

Birmingham City Council

Education, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28 February 2024



Subject: Early Years Education Entitlement
Report of: Sue Harrison, Strategic Director Children and Families
Report author: Lindsey Trivett, Head of Early Years and Childcare

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To examine how best the council can increase the take up of Early Years entitlement for children in the city and the benefits it provides children.
- 1.2 To examine the plans for delivering the new and expanding responsibilities for early years.

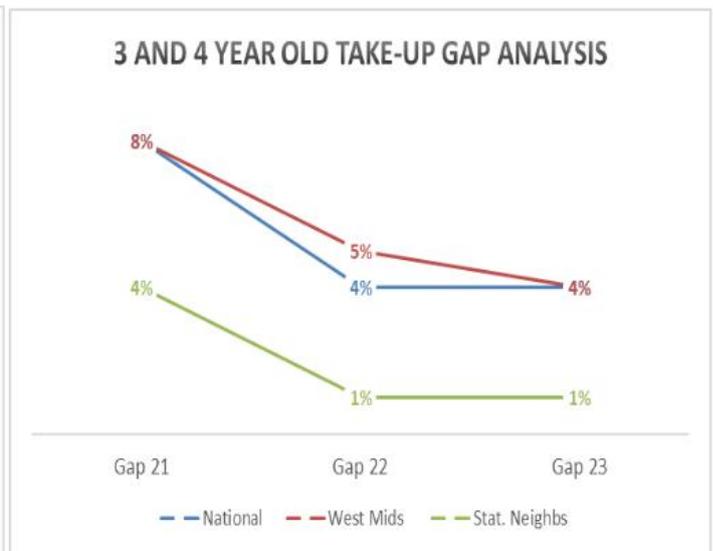
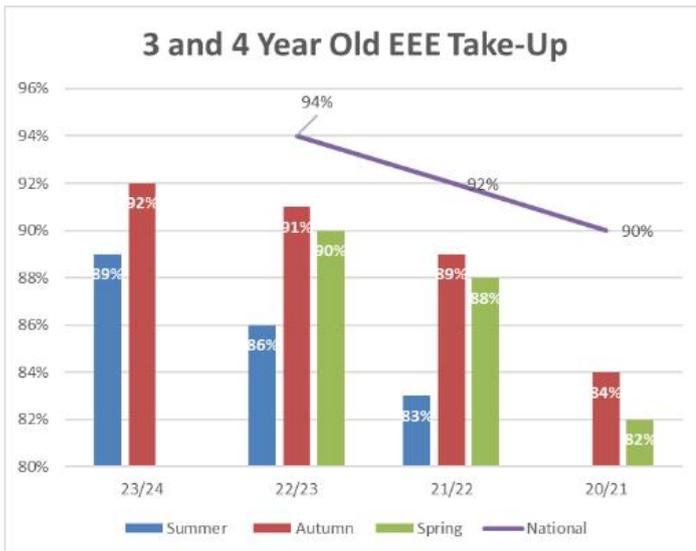
2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the report and provide feedback/comments.

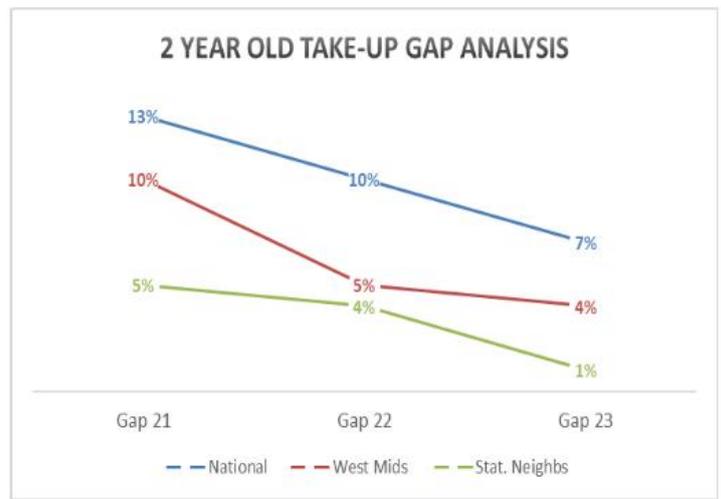
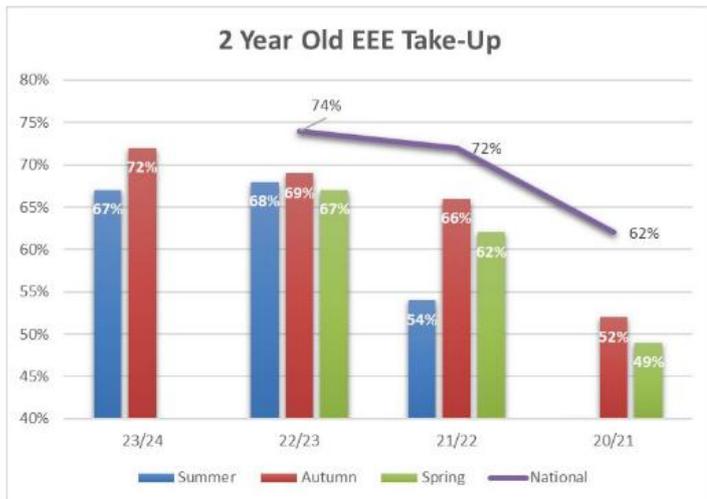
3 Early Education Entitlement and Childrens Outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- 3.1 It has been long known that the best way to improve a child's educational outcomes it is to get them engaged in the early education entitlement from the earliest opportunity. Providing children with good quality education and care in their earliest years can help them succeed at school and later in life. Children who took up their early education entitlement are far more likely than those who did not to achieve a good level of development at the end of Foundation Stage.
- 3.2 There has been a targeted offer for disadvantaged 2 year olds (linked to income levels and SEND) since 2013, and a universal offer for all 3 and 4 year olds since 2010.

3 and 4-Year-Old Take-Up in Birmingham remains lower than the national level. However, we have seen an increase in take-up over the past 4 years for each respective term and participation is now higher than pre-COVID. The national comparator data is only available each year in the Spring Term to coincide with the DfE Annual Census. (See graphs below.)



