on the waiting list
- Referrals from Social Services
- Siblings and other family using the service

Work with other settings and the Council

There is a good childminding unit across the road.

The Council has recently provided capital funding to extend the play area outside.

The nursery are quality assessed by the Council to ensure our provision meets the right standard to offer the Early Year Foundation stage.

Economic situation and impact of SFF

The provision of 3 hours per day used to mean that parents often did not buy additional time; which had a negative impact on our economic viability. The purchasing of extra hours makes the provision of the free entitlement more sustainable. Parents use working tax credits and business vouchers to help buy more time.

The amount Southwark gives to settings per hour is quite generous; however we are concerned that providing this will have a knock on effect of raising fees for extended provision.

The new requirements for graduate leaders will mean that our costs will rise. We support this as it raises quality but this comes at a cost.

Recruitment is an issue as it is difficult to find well qualified staff.

The Nursery would like financial information as early in the business cycle as possible so it can make accurate financial forecasts.