



Schools Forum
12 June 2019

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Children and Young People**

Update on take-up of the extended 30 hours childcare entitlement and wider early years entitlements in Brent

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	N/A
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1: % year on year take up for 2 year old and universal 3 & 4 year old entitlements Appendix 2: Take up for 3 & 4 year olds – universal free early education entitlement (15 hours) Appendix 3: Extended entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds (30 hours) by ward Appendix 4: Combined (universal, extended and reception) for 3 & 4 year olds Appendix 5: Free early education entitlement for 2 year olds by ward Appendix 6: Free entitlement vacancies by ward
Background Papers:	Prior reports to Schools Forum on Early Years takeup
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1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The statutory entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare and early education for all 3 and 4 year olds from working families took effect on 1 September 2017 and 30 hour places have been delivered in the borough alongside the existing free early education entitlements for eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on take-up of the free entitlement to 30 hours places in Brent as well as take-up of the 2 year entitlement and the universal entitlement to 15 hours free early education for all 3 and 4 year olds.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Schools Forum is requested to note the contents of this paper as an update from that presented in a paper to Schools Forum in June 2017.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Various legislation including the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2016 extend statutory duties on local authorities to secure free early education and childcare for qualifying children.

Specifically, this provides all 3 and 4 year olds in England with 15 hours of early education, eligible 2 year olds with 15 hours of free early education and 3 and 4 year olds from working families with the equivalent of 30 hours of free childcare over the equivalent of 38 weeks of the year.

3.2 The most recent entitlement to be introduced was the extended entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds from working families. In this context, working families is defined as:

- Both parent, carers or the sole parent (in a lone parent family) earn on average the equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage or national living wage
- Each parent earns less than £100,000 per year
- Parents live in England

3.3 The Department for Education has issued one iteration of the estimate of 3 and 4 year olds from families who should be entitled and this indicates that 1550 children are in families that should be entitled in Brent.

4.0 Detail

4.1 30 hour update

4.1.1 Sufficiency of 30 hour places

In order to ensure all eligible children can access a place, considerable work took place with providers in Brent to promote the benefits of registering to deliver 30 hour places. This has resulted in a spread of free entitlement provision across the sector as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - 30 hour providers by type

	Total number of providers	Registered to offer 30 hour places	Percentage of providers registered to deliver 30 hour places
Childminders	167	65	39%
PVI settings	119	95	80%
Maintained schools (including nursery schools)	61	37	60%
Total number of providers	347	197	57%

4.1.2 30 hour take-up

Take up for the 30 hour entitlements has been consistently strong in the borough with take up in all terms, with the exception of one, exceeding the outer London average. This is illustrated in Figure .

Figure 2 - 30 hour take up

	Local authority	Eligibility codes issued	Codes validated (number)	Codes validated (%)	Children in a 30 hours place ⁶	Children in 30 hours place as a % of codes issued (%)
Spring term 2019	Outer London	29,263	26,385	90	25,526	87
	Brent	1,440	1,322	92	1,241	86
Autumn term 2018	Outer London	20,896	19,066	91	19,330	93
	Brent	1,009	945	94	1,008	100
Summer term 2018	Outer London	30,223	26,439	87	24,210	80
	Brent	1,483	1,349	91	1,392	94
Spring 2018	Outer London	26,467	22,866	86	21,362	81
	Brent	1,360	1,196	88	1,086	80
Autumn 2017	Outer London	17,130	15,084	88	14,895	87
	Brent	915	866	95	839	92

4.1.3 Progress and challenges

Early difficulties with access to the HRMC online application system have largely been addressed and the Local Authority has received no recent feedback from families indicating that they have experienced problems with using this system. Promotion for the 30 hour free entitlements is ongoing and progress against take up targets for this entitlement is positive.

Notwithstanding this, anecdotal feedback from parents indicates that some are choosing not to take up their full entitlement. Parents report that this is for a variety of reasons including a desire to spend time at home with children and a feeling that children are of an age when long hours at a nursery may not be appropriate.

Innovative work is taking place to engage employers in the childcare agenda and this has resulted in a number of Brent employers making changes to their recruitment practices and provision of information to their employees to enable them to access childcare to meet their needs. Alongside this, the early years, quality improvement and early years inclusion support teams are involved in targeted work in ward areas to raise the profile of early learning (both in the home learning and formal childcare setting). These initiatives are now at risk as funding has not been agreed at Schools Forum.