3.3 Whilst the take-up for 3 and 4 year olds does remain lower than the national, regional and statistical neighbours averages, the gap between Birmingham and the rest is closing. We have halved the gap in participation between Birmingham and both nationally and regionally (from an 8% gap in 2021 to 4% in 2023) and reduced by 75% the gap to our statistical neighbours (from 4% to 1% between 2021 and 2023). This means that participation is increasing at a higher rate in the city than in the rest of the country.



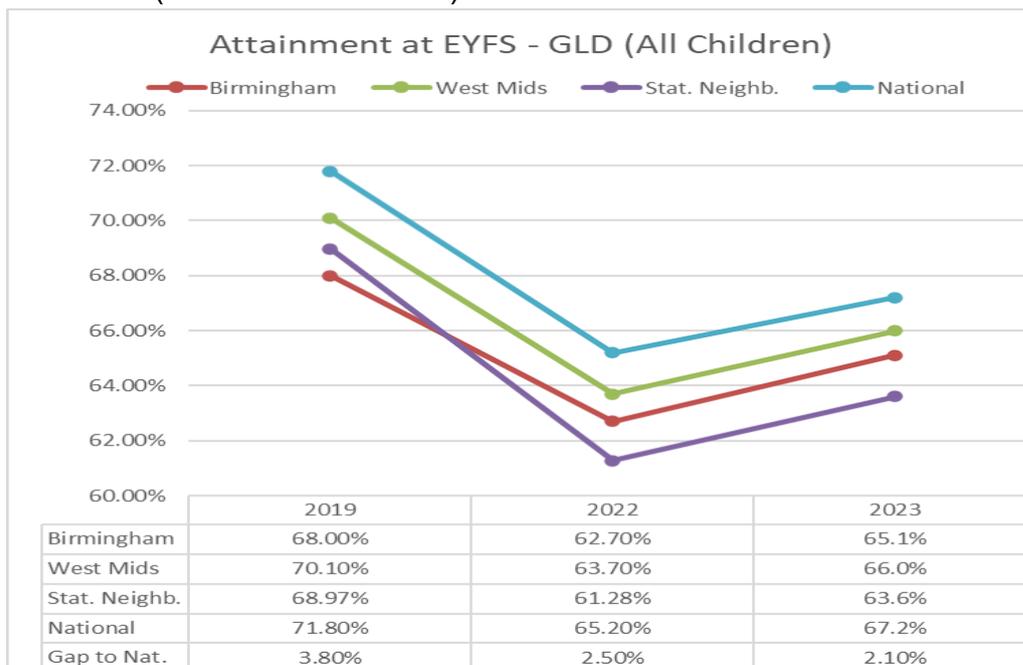
3.4 Similarly to the 3 and 4 year olds, take-up for the disadvantaged 2 year old offer has also been increasing over the last 4 years with participation in Autumn term 23 reaching the highest level of participation we have ever had in Birmingham. (See graphs above.) The gap between take-up in the city and the national average has reduced by almost half (from 13% in 2021 to 7% in 2023), over half compared to the West Midlands (from 10% to 4%) and has reduced by 80% compared to our statistical neighbour local authorities (5% to 1%). This demonstrates that the number of children accessing their entitlement in the city is increasing faster than elsewhere in the country. However, whilst this is a positive step, we recognise that there is still more to do.

3.5 Work being undertaken to support increasing take-up (attendance) includes:

- District take up analysis – targeting districts with lowest take up.
- Ongoing sessions to raise awareness of early education with family facing professionals. Monthly sessions are held targeted at staff in the Virtual School, Family Support Workers, Health Visitors, Childrens Centres and Social Workers. To date there have been approx. 600 attendees to date.
- Working with other professionals to strengthen the support given to children and families in temporary accommodation (TA) to access their early education places especially in the Edgbaston, Ladywood, Perry Barr and Selly Oak districts where TA numbers are high. Early Years Officers have attended meetings in those districts offering support and guidance as required to strengthen existing strategies family facing professionals already have in place. In addition, we are mapping take up of places against eligibility of TA children on a termly basis to identify districts that have particularly low take up compared to eligibility. The data will be used to monitor improvements in take-up and inform ongoing support strategies.
- Use of the 2-year-old promotional video. This shows local Birmingham settings and parents talking about the wider benefits of children taking up their 2-year-old entitlement. It has been shared for wider use by providers themselves and is available on the Council website.
- Ongoing work with the Children’s Centres District leads to develop and review action plans. These have been further developed and now include a focus on accountability, to discuss barriers and try to address them, sharing good practice and positive outcomes of support.
- Using the data captured when parents access an eligibility code from the Eligibility Checking System (ECS) and tracking those codes accessed that then do not pull through to children taking up a place in a setting. This information can then be used to make direct contact with parents to understand if any support is needed to access a place or explore barriers to access.
- Further to implementing a flexible 2-year-old funding approach which allows for admission at any point during each term, we have also now included a flexible approach for 3 and 4 year olds. This was introduced in Autumn Term 2022. This has increased take up each term. 101 additional 2 year old and 58 additional 3 and 4 year old children were included on the Autumn Term 2023 headcount that otherwise would have been delayed by a term.
- We are currently undertaking a thorough review of our marketing materials and our Early Years Webpages. We are continuing to work with our Corporate Communications team to develop a marketing campaign aimed at improving take-up of the early years entitlements.

3.6 The best measure to look at whether children are ready for school (school readiness) is the percentage of children with 'a good level of development' at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS).

3.7 The outcomes at the end of the EYFS were not available during the two years of COVID (2020 and 2021) as the assessments were suspended.



3.8 The chart above shows that we consistently sit below the national average for children's outcomes at the end of the EYFS. However, the gap to national has reduced to 2.1% from 2.5%. The percentage of pupils achieving a "Good Level of Development (GLD)" in Birmingham is lower than the West Midlands and England average, but higher than the statistical neighbour average (ranked 3rd out of 11 local authorities). Whilst we still sit in the bottom quartile of all local authorities, we are now ranked 116 out of 152 in England.

3.9 The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) that achieve a GLD in Birmingham is 6.8% points higher than the England average. However, pupils who are not eligible for FSM performed 2.3% below the England average. So, the more deprived children do better in Birmingham than compared to such children nationally.

