

# Full-Time Early Education Places

---

## *Summary Consultation and Findings*

### **1 Introduction**

#### **1.1 Overview**

The Department for Education gives funding to every Local Authority to provide 15 hours of free early education a week for all children from the term after their third birthday and for eligible two year olds in the term after their second birthday. All children are then entitled to a full-time school place in reception class in primary schools from the September after their fourth birthday.

The 15 hours of free early education offers all three year olds the chance to attend some form of early education setting. Children are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year. This is often taken as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year. Funded early education places are available in a range of different settings. All settings offering funded education places must be registered with Ofsted to check the standard of care and education provided. The different types of setting that provide the free entitlement include: nursery schools; nursery classes within primary schools; private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nursery providers; and childminders. Different settings organise the 15 hour entitlement to free early education in different ways, for example some may offer five half days while others may offer a place for 2.5 days a week.

The 15 hours of free early education is based on evidence from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project (Sylva et al, 2010) that 15 hours' education makes a positive difference to children's level of development. The government only funds 15 hours because of the evidence that spending more than 15 hours in day care or education does not make a significant difference to children's level of development.

However, many parents need more than 15 hours of childcare a week to enable them to go to work. From September 2017, the government is introducing the new 30 hours childcare offer. 30 hours childcare will be available for three and four year olds of working parents in England. The 30 hour offer doubles the existing 15 hours currently available to all three and four year olds and could save working families up to £5,000 a year. To qualify, they must be in work and each earning at least £120 a week and not more than £100,000 per year.

Some providers of early education only offer 15 hour part-time education places and do not provide full time places or day-care. However, there are many providers that do offer additional hours of education or childcare that parents can pay for.

Some schools choose to offer full-time places that are not funded by the local authority without asking parents to pay for the additional hours. This is the decision of individual settings.

## **1.2 Consultation**

Birmingham City Council's Early Years Childcare and Children's Centre Service currently makes available additional free full-time early education places for some 3 and 4 year old children before they go into reception classes.

These places are additional to the part time places funded by the Government. The Government funded places are unaffected by the proposals contained in this consultation and will continue to be available to children in Birmingham. Further information about the Government funded Early Education and Childcare places is provided within this consultation paper to help you to consider your response.

The additional full time places that Birmingham City Council currently provides are for children who meet certain eligibility criteria, which cover five key groups of children:

1. Children who are vulnerable because of a safeguarding concern, such as children on a child protection plan
2. Children with disabilities or additional needs
3. Children in the early stages of language development
4. Children who are vulnerable because of their parents' situation, such as those with a parent in prison or with long-term illnesses
5. Children who were funded full-time in the previous term.

Due to unprecedented budget pressures, the Council is therefore proposing to stop funding additional free full time early education places for the above listed groups from September 2017. This proposal means that the level of funded Early Education provision these children receive may be reduced from September 2017 to the level provided by Government funding. For children whose parents do not work, only 15 hours will be funded from September 2017. Children whose parents work will be able to access 30 hours funded Early Education provision per week as part of the government provision starting in September 2017. The funding for these places will however be provided by the Government rather than Birmingham City Council.

A consultation was carried out to engage the parents, early year's professionals, providers of nursery schools/classes, childcare providers from the private, voluntary and independent sectors, neighbouring local authorities and the general public and seek their views on the proposed changes to the criteria. A consultation document and questionnaire was provided, both online through BeHeard and in paper form, which outlined Birmingham City Council's proposal and allowed for feedback.

## **2 Data Sources and Scope**

The questionnaire was made available to all Birmingham citizens via BeHeard, and circulated via Schools Noticeboard to all Nursery Schools and Primary Schools, emails to all early education providers and Childrens Centres. Three open forum engagement sessions were also held.

The survey ran from 31<sup>st</sup> March until 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

### 3 Responses

The consultation received 109 completed questionnaires via online and paper submissions.

### 4 Key Findings

Respondents were asked to best describe their interest in the consultation – Early Years Professional, Childcare provider from the PVI sector, Nursery School, School with a nursery class, Childminder, Parent or other.

Identifier	Number of responses	% of responses
Nursery School	28	25.7%
Childcare provider from Private, Voluntary or Independent sector	22	20.2%
Parent	17	15.6%
Childminder	13	11.9%
School with a Nursery Class	13	11.9%
Other (Please Specify)	12	11.0%
Early Years Professional	3	2.8%

#### 4.1 *Do you agree with our proposal to stop providing full-time places for all three and four year old children in nurseries or childcare?*

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. Figure 1 below shows responses.

Overall, 74% indicated they disagreed with the statement, and overall 26% agreed with the statement.



**Figure 1: Do you agree with our proposal to stop providing full-time places for all three and four year old children in nurseries or childcare?**

Comments overall were arguments supporting the continuation of the offer of full-time places to children that are very vulnerable and at risk of harm. Respondents felt that the criteria could be tightened further but should not be taken away altogether. Many people felt that alternative funding should be sought from elsewhere and the Council should prioritise this provision for young children over other areas of expenditure as the savings would then be achieved later in the child's life.

