

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Paul Turner – Assistant Director – Education, SEND and Early Years.
Meeting	Thursday 22 Sept 2022

EARLY YEARS GRANT FUNDING

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To inform members about how the Early Years Grant Funding is administered and to give insight into uptake, parental satisfaction with the offer and to provide generalised commentary on quality.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 That the report be noted and that any areas for additional scrutiny be identified, where appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

To allow Members of the Scrutiny Committee an overview of the administration of Early Years Grant Funding, its uptake and quality.

3.1 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

Local authorities are required to administer Early Years grant funding for their areas and

ensure that there is sufficient availability of childcare to meet anticipated demand. We receive funding from the Department for Education which is allocated in accordance with a national funding formula. This formula calculation is presently being reviewed nationally.

Local authorities are able to devise their own systems for payment, following consultation with providers. We are required to pass through at least 95% of three and four year old funding, any retention is used to cover the council's own costs. Currently the council's retention is 4% and we continue to make savings where possible.

Early Years providers are paid monthly in arrears for childcare hours that have been delivered. Providers are required to register children and their attendance in accordance with agreed procedures.

Each provider receives a bespoke hourly rate for children aged 3 and 4, this takes into account a deprivation supplement based on the ward where the parent resident.

6.1 Number of registered children

		2019	2020	2021	2022
15 hour entitlement	Registered 2 year olds	576	580	496	550
	Registered 3 and 4 year olds	3161	3004	2900	2884
30 hour entitlement	Registered 3 and 4 year olds	779	843	836	850
	Total	4516	4427	4232	4284

Data source = DFE early years annual census

There has been a reduction in number of children attending since COVID partly due to the number of parents continuing to work from home and partly due to a slight decline in the Early Years population, this follows national trends.

6.2 Percentage of eligible children attending

	Blackpool 2022	England 2022
Eligible 2 year olds	73%	72%
Eligible 3 and 4 year olds	89%	92%

Blackpool percentages are broadly in line with England averages.

6.3 The local market

Blackpool Childcare Providers - 2022	
Childminders	31
Private nurseries	41
School nurseries	18
Total	90

The number of providers has remained reasonably constant over recent years. The latest formal Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was undertaken summer 2021 and at that time there were sufficient places to cover anticipated demand.

A further survey is currently in progress. It is anticipated that there will be no significant changes and that there is still a sufficient supply of places. The market is reasonably stable but the decline in demand since COVID and raising cost of living are presenting challenges to some providers. The council have no control over the overall funding rate, and providers concerns are communicated to the Department for Education.

The Early Years Provider Strategic Group meets termly and has representation from elected Providers and council officers. The Group is a mechanism for discussion and consultation on funding and sustainability issues.

6.4 Support to parents

Parents that are potentially eligible for 2 year old childcare are contacted at the beginning of each term and invited to apply to an eligibility check. Once eligible a parent receives a code that they can take to their chosen nursery and they then can register their child's attendance. The code is sent to the parent by SMS text message.

Those parents that do not reply are reminded, support with applications is also provided via Community Hubs, Betterstart Community Connectors and Health Visitors.

The Childcare team also provide brokerage support via telephone and email for any parents that may need assistance finding a suitable place, or more information with regard to eligibility.

The Universal offer for 3 and 4 year olds is promoted via social media, advertising campaigns eg Your Blackpool, libraries and community hubs.

Details of all childcare providers are also available at www.fyidirectory.co.uk and search functions have recently been improved to enable the provision of short lists of selected providers and also radius searches eg tell me all childminders within one mile of a certain

6.5 post code etc. Further work is planned to show all providers on website interactive maps.
Parents views

A parent/carer survey was undertaken during Summer 2021. A further survey is due for Autumn 2022.

Parents were asked to rate the quality of the childcare they received:

Age group	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor	Total responses
Below school age	124 (62%)	60 (30%)	15 (7.5%)	1 (1%)	0	202
School age	0	24 (57%)	15 (36%)	3 (7%)	0	42
Overall	124 (51%)	84 (35%)	30 (12%)	4 (1%)	0	244

Parents were asked to rate the value for money for the fees they paid for non funded childcare they received.

For below school age children 117 respondents (59%) told us they did not purchase additional hours.

Age group	Good value	Satisfactory value	Poor value	Total responses
Below school age	135 (68%)	56 (28%)	4 (2%)	195
School age	24 (60%)	13 (33%)	3 (7%)	40
Overall	159 (30%)	69 (64%)	7 (11%)	235

Parents were asked how easy it had been to find suitable childcare:

Age group	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy or difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	Total responses
Below school age	36 (36%)	28 (28%)	22 (22%)	12 (12%)	2 (2%)	100

School age	7 (24%)	4 (13%)	7 (24%)	8 (27%)	3 (10%)	29
Overall	43 (33%)	32 (25%)	29 (22%)	20 (15%)	5 (4%)	129

Parents were asked how they felt providers had handled issues associated with COVID and lockdowns:

Age	Handled issues well	Handled issues satisfactorily	Handled issues poorly	Total responses
Below school age	135 (68%)	56 (28%)	4 (2%)	195
School age	24 (60%)	13 (33%)	3 (7%)	40
Overall	159 (30%)	69 (64%)	7 (11%)	235

6.6 **Current plans and work in progress**

- A new sufficiency assessment will be published during Autumn term 2022
- Continued development of FYI directory with new search options including interactive maps
- Publicity campaign Autumn 2022 to encourage parents to take up childcare

Continued work with the Early Years career academy and Blackpool and the Fylde College to encourage more people to train as Early Years workforce professionals

6.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 **List of Appendices:**

7.1 None.

8.0 **Financial considerations:**

8.1 None.

9.0 **Legal considerations:**

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.