

	<p align="center">London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p align="center">CHILDREN AND EDUCATION POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE</p> <p align="center">10 FEBRUARY 2015</p>
<p>CHILDCARE TASK GROUP – UPDATE</p>	
<p>Report of the Chair of the Childcare Task Group: Councillor Natalia Perez Shepherd</p>	
<p>Open Report</p>	
<p>Classification - For Information Key Decision: No</p>	
<p>Wards Affected: All</p>	
<p>Accountable Executive Director: Andrew Christie, Executive Director of Children’s Services</p>	
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Following discussions around Childcare Provision held at the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee (CEPAC) meeting on 3 September 2014, a Childcare Task Group was formed. This paper provides a summary of activities that have been undertaken to date.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to review and comment upon the contents of this report.

3. CONTEXT / AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GROUP

- 3.1. At the time of writing, the Childcare Task Group has met on four occasions since it was established at the CEPAC meeting on 3 September:
- 17 October
 - 7 November
 - 28 November
 - 9 January

3.2. The first meeting was used to scope the focus of the task group and draw up the terms of reference (see appendix 1), and activities for the group to undertake before the end of the year were planned.

3.3. The group is attended by the following:

Councillors

- Councillor Natalia Perez Shepherd
- Councillor Elaine Chumnerly
- Councillor Caroline Ffiske

Officers

- Jackie Devine (Early Years and Childcare Commissioner)
- Rosemary Salliss (Early Years Foundations Development Manager)
- Steve Comber (Policy Officer, Children's Services)
- Sue Spiller (Head of Community Investment)
- Paul Williamson (Head of Extended Services)

Expert witnesses

- Michele Barrett (Head of Vanessa Nursery)
- Patricia Logan (Head of Bayonne Nursery)
- Michael Pettavel (Head of Randolph Beresford Early Years Centre)
- Andy Sharpe (Masbro Centre)

3.4. The agreed aims and objectives of the group are as follows:

1. to review the provision of childcare for under-8 year olds in the borough and identify areas of best practice, including looking at the services provided by other organisations and partners in the borough, such as third sector, health, private sector etc;
2. to look at the implementation of the two year old offer;
3. to understand the views and experiences of parents and carers in relation to childcare and early years services in the borough, and to look at accessibility and affordability of childcare and how families could be supported;
4. to identify any gaps in the provision and to understand the extent of the impact on the families in relation to these gaps and identify any solutions;
5. to look at how the Council could support childminders, and to look at what the Council could do to raise the profile of childminders;

6. to contribute to a Council strategy for childcare.
- 3.5. The group is due to provide a final report with recommendations to CEPAC on 20 April 2015.

4. WORK UNDERTAKEN / EVIDENCE GATHERED THUS FAR

- 4.1. The group is still at an evidence gathering stage. Thus far, the following activities have been undertaken:

Family and Childcare Trust – London Childcare Report

- 4.2. Jill Rutter from the Family and Childcare Trust attended a meeting of the group to outline the key findings from the London Childcare Report in the context of Hammersmith and Fulham. The key points are as follows:

- A high incidence of in-migration and international migration in London means that informal childcare links are often severed. The use of informal childcare through grandparents in London is the lowest of any UK region. Furthermore, residential mobility of families means that informal childcare links within communities are difficult to develop. London has a higher proportion of single parents than the rest of the UK. All of the above result in an increased reliance on formal childcare for working families.
- Maternal employment is the lowest in London of any UK region (63% of mothers with dependent children in employment, compared with 73% nationally). Being in work, or being able to extend hours of work is key to helping families move out of poverty.
- Childcare costs for under-fives are highest in London. A part-time nursery place for a child aged under-two is 28% higher in cost than the national average (£140.12). The average cost for this is even higher in LBHF.
- There is evidence that there is confusion among families regarding the support that they can access for childcare. For instance, a working family can only access one of 'Universal Credit' or 'Tax Free Childcare' support. There are certain families where it is not clear which of these would be most beneficial. The provision of information regarding support for childcare is critical to increasing take up.
- It is recognised that there is a low take up of the two-year-old offer in Hammersmith and Fulham, but a high take up among three and four-year-olds.
- Low take up of the two-year-old offer is generally due to a parental view that the provision is temporary, that the provision is poor, that travel to providers is difficult and, in London, that populations are so

mobile (one in five families living in private rental properties as opposed to one in ten a decade ago).

- When considering childcare provision in Hammersmith and Fulham the key issues are:
 - Childcare supply, identifying gaps in provision and ensuring business sustainability
 - Addressing the social segregation in early years provision (non-working families accessing Children's Centres while working families access PVI provision – the networks formed at this stage of life tend to last for life).
 - Ensuring the quality of PVI provision
 - Providing childcare for parents with atypical work patterns

- There has been a 13% drop in the number of childminders in the past two years in London. Childminders tend to be older women on low earnings (an average of £11k per year) with high business risks. Many younger childminders see the opportunity of working in nurseries as a more secure option with more potential for career development. This limits the provision of childcare for parents with atypical work patterns.

- Childcare needs to be seen in the context of access to family friendly employment that helps families balance work and caring obligations. The Family and Childcare Trust see a role for the Mayor of London and local authorities to promote family friendly working. One example is to harmonise school holidays across all boroughs.

Consulting with childminders - visits to the Quality Childminder Forums

- 4.3. On 21 November 2014, the Task Group visited a meeting of the Quality Childminder's Forum (QCF) in the south of the borough, based at Fulham Central Children's Centre. On 28 November 2014 the Task Group visited the QCF in the north of the borough, based at Old Oak Community and Children's Centre.