3.10 22.9% of SEN support pupils in Birmingham achieved a GLD in 2023 which is 1.4% lower than the England average. The gap has reduced by 0.8% between 2022 and 2023. A similar pattern is seen for EHCP pupils, where the percentage achieving a GLD in Birmingham is also lower than the England average at 0.9%. The gap though is larger for these children at 2.9% difference (a reduction from 3.1% difference in 2022).

3.11 A focus area over the last 3 years has been on the development of Speech, Language and Communication as this area really underpins the whole of a child's early years development. 75.8% of all children reached the expected level in the prime learning goal of Communication and Language in 2023 (an increase of 0.4% from 2022) and in the specific area of Literacy 67% of all children reached the expected level (an increase of 1.9% from 2022). The focus is beginning to have an impact.

3.12 The main improvement priority over the next 12 months is improving children's outcomes and narrowing the attainment gap. We know that a core part of this is to drive-up the take-up of the early years entitlements as children who took up their early education entitlement are far more likely than those who did not to achieve a good level of development at the end of Foundation Stage, and to continue our focus on Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) development. The WellComm project has been running over the last 3 years now, which was initially difficult as this was throughout the period of COVID. Progress to date: -

- Settings and practitioners have accessed training and been supported to understand the impact of poor SLC outcomes on children's educational futures. Each setting has been provided with a funded WellComm toolkit.
- Providers (PVI's and Schools) are using the WellComm toolkit to assess and target support for SLC and are returning data to the Early Years and Childcare service on a termly basis. The autumn term 2023 return covered the progress of 6,186 children from 165 settings (out of 847).
- In the Autumn term of 2023 3,185 children were rated as Green, 1,278 as Amber and 1,723 as Red compared to 3,463 children who were rated as Green, 1,007 as Amber and 1,360 as Red the previous term (Summer 2023).
- Analysis of the data shows that 66.2% of children remained at the same level as their previous assessment, 22.6% improved and 11.1% showed a decrease. All children not rated Green will now have an identified plan to support their development on the pathway being created within the Balanced System Approach.

3.13 The Balanced System Approach is now in the delivery phase. Multiagency workgroups which include parents, professionals and early years providers are now delivering an implementation plan. The plan focuses on: -

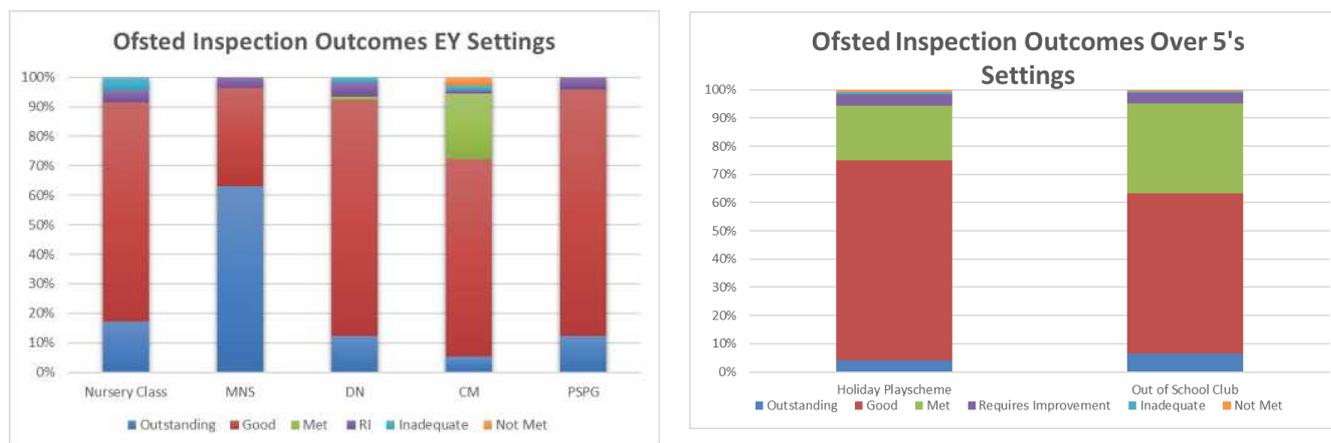
- Easy access to local Speech and language therapists.
- Workforce training and support for Early Years professionals working with children.
- Improved information for parents, young people and professionals.
- More efficient assessment and intervention for universal, targeted and specialist support.

3.14 The Balanced System is now delivering parents access to Speech and Language Therapists in local Children's Centres. This approach has invited all families currently on a specialist waiting list. This local support will be expanded soon to include support for early years providers and the opportunity for local providers to refer families to local support.

3.15 During the second half of 2023 we worked on a collaborative project with [NESTA](#) which was focused on gaining a better insight/understanding of the diverse needs of families in Birmingham with the aim of improving take-up of early education places and children's early years outcomes.

3.16 With NESTA’s support, a Data Tool has been created that will enable better understanding of the demographics, attitudes, and experiences of communities in Birmingham that are facing the poorest educational outcomes and have the lowest up-take of early education and other early years services. This work has culminated in the creation of a data tool that will be hosted on Birmingham City Observatory website. Currently the tool has been created and work is being undertaken by the observatory to map data from the various sources used to power it into the tool. As soon as the data mapping is complete the tool will be tested and then published. A promotional piece of work will accompany this going live.

4 Quality of Provision



4.1 As at January 2024, 94% of the Early Years provision in the city is rated as Good or better by Ofsted. 95% of registered childcare provision for the over 5’s is rated as Good/Outstanding. These figures include settings that have received a “Met” judgement. Settings receive a Met judgement instead of Good or Outstanding if at the time of inspection they do not have any children present or in the case of over 8’s provision that is registered on the Voluntary Childcare register.

4.2 Towards the end of 2022, we had identified a theme that the quality of settings outcomes had been falling once inspections resumed post COVID-19 between September 21 and July 2022. Specifically looking at Early Years PVI providers, we had been concerned about the number of settings receiving declining Ofsted ratings recognising the negative impact the pandemic had on the whole childcare sector.

