

Childcare Sufficiency Monitoring Update – Southend on Sea – April 2015

Early education and childcare in Southend is available through a large, diverse and regularly shifting market of private, voluntary, independent and maintained providers. Early years childcare provision for children aged 0-4 for at least three hours a day is provided at day nurseries, childminders, pre-schools, independent schools and in nursery classes in maintained or academy schools. Embedded within this childcare provision will almost always be the free early education entitlement of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year, with some offering this provision for 12 hours stretched over 47 weeks. Three and four year old funded provision is universally offered from the term after a child's third birthday until school age and for 40% of two year olds who meet set criteria based on income and need.

Number of Places

Levels of provision fluctuate but the current picture of provision registered with Ofsted is:

Day Nurseries open all day

28 nurseries offering 1,700 places from 7am – 7pm (part time equivalent places = 3,400, but there could be more ie. technically 2 x 3 hour sessions can fit into a day)

Pre-schools open morning and afternoon

19 pre-schools offering 580 places 9am – 3pm (part time equivalent places = 1,160)

Pre-school open mornings only

20 pre-schools offering 560 places only in the morning (part time places = 560)

Independent schools

6 independent schools offering 190 places 9am – 3pm (part time equivalent places = 360)

School nurseries

15 school nursery classes offering 470 places 9am – 3pm (part time equivalent places = 940)

Registered childminders

171 childminders offering 870 places 7am – 7pm (part time equivalent places = 1,740)

(inc 76 offering 456 funded places – part time equivalent 912)

= 4370 registered places, with the total part time equivalent places = 8,160

Occupancy

The early years team regularly monitor occupancy. This is done through 'making every contact count' for example by development officers during their visits to give advice and guidance regarding delivering quality provision, at provider training events as well as direct enquiries through ad hoc surveys.

On the whole there are always vacancies throughout the borough, with parental preferences for particular settings making them popular and therefore difficult to access. Where parents cannot access their particular choice there has always been childcare in the area that does have places. In the last 12 months there have not been any complaints received from parents by the Early Years team in the local authority regarding being able to find a childcare place.

The Department for Education doubled its target for the take up of two year old funding from September 2014 by opening up the opportunity to children whose parents receive working tax credits. This means that around 800 Southend children are able to benefit from 15 free early education hours a week and this has placed some pressure on some of the fuller providers to accommodate these additional children. However, there is always available childcare spread throughout the borough. Furthermore, over 2,000 children start Reception in school in Southend each September. 98% of all pre-school aged children attend childcare this movement into school each year free up places on a cyclical basis.

Summary

The Council's Early Years team constantly monitors whether enough childcare places are available, using its close working partnership with childcare providers across the area. There will always be certain providers that get full quickly due to parental preferences, but on the whole across Southend our sufficiency monitoring to date shows that there continues to be adequate provision across the town for those parents who want work or train, and to take up free early years provision.

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Childcare Sufficiency

April 2015