Many of those that disagreed felt that if full-time places are withdrawn there will be an increase in safeguarding concerns.

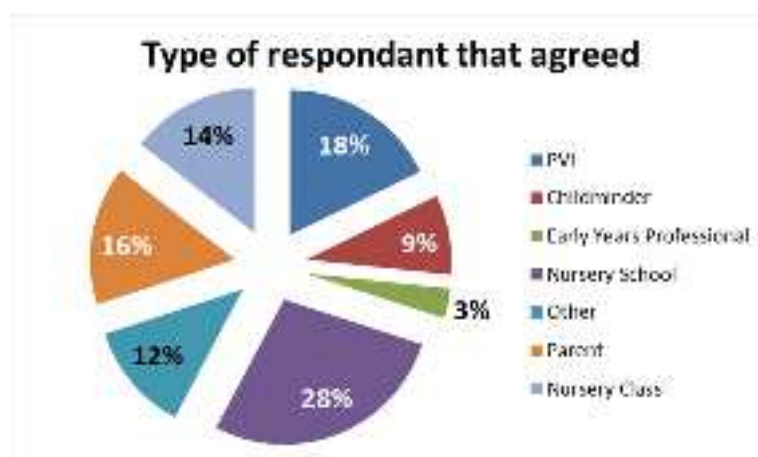
#### ***4.2 Do you believe there will be an adverse impact on vulnerable children and families?***

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. Figure 2 and 3 below shows responses.

Overall, 83% agreed with this statement, with 17% disagreeing. Of those that agreed, 16% of the responses were from parents with the remainder being from schools, providers or professionals. The largest group of respondents that felt there would be an adverse impact were from Nursery Schools (28%).



**Figure 2: Q2: Do you believe there will be an adverse impact on vulnerable children and families?**

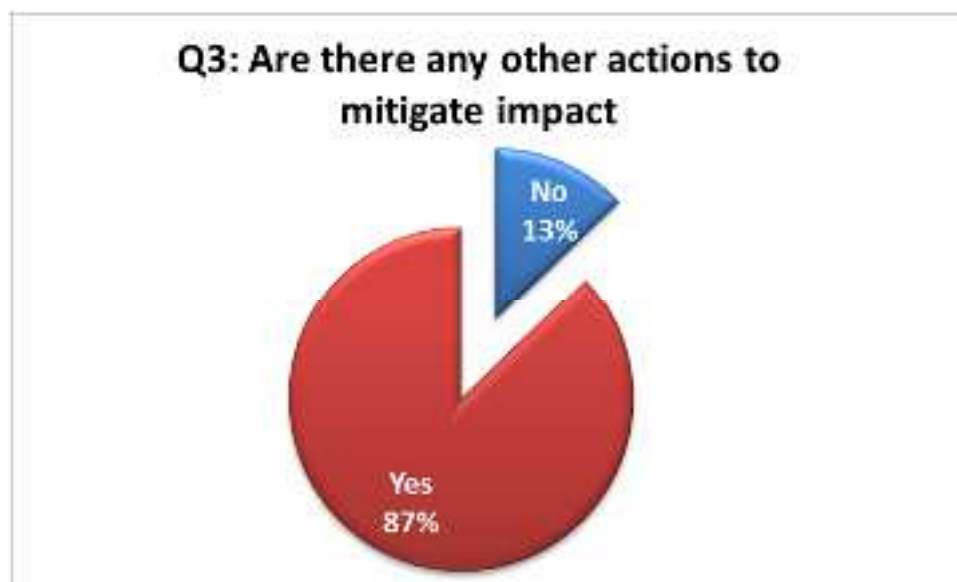


**Figure 3: Respondents that agreed there will be an adverse impact.**

90 respondents made further comments. Of those that agreed there would be an adverse impact, the comments were concerned that there would be valuable opportunities to safeguard children lost, and that less vulnerable children would access their early education place as parents would be less bothered to bring them in for a half-day session. Of those that disagreed that there would be an adverse impact, the reasoning picked up on the body of research evidence that is available that identifies that hours above 15 do not make a significant impact for most children.

#### ***4.3 Are there any actions we should be considering to mitigate the impact on vulnerable children and families?***

Respondents were asked if there were any other actions that could be taken to lessen the impact of the withdrawal of the full-time places for vulnerable children and their families. Figure 4 shows the responses to each criterion.



**Figure 4: Please tell us whether you think each of the criteria below would help us identify children to consider for a funded full-time early education place.**

Most of the responses did not actually give any other actions that could be used to mitigate the impact. These responses were in the main arguing to keep the current in place and to continue to fund the local full-time places. The main ideas can be captured within the following:-

- a) Tighten the criteria.
- b) Introduce a grace period before the place is removed.
- c) Better join up with Social Care and Education.
- d) Increase parenting support available.
- e) Identify an alternative source of funding.