4.3 We believe that Ofsted grades have fallen specifically in relation to curriculum intent, implementation and impact and the changes (i.e. learning and development and welfare requirements) which were introduced during the pandemic when many providers had experienced heightened difficulties.

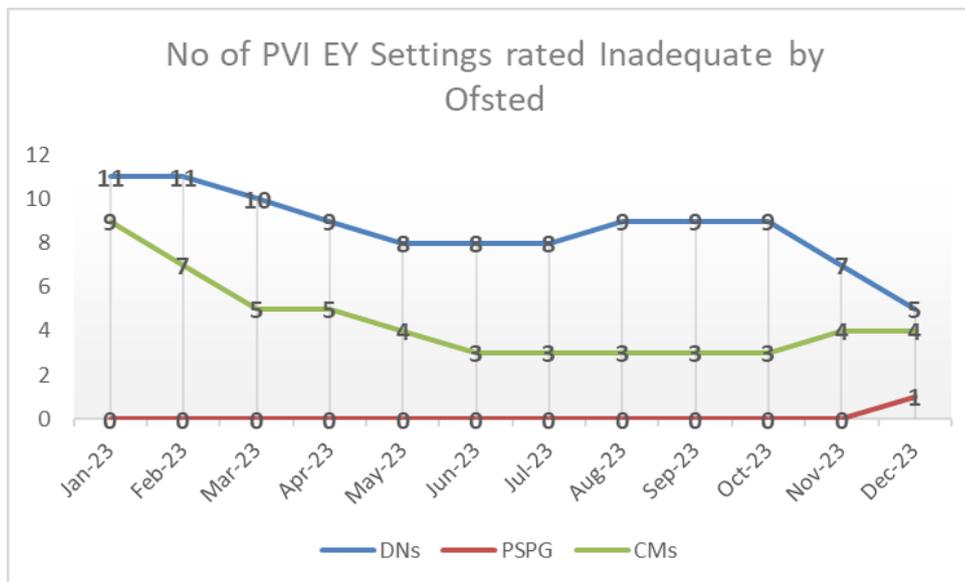
4.4 The team of Early Years Consultants (EYCs) have been supporting the challenges within the sector through the provision of a number of different services. These include:-

- All settings judged less than Good are allocated to an Early Years Consultant. EYC visits include discussions and observations of the EYFS (policy and practice), this includes checking CPD plans are in place for staff, policy and procedure explored to check it reflects current guidance, assessing the

environment, scenarios posed to staff to test understanding and setting response to concerns. Any Ofsted actions, recommendations or observed poor practice/policies identified will be immediately raised with the setting and the EYC will support using a Focused Improvement Plan (FIP). Review visits and progress summary reports are planned based on the Ofsted rating with more intensive support offered to providers with requires improvement and inadequate Ofsted grades. This may include signposting to training and EYC supporting the review of current setting procedures.

- The intention is that the setting will improve and receive a G/O outcome at next inspection (this is in line with our Statutory Duty).
- All settings (regardless of Ofsted grade status) have access to their district EYC's through regular district email updates which invite providers to contact the EYC as needed as well as general themes of support offered.
- There is a menu of Early Years and Childcare Workshops planned currently through to the end of the calendar year. These include various themes from Childcare briefing sessions for new Childminders/Settings, Maths, English as an Additional Language, WellComm, Transitions, Assessment and Moderation. These are put together from common themes identified by EYCs as part of their support to settings.
- Ongoing support for Speech-language and Communication assessment and provider support pathway through the WellComm project. Building on the WellComm project and using Family Hubs funding from the HLE strand we will be training multi agency practitioners; SALT, PVI's, MNS and CC's as Early Talk trainers who work train practitioners across the Early Years sector.
- District Early Years Network sessions across the city giving providers direct access to the district EYC with a focus on areas that are relevant and key for those setting.
- Following a decline in Ofsted grades during 2022, the EYCs have now completed engagement visits for **all** group care providers rated good or outstanding. These visits are an opportunity to signpost providers to the universal services offered by the service and external programmes such as the DfE Covid Recovery Programme. From March 2024 these engagement visits will be extended to include contacts with Childminders. The engagement visits will either be to the childminders home or via Childminder Stay and Play sessions offered by the Heart Stronger Practice Hub.

4.5 Our data trend of settings with Inadequate Ofsted outcomes demonstrates that the quality of settings is now improving. We now have 596 settings in the PVI sector and as of Dec 2023 only 10 settings are rated Inadequate, reduced from 20 settings in January 2023 – a reduction of 50%. (See chart over the page.)



4.6 The Early Years Networks are also a key part of our strategy to support and improve the quality of early years and childcare settings. We commission 10 district networks across the city that are led by the 27 Maintained Nursery Schools. There are two project coordinators (ex-nursery school HT's) line managed by the Chair of the MNS Trust. There are four areas of focus for the project coordinators, all of which aim to promote quality of the early education experience for each child as well as increased take up due to knowledge and expertise of the early education offer which can be shared and cascaded across the sector. The four areas of focus are: -

- Lead and develop the Early Years Network Steering Groups within each of the 10 districts that are responsible for planning the delivery of Early Years Networks and associated activity to develop the quality of practice across the early years workforce (inc. Childminders) and increase EEE take-up.
- Development of a comprehensive website resource (www.birminghamearlyyearsnetworks.org) which supports the work of the networks and is available to ALL early years providers across the city.
- Work with primary schools with nursery/reception classes to strengthen practice relating to children under 4 years old with an aim to supporting increased capacity to deliver 2-year-old EEE places and improved outcomes for all children at the end of Foundation Stage, and to establish effective transition arrangements within the district areas. This work is supported by the Early Years Consultants team.
- Utilise the expertise of the maintained nursery schools to provide CPD opportunities to the LA team of EYC's enabling them to experience and understand innovative pedagogical approaches of teaching in early years, to ensure this can also be cascaded and modelled across to the PVI sector.

5 Sufficiency and the New Offers

5.1 In the main the general sufficiency position has not changed since the Childcare Sufficiency Report for 2021/2022 was completed by CORAM. The city has had a

falling birth-rate for several years and there is a general oversupply of places citywide with a small number of wards in the city that have a deficit of places.