4.2 Other early years entitlements

4.2.1 Sufficiency of two year places and universal 3 & 4 year old places

There is a spread of providers offering 15 hour 3 and 4 year funded places across the sector as illustrated in Figure 3. There is spread of provision across the borough and full details of this can be found in the Brent 2018 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. 3 out of 4 nursery schools offer 2 year old places under the PVI element of their provision. There are currently no primary or infant schools offering 2 year old provision. One school has recently expressed an interest in expanding their offer to include free entitlement places for vulnerable two year olds in their area.

Figure 3 - Free entitlement providers

	Total number of providers	Registered to offer 15 hour two year old places	% registered to offer 15 hour places 2 year olds	Registered to offer 15 hour universal places	% registered to offer 15 hour universal places for 3 and 4 year olds
Childminders	167	70	42%	68	41%
PVI settings	119	96	81%	109	92%
Maintained schools (including nursery schools)	61	3	100%	54	89%
Total number of providers	347	166		231	

4.2.2 Two year free entitlement and 3 and 4 year old universal take-up

Take-up figures for the 2 year old and universal 3 year old entitlement contrast with take up for 30 hours in Brent. There has been a year on year decline in 15 hour take up for 3 and 4 year olds and this is currently at 77%. Two year old entitlements have increased year on year since 2015 but declined slightly to 56% in 2018. Year on year take-up comparisons are detailed in Appendix 1.

4.2.3 Progress and challenges

Awareness of entitlements continues to be embedded with ongoing campaigns to ensure that each new cohort of families is aware of their entitlement. Alongside this feedback from parents suggests that some parents are aware that they are entitled but are choosing not to take up this provision. An exercise carried out in February 2019 contacting families known to be eligible for the two year entitlement but whose names had not appeared in the January 2019 headcount highlighted the following:

Figure 4 – Parental feedback

Response from parents	
Child already in a setting	20
Already registered with a childcare provider	12
Currently looking for a childcare provider	10
On waiting list	9
No answer, unable to reach parent	7
Golden ticket had expired and new ticket was requested	4
Decision not to use funding as parent providing care for the child	3
Language barrier - parent unable to communicate	2
Child too young	2
Child moved out of borough	1

This indicates that 78.5% of families contacted were either already accessing childcare provision or in the process of accessing provision. 8% were choosing not to take up the entitlement.

Outreach to families in the borough indicates that some families are new to the borough and are unaware of their entitlement to universal provision. Once funding has been identified, research will be conducted in 2019-2020 to identify reasons for non take up of funded places.

Where settings have closed (6 in the previous 12 months) a pattern has emerged that children largely take up alternative provision. For example of the 15 children taking up a two year old place at settings which subsequently closed, 11 children have moved to alternative provision in the borough.

While take-up numbers in Brent for these entitlements are below London and national averages, there has been no feedback from parents to suggest that they are not able to access preferred provision.

It is anticipated that the research project will shed light on other possible reasons for low take-up of the free entitlements in the borough.

4.3 Ward level overview

4.3.1 Universal 3 and 4 year provision

Appendix 2 illustrates take up of the universal funding for 3 and 4 year olds at ward level (home ward). For the academic year 2017/18, a total of 6,008 children were taking up a free funded place. Of these, 3,709 were taking up a place with a PVI/Childminder and 2,299 with a maintained setting.

Over the academic year, the three home wards with the largest number of children accessing the universal funding are resident in;

- Harlesden
- Stonebridge
- Wembley Central

The three home wards with the lowest number of children accessing the universal funding are resident in;

- Kenton
- Mapesbury
- Northwick Park

4.3.2 30 hour provision for 3 and 4 year olds

Appendix 3 illustrates take-up of the *extended* entitlement (30 hours) for 3 and 4 year olds at ward level (home ward).

For the academic year 2017/18, a total of 1,283 children were taking up the extended entitlement. Of these, 1,001 were taking up a place with a PVI/Childminder and 282 with a maintained setting. This illustrates that whilst the proportion of maintained settings offering places is high in Brent, take-up in these providers is significantly lower than in PVI settings.

The figures in Appendix 3 indicate that over the academic year 2017/18, the three home wards with the *highest* number of children accessing the extended entitlement are resident in;

- Tokyngton
- Harlesden
- Stonebridge

The three home wards with the *lowest* number of children accessing the extended entitlement are resident in;

- Brondesbury Park
- Kilburn
- Mapesbury

4.3.3 Combined (universal, extended and reception) for 3 and 4 year olds

Appendix 4 illustrates the population of 3 and 4 year olds by ward, based on GLA projections for 2019 and the total take up of 3 and 4 year olds accessing the free entitlement at ward level for the academic year 2017/18 and autumn and spring terms of the 2018/2019 academic year. The three wards with the *highest* number of resident 3 and 4 year olds accessing a free funded place are;

- Harlesden
- Preston
- Wembley Central

The three wards with the *lowest* number of resident 3 and 4 year olds accessing a free funded place are;

- Queensbury
- Queens Park
- Kilburn

The pattern of take up year on year indicates that Harlesden, Preston and Wembley Central wards continue to have the highest levels of take up in the early part of the 2018-2019 academic year.