- 4.4. The QCF enables childminders to network and develop best practice through a range of training workshops and interactive sessions delivered jointly by the early years team and children's centre team. The QCF meets formally on a half-termly basis and also holds weekly drop in sessions.

- 4.5. At each QCF, the Task Group had an hour on the agenda to meet with the childminders to discuss the positive and negative aspects of childminding in the borough and any improvements that they think could be made in the future.

4.6. The Task Group designed a short questionnaire for each childminder to fill out at the start of the session. The purpose of this questionnaire was to get an overview of the opinions held by the childminders and to provoke further discussion during the rest of the session. The key areas that were discussed at each session are as follows:

- Promotion of childminding services
- Demand for childminding services and funding
- Training and support for childminders

Consulting with parents – the childcare questionnaire

4.7. A questionnaire has been designed to gather and analyse the views of parents from across the borough. A copy of this is attached at appendix 2.

4.8. The online survey went live on Saturday 6 December and ran until 25 January. It was promoted by the corporate communications team as well as by the task group in schools, children's centres and via other officer distribution groups.

4.9. At the time of writing, we have received 136 completed responses online. There have also been a significant number of paper responses that have been filled out by parents attending Children's Centres, which will also be entered onto the online system.

4.10. A full analysis of responses will be included in the final report of the Task Group.

Consulting with parents – focus group at the Masbro Centre

4.11. On Friday 9 January, a small group of parents met with Councillor Natalia Perez Shepherd, Andy Sharp and Jude Wood to give their experiences and express any issues they have in relation to childcare.

4.12. The parents indicated that the hourly cost of childcare in the borough is generally too high and that many holiday activities and youth clubs are unaffordable.

4.13. With regards to the two-year-old offer, parents indicated that some nurseries set hours for the provision of this that are not suitable for parents, sometimes offering only three hours per day. The lack of flexibility in hours means that places are sometimes not taken or, if they are, the hours prevent parents from being able to return to work. It was noted that some providers work with parents to deliver a personalised offer of childcare and that this works well.

4.14. The parents noted that there is generally not enough information about childminder provision that is available in the borough. There is a general lack of confidence in using childminders, with parents preferring to use nursery provision where several practitioners will be in attendance. When

the parents were informed about the Quality Childminders Forums, they indicated that this would make them feel more confident about childminders. It was noted that this was a good idea for parents and childminders to have the opportunity to meet via the forums.

4.15. With regards to the choice of childcare provision in the borough, parents indicated that more could be done to meet their needs. Suggestions were made around:

- Crèche facilities for short term needs, for instance when parents have to attend medical appointments.
- Out of hours support for those that do not work between the hours of 09:00 and 17:00.
- An increase in accessible holiday clubs
- Support with getting back into work being attached to childcare providers.

Expansion of the two-year-old programme

4.16. In November, Rosemary Salliss presented the group with a report on the status of the expansion of the two-year-old programme.

4.17. More detail on this area has been provided to the Committee in a separate report to this meeting.

West London Zone for Children and Young People

4.18. Rachel Goenner, the community link worker for the West London Zone for Children and Young People, attended a meeting of the task group to outline the work of the group and the links that they could have with the development of childcare in Hammersmith and Fulham.

4.19. The West London Zone for Children and Young People is an organisation set up by the charity Only Connect. It is a partnership of organisations and individuals working together to support children and young people across three square miles of south Brent, north Hammersmith, north Kensington and north Westminster.

4.20. In the initial phase of their work the partners of West London Zone are conducting research to understand how best to support residents aged 0-25 living in four of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Zone, one in each borough: White City and Wormholt ward in Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensal Green ward in Brent, Golborne ward in Kensington and Chelsea and Queen's Park ward in Westminster.

4.21. They have a particular focus on critical phases such as early years, transition from primary to secondary school, and support into employment, and are building partnerships with projects which deliver services supporting children and young people in these areas.

- 4.22. Close working with the West London Zone could support the development of the childcare offer in Hammersmith and Fulham, particularly when considering their planned work on the effective sharing of data and the implementation of effective Early Intervention methods, as well as making the innovative use of various public and private funding sources.

June O'Sullivan MBE – London Early Years Foundation

- 4.23. June O'Sullivan attended a task group meeting to hear the evidence that the group have been gathering and to provide input from her perspective as Chief Executive of the London Early Years Foundation (LEYF).
- 4.24. June acknowledged the findings of the group thus far and emphasised the need for the borough to focus on a whole systems approach to delivering an improved offer for children during the Early Years phase, childcare being just one component of this.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1. Members of the Task Group are volunteering to visit and meet with the remaining witnesses using an agreed template for information gathering. The findings from each witness will be reported back to the group for inclusion in the final report.
- 5.2. A future interview with Councillor Macmillan and Councillor Fennimore is also being arranged.
- 5.3. The final report of the Task Group, outlining key findings and recommendations, will be presented to the Committee on 20 April 2015.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. As this report is intended to provide an update on recent developments, there are no immediate equality implications. However any equality issues will be highlighted in any subsequent substantive reports on any of the items which are requested by the Committee.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. As this report is intended to provide an update on recent developments, there are no immediate legal implications. However any legal issues will be highlighted in any subsequent substantive reports on any of the items which are requested by the Committee.

8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. As this report is intended to provide an update on recent developments, there are no immediate financial and resource implications. However any financial and resource issues will be highlighted in any subsequent substantive reports on any of the items which are requested by the Committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	None		

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 - Childcare Questionnaire