5.2 In the Spring Budget March 2023, the Government announced a range of measures to assist working parents including the **expansion of the Early Education offer** to children of eligible working parents aged 2 and under. As a result of this the Early Years and Childcare Service have recalculated the childcare sufficiency forecast to include impact of phased implementation from April 2024 where:

- Phase 1 from April 2024 - eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access their 15 hours childcare (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's 2nd birthday.
- Phase 2 from Sept 2024 - eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-year-olds can access 15 hours childcare (over 38 weeks a year) from the term following their child turning 9 months.
- Phase 3 from Sept 2025 - the offer will be rolled out in full, with eligible working parents of children aged 9 months and above able to access 30 hours (over 38 weeks a year) from the term following their child turning 9 months.

5.3 The revised forecasts have identified that due to the existing significant oversupply position, the Phase 1 demand (April 2024) will be absorbed within the existing oversupply, Phase 2 in September 2024 should be covered when you look at the city as whole (but with some hotspots), but there will be a need for additional places to be created to meet anticipated demand for Phase 3 from September 2025.

	Phase 1 April 2024	Phase 2 September 2024	Phase 3 September 2025
15 Hours for 2 year olds	2,192	2,192	2,192
15 Hours for 9 to 11 month olds		3,395	3,395
15 Hours for 12 to 23 month olds		3,534	3,534
30 Hours for 2 year olds			2,192
30 Hours for 9 to 11 month olds			3,395
30 Hours for 12 to 23 month olds			3,534
Total Additional PTE Places Required	2,192	9,121	18,242
Sufficiency Position Summer 2023 - Oversupply (pte places)	16,622	16,622	16,622
Net Sufficiency Position	14,430	7,501	-1,620

5.4 The table above shows the additional children we expect to be eligible for each phase of the new entitlement and the impact on existing levels of places available. We are not forecasting any additional children for phase 3 as additional children from Phases 1 and 2 will be claiming double the number of hours. We have estimated the number of children already accessing a funded place by using the current % of additional hours purchased by early education funded children as a proxy measure as we do not collect fee paying hours data for all under 5's. Based on this we believe there should be sufficient places for both phase 1 and 2 with more places in targeted areas for phase 3.

5.5 The initial forecast has identified 9 wards where we believe we could have specific pressures due to current sufficiency gaps which are currently being covered by parents accessing places in surrounding wards (see table over page). With an anticipated increase in demand for places from April 2024 it is highly likely that it could be challenging for parents to access a place that suits their needs in these areas. To address this identified potential need work will be undertaken to “sense check” the desktop assumptions by engaging with parents and providers in those targeted areas via surveys and focus groups to explore options for addressing any confirmed sufficiency gaps.

		Summer Term 2023	Summer Term 2024	Autumn Term 2024	Autumn Term 2025		
	Ward	Net 0 to 4 Year Olds Oversupply / Undersupply	Net Supply Remaining after P1	Net Supply Remaining after P2	Net Supply Remaining after P3	DISTRICT	Further Assessment Rating Based on Surrounding Wards & Migration
1	Allens Cross	-34	-63	-155	-276	Northfield	
2	Castle Vale	-108	-126	-199	-290	Erdington	
3	Garretts Green	-185	-214	-316	-446	Yardley	Garretts Green
4	Handsworth Wood	-51	-107	-281	-511	Perry Barr	Handsworth Wood
5	Harborne	-595	-638	-746	-898	Edgbaston	
6	Heartlands	-109	-124	-182	-254	Hodge Hill	
7	Highter's Heath	22	-9	-98	-219	Selly Oak	Highter's Heath
8	Holyhead	-250	-264	-309	-369	Perry Barr	Holyhead
9	King's Norton South	-162	-177	-248	-334	Northfield	
10	Kingstanding	-175	-219	-365	-555	PB/Erd	Kingstanding
11	Ladywood	-240	-260	-336	-431	Ladywood	
12	Longbridge & West Heath	-132	-181	-372	-612	Northfield	
13	Perry Common	-144	-171	-267	-390	Erdington	Perry Common
14	Quinton	-26	-71	-215	-404	Edgbaston	Quinton
15	Stirchley	0	-44	-146	-292	Selly Oak	
16	Stockland Green	-127	-183	-367	-607	Erdington	Stockland Green
17	Sutton Four Oaks	-10	-24	-52	-95	Sutton	
18	Sutton Reddicap	-189	-212	-278	-366	Sutton	
19	Weoley & Selly Oak	-34	-79	-229	-424	Northfield	
20	Yardley East	-141	-173	-267	-393	Yardley	Yardley East
	Totals	-2,692	-3,339	-5,428	-8,166		

5.6 The table above shows that 9 wards (rated red) have a potential sufficiency issue during most of the phases mainly due to surrounding wards not having the sufficiency capacity required; 7 wards (rated amber) have a potential sufficiency issue from Phase 2 onwards; and 4 wards (rated green) even though they show a current undersupply, we are not anticipating any sufficiency issues due to oversupply of surrounding wards and current high migration behaviours of parents.

5.7 Other Work being undertaken to support sufficiency: -

- Reviewing closures of settings and considering the impact on sufficiency in area.
- Holding a monthly EEE Panel where RI/Inadequate Ofsted outcomes are reviewed being mindful of impact they have on sufficiency.
- Using the DfE/DWP lists for potentially eligible 2-year-olds. We use the list each term to identify parents/carers of eligible children and directly email information to parents to raise awareness of the offer and signpost to information on how to access a place. We follow this up with email reminders. 4,688 parents were contacted directly to promote the offer for the Spring Term 2024. We are in the process of resolving the issue with us sharing the list with our contracted Children Centre provider due to Data sharing issues imposed by the DfE.