4.3.4 Take-up of two year provision

As at July 2018, 1,118 (59%) children were taking up a free funded place with a PVI/Childminder. In total, for the academic year 2017/18 1,837 children had accessed a free funded place.

Appendix 4 illustrates take-up of the 2 year old funding at ward level based on the child's home ward for the academic year 2017/18.

The three home wards with the highest number of children taking up a place are;

- Stonebridge
- Harlesden
- Willesden Green

The three home wards with the lowest number of children taking up a place are;

- Brondesbury Park
- Queens Park
- Northwick Park

4.4 Vacancy information

Brent early years settings return vacancy information to the Local Authority on a termly basis. This information is shared with parents via the online Childcare Directory. The January 2019 return of these figures is reflected in Appendix 5.

This illustrates that the ward with the greatest number of two year old vacancies is Harlesden with 99 vacancies, followed closely by Stonebridge with 94 and Preston with 91 vacancies. The ward with the greatest number of 15 hour spaces for 3 and 4 year olds is Wembley Central with 114 vacancies, followed by Harlesden with 101. The ward with the greatest number of 30 hour spaces for 3 and 4 year olds is Wembley Central with 86 vacancies. These figures also illustrate areas where place availability is much more limited. Queens Park has consistently low numbers of available places across the entitlements. This is also reflective of higher numbers of home based childcarers in this ward with 19 of the 134 registered home childcarers being based in this ward. There has been no feedback from parents that they have been unable to find available provision to meet their needs.

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 Next steps in continuing the delivery of the extended entitlement and increasing take-up of the two year and universal entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds will be as follows:
- To ensure all entitlements continue to be marketed throughout the borough in order that all parents are aware of the offers available. We are also planning to engage with parents whose children are currently accessing two year old entitlement places to promote extended entitlement and discuss with them the benefits of this for them and their child.
 - To continue to engage with partners including employers to improve information sharing around childcare entitlements (30 hour offer included).
 - Identify funding to enable us to explore the reasons parents choose not to take up any free entitlement, including barriers to take-up and to identify any factors which could change parental preferences around non-takeup of the entitlement for their children.

6.0 Risk assessment

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Childcare providers choosing to withdraw from offering 30 hour places leaving a shortfall of places to meet anticipated demand.	Eligible families are unable to access what is a statutory entitlement for them.	There are currently 197 providers registered to deliver 30 hour places. Several maintained providers have expressed an interest in commencing delivery from September 2019. Place availability will continue to be monitored closely to ensure provision is available in future terms.
There is low take-up of the entitlement despite sufficiency of 30 hour places in the borough.	<p>Sustainability of childcare businesses would be negatively impacted.</p> <p>Families would not be accessing an entitlement that could provide extended early education for their child and support their access to employment .</p>	<p>A comprehensive marketing and outreach campaign continues to ensure that both parents and partners are aware of the entitlement and how to access it. The benefits of early education will also be promoted. The absence of a national campaign will mean that we will have to continue efforts across the borough to ensure that momentum is retained.</p> <p>Business support to providers will continue.</p> <p>Work with employers and (JCP etc.) to promote the entitlement as an aid to recruitment and retention</p>
Systems or process failures impacting administration of the entitlement	The LA unable to meet administrative requirements, affecting access to places for eligible children, payments to providers and required audits being carried out.	<p>Back up manual processes have been developed to ensure administration can run smoothly.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation processes in place to ensure that ongoing review and feedback takes place, identifying potential issues and addressing these in a timely manner</p>
Sufficiency of two year or	Continued decrease in	Targeted business support to

universal 3 and 4 year places is impacted by a focus on conversion of places to 30 hour places by providers	take-up of these as families are not able to find suitable childcare provision	providers to enable business sustainability, with a focus on delivery models suited to their area and business needs.
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7.0 Staffing implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 Financial implications

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 Task and Finish Group comments

9.1 This paper was discussed by the Early Years Task and Finish group on 27 March 2019. The experience of offering 30 hour places was discussed, with some members of the group reporting that delivery of these places was a struggle. It was acknowledged however that there were also other providers in the borough who had advised that delivering 30 hour places had been a success and helped their sustainability significantly.

9.2 It was also noted that while take-up of the two year entitlement and the universal 3 and 4 year entitlement were still below London and national averages, take-up of the 30 hour entitlement has been consistently high in Brent since the roll-out in September 2017.

Report sign off:

Gail Tolley

Strategic Director of Children and Young People