The highest level of suggested actions were mainly linked to finding the funding from elsewhere within the Council or tightening the criteria – both of which assume funding will continue to be available.

A couple of the responses identified actions linked to establishing a panel such as the Corporate Childcare Places panel where children that would benefit from a full-time place could be referred to, and funding allocated as part of a “package” of support. This is in line with the Early Help panels that already exist and this is an avenue that can be explored further.

The responses identified that the main concern is around safeguarding vulnerable children. Further discussion with Children’s Social Care is required to further understand what mitigations can be explored for this group of children.

## 5 Demographics

### 5.1 *What best describes your interest in this consultation?*

Figure 5 shows 16% of those who responded identified as parents. 12% identified as a school with a nursery class. 32% identified as childcare providers from the PVI or Childminders, 26% as nursery schools and 3% identified as EY Professionals. 12% stated other (Governors, retired teachers, elected members, etc.) or did not answer.

What best describes your interest in this consultation?	No.	% respondees
Childcare provider from Private, Voluntary or Independent sector	22	20%
Childminder	13	12%
Early Years Professional	3	3%
Not Answered	1	1%
Nursery School	28	26%
Other (Please Specify)	12	11%
Parent	17	16%
School with a Nursery Class	13	12%
Grand Total	109	100%

**Figure 5: What best describes your interest in this consultation?**

### 5.2 *In which constituency of the city do you live?*

Figure 6 shows a range of respondents across the city varying from 22% of respondents who live in Northfield whilst only 3% from Perry Barr. 4% of respondents did not state.

Constituency	No.	% respondees
Edgbaston	6	6%
Erdington	15	14%
Hall Green	14	13%
Hodge Hill	15	14%
Ladywood	5	5%
Northfield	24	22%
Not Answered	4	4%
Perry Barr	3	3%
Selly Oak	7	6%
Sutton Coldfield	4	4%
Yardley	12	11%
Grand Total	109	100%

**Figure 6: In which constituency of the city do you live?**

### 5.3 Age: Which age group applies to you?

Figure 7 shows below shows respondent age group. The majority of respondents were spread over the 30 to 59 age band. There were no responses from anyone over the age of 69 or younger than 20, and 10% of respondents provided no response.

Age Group	No.	% respondees
20-24	1	1%
25-29	9	8%
30-34	13	12%
35-39	14	13%
40-44	17	16%
45-49	12	11%
50-54	9	8%
55-59	12	11%
60-64	10	9%
65-69	1	1%
Not provided	11	10%
Grand Total	109	100%

**Figure 7: Which age group applies to you?**

### 5.4 Gender: What is your sex/gender?

Figure 8 shows that 75% of all respondents were female, 16% male and 9% did not answer or preferred not to say.

Gender	No.	% respondees
Female	82	75%
Male	17	16%
Not Answered	10	9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 8: What is your gender?**

### **5.5 Disability: Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?**

12% of respondents stated they had a physical or mental health conditions lasting 12 months or more (Figure 9).

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?	No.	% respondees
No	83	76%
Not Answered	11	10%
Prefer not to say	2	2%
Yes	13	12%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 9: Disability: Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?**

### **5.6 Ethnicity: What is your ethnic group?**

Over half of respondents (68%) identified as White or White British. This was followed by Asian / Asian British with 8% (Figure 10).

17% chose not to answer this question or preferred not to say.

Ethnic group	No.	% respondees
Asian/Asian British	9	8%
Black African/Caribbean/Black British	3	3%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	4	4%
Not Answered	11	10%
Prefer not to say	8	7%
White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/Br	74	68%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 10: What is your ethnic group?**

## 6 Summary

The Consultation achieved a good representation across the stakeholder groups

The proposed changes to the criteria as outlined in this consultation has been met, overall, with a negative response, with the majority disagreeing with the proposal to withdraw the places, whilst also highlighting some areas for debate.

In particular, the **funding** of the proposed changes was highlighted as an issue, and there did not seem to be an acceptance that the funding was not available.

Where **children are subject to safeguarding concerns** and will not proceed to reception class in school in September, there was a strong level of support for the provision of a full-time place to remain. In fact there was a strong level of support for these places to remain on an ongoing basis with an argument for the Council to find alternative source of funding from Children's Social Care, albeit with a **tightened criteria**.

Within this consultation there was concern expressed about the **Government's introduction of 30 hours childcare** for working parents as agreed in the Childcare Act 2016 which is due to be implemented in September 2017. Many felt that this will serve to widen the equality gap to disadvantaged children. However some of the concerns expressed by respondents around support for working parents with low incomes will be addressed through the new Government policy.

Overall, the consultation received a response where the majority did not have agreement on the proposed withdrawal of the current model of full-time places, but with no viable alternatives or solutions given.

**Lindsey Trivett**

*Interim Head of Early Years, Childcare and Children's Centres*

*May 2017*