- We have reviewed the published admission numbers (PANs) of Schools as many were overstated compared to actual places available.
- The Early Years Consultants (EYCs) have developed two specific workshops to support sufficiency of childcare places with providers - a Childcare Briefing Workshop to support good practice in terms of planning for delivering good quality childcare provision aimed at new/potential providers; and a Business and Sustainability Workshop is offered to support the maintaining of a sustainable, good quality childcare business. Both workshops are delivered on a rolling basis.
- The EYCs also raise awareness of early education funding and associated funding supplements during their ongoing communications with settings.
- We are experiencing increasing feedback from settings to say they are unable to accommodate all children coming forward for places where they have additional needs. This is also evidenced by increasing complaints from parents with children who have SEND. We are doing some work to look at sufficiency for places for children with more complex SEND needs alongside the Education Infrastructure team who manage school-place sufficiency. Where partners/professionals supporting children are highlighting concerns or difficulties regarding accessing childcare for children with SEND, we are working with them to unpick the issues/barriers for those families and looking at ways to support them. Bi-weekly SEND meetings to track progress/agree actions are held by the Senior EYC for Inclusion.

5.8 In the Spring Budget 2023 the government also announced it was investing £289m over two academic years (from Sept 2024) to enable local authorities to set-up **wraparound childcare** provision. This is the first step in the government's ambition for all parents of primary school children (Reception to Year 6) who need it to access childcare in their local area from 8am – 6pm.

5.9 This funding is for local authorities to introduce or expand childcare provision on either side of the school day and enable us to develop flexible ways of providing childcare and gather evidence of what works.

5.10 The DfE expect parents to see an expansion in wraparound childcare from September 2024 with every parent that needs it able to access term-time wrap-around childcare by September 2026.

5.11 The programme is for Term-Time only provision and does not cover holidays and has a primary focus to support 'Working Parents'. It is clear that it is not just about delivery in schools, as the funding can be used to fund providers such as PVI's (Private, Voluntary and Independent), Childminders and Schools.

5.12 The funding is not available or intended to subsidise the cost of places for parents. Other funding is available to support parents e.g., Universal Credit Childcare and Tax-Free Childcare.

5.13 To support the delivery of the new offer programmes the DfE have awarded the Council the following Capital and Revenue funding: -

- Revenue Funding – Wraparound Programme Funding for Providers of £6,564,193 to be rolled out to childcare providers to create new places and Local Authority Capacity Funding of up to £874,470 to support the Council delivery team to rollout the programme.
- Early Years Delivery Support Revenue Funding of £202,896 to support increased LA costs associated with the delivery and roll out of the wider Early Years offer programme.
- An increase to the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to directly fund the children that take up the places for the wider offer within settings as is the case currently for the 2-, 3- and 4-year-old entitlements.
- Childcare Capital Expansion Funding of £1,679,209 to be used for both the Wraparound and Expanded Early Years Offers.
- All of the funding can be used from 2023/24 through to 2026/27.

5.14 Funding decisions will be driven by the Sufficiency mapping which is currently being undertaken and will be completed prior to the commencement of a grant funding programme for schools/settings. There will be a robust, transparent funding process in place with childcare providers to ensure grant funding is used appropriately and in line with DfE required outcomes. This is subject to a cabinet report which will be considered by Cabinet in March 2024.

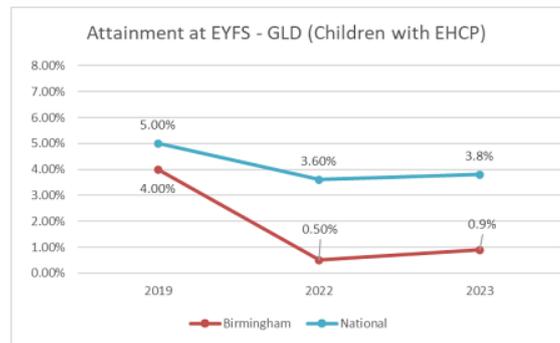
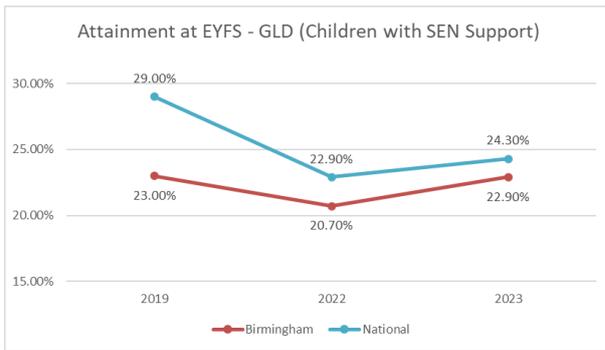
5.15 We continue to work with our delivery partners StreetGames on the delivery of the holiday activities and food programme (HAF). The programme has been extremely successful as outlined below by the numbers of unique children reached: -

- Spring- DfE target 15524 actual 16090,
- Summer DfE target 24,838, actual 26356,
- Winter DfE target not available yet.

5.16 As we move into the last year of delivery (programme ends March 2025) we focus our attention on sustainability and the development of an exit strategy. We will work with our multi agency partners in our HAF steering group to explore how we might link up to LA agendas/strategies relating to health, well-being, and physical activities as well as wraparound and short breaks with the main aim of ensuring that our children and families, including SEND are able to smoothly access services and support during the holiday periods.

6 Inclusion in the Early Years

6.1 As previously identified in paragraph 3.10 of this report, the proportion of children with SEN support and EHCP in Birmingham that achieved a GLD in 2023 is lower than the England average, with an increase in both between 2022 and 2023. The gap has reduced between 2022 and 2023.



- 6.2 Within the Early Years Foundation Stage, all settings are required to be Inclusive. Most children therefore access their early education within a mainstream setting apart from a small number of children that have an Education Health and Care Plan which identifies a specialist placement to meet the SEND provision detailed in the EHC Plan. In these cases, children will attend one of the city’s Special Schools with a nursery class or one of two resources bases in a maintained nursery school.
- 6.3 To ensure quality of provision for children with SEND, the Area SENCoS, within Early Years Inclusion Support, hold twice yearly contact meetings with all PVI settings. These are embedded in the Area SENCO team model of support which comprises training, advice and targeted direct support for specific children. The meetings include identification of training and development needs and inform the training programme. Currently 99% of PVI providers have one or more practitioners who have attended the core SENCo training delivered by the team. Similarly, there are termly multi-agency planning meetings (MAPS), conducted by the SEND advisory teams and the Educational Psychology Service, with maintained nursery schools and primary schools. These allow discussion about children in the early years with emerging or identified SEND. All meetings combine a support and challenge approach towards best inclusive practice. Information collated from these meetings, across the sector, indicate that the most common area of SEND identified in EY children is Communication and Interaction. Birmingham is a regional EY hub for the Autism Education Trust, so all providers have ready access to this training which develops quality practice.
- 6.4 The Area SENCo team targets support around children in receipt of EY Inclusion Funding (ISEY) or with an EHCP, who attend a PVI setting. This includes a specific visit to all settings receiving an Inadequate or Requires Improvement rating from Ofsted. At this visit actions may need to be agreed towards improving inclusive practice. Review consultations are then arranged.
- 6.5 All providers in receipt of ISEY are required to complete a termly evaluation detailing the impact of the support on outcomes for the child, including parent/carer views. The latest completed evaluation period (Autumn term 2023) indicated the following from 768 returns out of a possible total of 916 evaluations returned (84%): -
- 100% settings agree /strongly agree that funding enabled sustained access to child’s EE funded placement.
 - 100% of settings and of parent/carers agree / strongly agree that the child in receipt of ISEY funding has made learning and development progress.

