

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 7th February 2019

CONTACT OFFICER: Michael Jarrett, Service Lead, Early Years
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 476556

WARDS: All

PART I **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE REPORT

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 For the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel to comment on a report outlining Early Years Workforce developments across Slough

2. Recommendations/Proposed Action

2.1 The Panel is requested to comment and consider the information in this report noting that:

- The development and publication of an Early Years Workforce strategy aims to support the wider workforce to identify clear career pathways and opportunities for progression. Programmes and developments outlined in the strategy are proposed actions and review points for the early years service over the next few years.
- Slough Early Years Service works in partnership with training providers to ensure that appropriate training and development is available for potential practitioners. The objective remains to maximise the number of residents taking up childminding as well as increasing residents participating in level 2 and 3 childcare qualification.
- A key component of the promotion of working with children is to encourage more men to consider childcare as a career thereby reducing the gender gap and providing more young children with appropriate male role models.
- The development or maintenance of current numbers of childminders is a key priority for Slough as they are the most flexible providers of free early education and childcare in the Early Years Sector and are therefore a key component in the provision of the 30 hours extended entitlement.
- A SEND Network to support childminders with inclusive practice and skills development aims to increase the number of approved providers of FEE capable of offering places to children with severe and complex needs.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

JSNA reports performance in schools as good. Early Years Profile figures for summer 2017 were exceeded in 2018 and the Good Level of Development was 73.6%, 2.1%+ national.

3.1 Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy priorities

The work of Slough Early Years Service supports the following priorities of the strategy:

1. Protecting vulnerable children
2. Influencing the wider determinants of health through early education

3.2 Five Year Plan Outcomes

This report considers the provision of early education for children which impacts on the following Five Year Plan outcomes:

- Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

No financial implications

(b) Risk Management

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications. The provision of Early Education is a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 (Sections 6 – 11).

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

5. Supporting Information

5.1 **Slough has a statutory duty to secure a free entitlement place for every eligible child in the area. Slough Early Years Service manages this duty on the authority's behalf.** (Childcare Act 2006 and 2016)

In February 2018 the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was tabled to cabinet, outlining the probable insufficiency of early years places in Slough from summer 2018 onwards. Consideration of the report led to a Manifesto Commitment to create at least 400 new Early Years Places across the Borough. The creation of new places for early education and childcare is dependant upon providers being able to access sufficient space and suitably qualified practitioners to either expand or create new provision. There is a national shortage of early years practitioners with ensuing recruitment difficulties.

5.2 The National Focus was outlined in an Early Years Workforce Strategy published by the DfE in March 2017. Many of the original objectives have changed but there continues to be a recognition of the need for career pathways in early years to be clearer and better supported.

5.3 There is currently an ongoing review process relating to workforce issues in Slough. This monitors key strategies that are being implemented and developed to support providers with recruitment, retention and the professional development of staff.

A significant feature of the review process has been the identification of a priority need to reach the wider workforce when recruiting to work with children.

To address this need a series of changes were instigated in 2018. The information sessions facilitated by the Early Years Service were updated, promotional materials rebranded and a new schedule established. The objective remains to maximise the number of residents taking up childminding as well as increasing residents participating in level 2 and 3 childcare qualifications. The Early Years Service works in partnership with training providers to ensure that appropriate training and development is available for potential practitioners.

5.4 Slough Early Years Service is currently a participant in a LSCB organised, multiagency recruitment campaign designed to address the shortfall in the wider children's workforce.

5.5 A National issue that is reflected in the Slough workforce is the lack of men working in childcare and early education. The national figure is 2% of the workforce and the most recent Slough number is similar at 3.79%. Increasing this figure is a key priority for future campaigns.

5.6 **Mandatory Training**

Early Years Providers must ensure that all their practitioners update specific training regularly, for example safeguarding. Slough Early Years Service commissions a range of providers to offer training to meet these statutory requirements and they are scheduled throughout the year and available for booking via The Link website.

5.7 **Continuous Professional Development Training**

The Slough Early Years Service provides professional development training for Slough practitioners on request. To support this offer, providers have been issued with a Professional Development Portfolio containing training / development suggestions.

5.8 **Numbers of Registered Childminders**

In recent years there has been a national, and local, decline in the number of registered childminders.

Maintaining current numbers of childminders in the context of a nationally declining workforce is a key priority for Slough as they are the most flexible providers of free early education and childcare in the Early Years Sector and are therefore a key component in the provision of the early education entitlements inc 30 hours.

Increasing the numbers of childminders able to offer free early education has been a priority for the Early Years Service in recent years. In September 2016 there were 54 childminders on the approved provider list, and in September 2018 there were 86 childminders on the approved provider list. This increase of 32 approved childminders represents an increase of 37%. This work continues to be a focus in order to increase the percentage of childminders offering free early education places. (currently 69%).

6. **Conclusion**

6.1 This report provides the Panel with an overview of the implementation of the Early Years extended entitlement and recommends specific developments to improve participation rates in Slough

7. **Comments of other Committees**

This report has not been considered by any other committees.

8. **Appendices Attached**

A – Early Years Workforce Strategy 2018-21

9. **Background Papers**

None.