- 6.6 The Area SENCo model includes training, consultation, and direct packages of support around targeted children in the PVI sector. In the Autumn term of this academic year: 160 practitioners have attended AST training (total for full academic year 22/23: 672 practitioners). 319 PVI settings (93%) have accessed one or more consultation session to date this year (total for full academic year 22/23 100%) and 160 settings have received a direct package of support around 234 children (total for full academic year 22/23: 197 settings around 383 children). Direct support best identifies where improvements can be made to quality and effectiveness of practice, and this typically includes the need to model strategies to support improved outcomes for children.
- 6.7 The amount of funding allocated to ISEY in 2024/25 is being increased to £3.75 million (up from £3m in 2023/24) and the funding will now be available to support all funded children access their early years entitlement (from 9mths to age 4) in line with DfE requirements for the new offer.
- 6.8 In terms of sufficiency, some families and specialist support services supporting the first transition of children with SEND into an early education or childcare placement, report challenges securing places in a setting of choice. There is a small team within the Early Years and Childcare Service that will work with a family in these instances to undertake brokerage to secure appropriate provision. Settings with a reputation for good inclusive practice report that they are at capacity for meeting the needs of more complex children and so there is a need to develop the inclusive practice of all settings within each District so that all children with emerging/identified SEND can have needs met by a local provider.
- 6.9 Information is sought from both PVI and maintained EY providers through regular contact meetings. All the SEND and inclusion teams have a remit to support and challenge around attendance of children with SEND towards the full- uptake of early education funded hours by eligible children.
- 6.10 Since the academic year 22/23, the Early Support Service, within Early Years Inclusion Support, has been tracking the number of children referred for specialist home teaching who previously attended an early education setting but where, for a range of reasons, the placement ceased. Of the 171 referrals received in Autumn Term 23 around 9% of children had previous access to a setting. The figure for the full academic year 22/23 was 11%.
- 6.11 The ongoing need for a comprehensive SEND CPD offer, for both SENCOs and all practitioners, is provided by the specialist support services engaged with the PVI and/or maintained sector as well as by the Dingley's Promise programme and Birmingham Early Years Network. Upskilling the sector is understood as critical in developing best inclusive practice and sustaining the placements of children with the most complex needs.
- 6.12 The Early Years Inclusion Project from Dingley's Promise which aims to: -
- support the increased take up of 2/3 year old early education places of children with SEND, that they make progress at the end of the EYFSP;
 - reduce the numbers of children on reduced timetables; and

- Positively engage the family and the child in support and transition plans.

6.13 In the academic year 22/23 a cohort of 100 EY practitioners were enrolled on the Level 3 EY National SENCO award programme. The course was funded through the EY DLP project and 92 participants achieved the qualification. This course was delivered by the Area SENCo team in collaboration with nursery school SENCOs. All trainers hold the relevant licence to deliver the School Improvement Liverpool course. This year the sector is being signposted to the government funded Level 3 EY SENCo award delivered by Best Practice Network.

6.14 Since Covid, an increasing number of settings report challenges in recruiting and retaining staff where the allocation of Inclusion Support in Early Years (ISEY- the LA EY inclusion fund) or SEND Support Provision funding would enable them to enhance ratios to meet needs. This can impact on whether children with identified SEND can access their full entitlement and/ or extended childcare hours requested by parent/carers. In these cases, the Area SENCo team advises around best use of funding to support the child's access.

6.15 We have also established a Childminder Inclusion Network. This is a city-wide network which is managed by our Early Years Consultant for Inclusion. Following the positive impact of the DfE funded Childminders Experts and Mentor Scheme and the Heart Stronger Practice Hubs focus on engaging childminders, the Childminder Inclusion Network has been combined with the network offered by the Stronger Practice Hub. This partnership working has enabled us to reach more childminders and respond more directly to their feedback. This shared work enables us to offer an SEND training program to strengthen practice and increase confidence in caring for children with mild to complex needs to more childminders. Half termly network meetings bring childminder members together to engage with partner professionals, to share good practice and information.

6.16 The Developing Local Provision (DLP 2) for children under 5 work is a programme that is currently being undertaken across the city with a focus on SEND and Inclusion. Phase 1 of the programme has provided £2m over last year, divided across the 10 districts (£200,000 per each district). This targets improvement in the quality of provision available particularly for children with additional needs. Phase 2 started in January 2024. This universal project offered in the 10 districts has the following KPI's; -

- % Increase of uptake of early education by eligible children in the district.
- % increase of children achieving GLD at end of EYFS.
- % decrease of children accessing their early education remaining with an EY provider rather than taking up their Reception place in school with typical age cohort.
- % decrease of children across the district who are at risk of placement breakdown following transition to Reception in school.

6.17 Phase 2 of the EY DLP will build on the workforce capacity building undertaken in phase 1 by now focusing on outcomes for individual children. Governance and

monitoring arrangements will align to the 5-16 Years DLP and report directly into the SEND Improvement Board.

7 Risks and Challenges/Future Priorities

- 7.1 The biggest risks and challenges over the next 12 -24 months are being able to successfully rollout the expanded statutory duties in early years for both early education and wraparound (out of school) childcare whilst the Council itself is experiencing such challenging times within the Section 114. There will be a need to recruit additional capacity to the Early Years and Childcare Service at pace in order to be able to deliver the changes required as the additional Statutory Duties are required to be implemented.
- 7.2 We also need to work with all early years settings to develop their understanding of the needs of children who are more complex so that we can start to address some of the challenges we are currently dealing with in terms of ensuring all settings are Inclusive and all children can access their early years entitlements.
- 7.3 The priorities over the next 12 months are as follows:-
- 7.4 **Further development of our Sufficiency Analysis** - to ensure we can appropriately target any development of new places required for both the Early Years and Wraparound entitlements.
- 7.5 **Ensuring take-up of the wider Early Education entitlements** – targeting each age group to coincide with the phasing of the introduction of the entitlements. We must also maintain our focus on ensuring the take-up of the disadvantage 2-year-old offer so that we can continue to close the gap with local authorities nationally. Within our focus of equity we will ensure Inclusion – in terms of children facing barriers that are social, racial or SEND – to improve outcomes for our more vulnerable children. We will also continue to focus on improving the use of Data to help us target more effectively to do so.
- 7.6 **Development of Wraparound places** – managing the rollout of the grant funding programmes.
- 7.7 **Improving outcomes at the end of EYFS for all children** –we know that a core part of this is to drive-up the take-up of the early years entitlements as children who took up their early education entitlement are far more likely than those who did not to achieve a good level of development at the end of Foundation Stage. We will continue to work on bringing together the Early Years Census/termly headcount process for schools and PVI providers to enable “in real time” duplicate checking and should allow multiple points of/rolling funded admissions. The outcome of the project with NESTA will result in a data tool that can be used within the City Observatory and will enable us to target and address barriers to take-up within specific communities/areas of the city. We will continue to support Speech, Language and Communication in partnership with other professionals. We will continue to promote improved SLC assessment via SLC champions, SEND speech and language therapists, and citywide workshops, and working through the EY DLP2 programme we will focus on improving take-up and supporting transition for

children with SEND from Nursery to Reception with targeted support for children where placement breakdown is likely.

7.8 **Workforce Recruitment and Retention** - potentially the biggest risk to achieving sufficient places being available to meet demand will be the ongoing challenge of staff recruitment and retention to enable providers to gear up to the anticipated increase in demand for places. This is a national issue and not unique to Birmingham. Birmingham has been selected by the DfE to offer a DfE pilot program of financial incentives to new recruits to the sector. This together with a National Campaign will help to address some of the current staffing issues. In addition to sustain and support workforce development, the Early Years and Childcare Service will be re-introducing a Workforce Development Officer role to the team permanently recognising the ongoing importance of the workforce in being able to deliver the associated statutory duties and to develop and oversee a comprehensive workforce strategy.

7.9 **Information duty developments for the team** - we have undertaken a review of the Information Duty requirements as part of the statutory duties for the Council and how we currently meet them and have identified a plan of improvement work. We aim to: -

- Create a new Early Years Information Hub which will hold interactive report suites for internal use and reports and links for external use. It will also have information on the statutory requirements, detail our responsibilities in regard to meeting those and detail the processes we have in place for managing them.
- The Early Years Information Team will work closely with the web team on redeveloping the Early Years aspects of the website ensuring data is accurate and reflective of current needs.
- The team will manage the information made available to settings/ providers and parents to ensure it is easy to use and provides the necessary information, and it is auditable and reflective of current needs.
- The team will work with the contact centre monitoring incoming query volumes to keep on top of demand and ensure we can react quickly to surges in public interest on specific topics. This will also involve training contact centre staff and ensuring info for contact centre advisors is relevant.

8 Any Finance Implications

8.1 The whole of the Early Years and Childcare Service is funded from the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

8.2 **Wraparound Childcare**: Funding for the programme will be un-ringfenced and will form part of the Section 31 Grant to LA's. However there is a clear MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) from the DfE outlining what the funding needs to be spent on and it is clearly linked to the delivery of the Councils Statutory Duties within the Childcare Act 2006/2026 and The Childcare ((Free of Charge for Working Parents) (England) Regulations 2022 set out within section 9.?? below.

- 8.3 **Expanded Early Years Offer:** Delivery Support Funding - Birmingham has been allocated £202,896 revenue funding for the financial year 2023/24 (with agreement from DfE to carry forward if required). The funding is to be used to support LA costs associated with the delivery and roll out of the programme.
- 8.4 **Capital Funding:** A total of £1,679,209 has been allocated to the LA to support the creation of new places for the Wraparound Childcare and the Expanded Early Years Offer programmes. The funding can be used to support the expansion of childcare places. It must be spent on capital projects and is being provided to meet the capital costs associated with projects that help ensure sufficient places are available.
- 8.5 The spend of all budgets is subject to a Cabinet report in March 2024.

9 Any Legal Implications

- 9.1 Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, that there is sufficient childcare for children up to 14 years old (or older if the child has SEND) available in their area to enable parents to work or train for work.
- 9.2 Local authorities are required to secure free provision for children eligible for the early year's entitlements. The Statutory guidance "Early Education and Childcare (applies from April 2024)' applies to the duty on local authorities to secure early years provision free of charge; the duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents, including wraparound childcare; the duty to secure childcare free of charge for eligible working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds; the provision of information, advice and assistance to parents and the provision of information, advice and training to childcare providers and supports the introduction of the following working parent entitlements:
- From April 2024, the 15-hour entitlement for children of eligible working parents from the age of 2.
 - From September 2024, the 15-hour entitlement for children of eligible working parents from the age of 9 months.
 - From September 2025, the 30-hour entitlement for children of eligible working parents from the age of 9 months.

10 Any Equalities Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EAI000259) has been undertaken for the new entitlements programme. The outcomes from the assessment demonstrate that the proposed funding programmes support positive outcomes for children, young people, their families, and carers. No negative impact on people with Protected Characteristics were identified. It was concluded that strengthening the sufficiency of Early Years and Childcare places for children and young people contributes to providing positive life chances and supports a positive approach to Safeguarding and Inclusion in Birmingham.

Appendix 1: Early Years Education Entitlement Presentation