



London Borough of Richmond upon Thames | Childcare sufficiency action plan 2011-2014

Last updated: 27 January 2011

Introduction

Under the Childcare Act 2006 local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare to address the needs of working parents/carers in their area for children up to the 1st September after they turn 14 years, or until they reach the age of 18 years in the case of children with a disability. A core element of this duty is to complete a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years which assesses the supply of, and demand for, childcare in the local authority and identifies any gaps in provision. The statutory guidance on undertaking a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment recommends that an action plan is also developed to help address the identified sufficiency gaps.

This document is the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames' childcare sufficiency action plan. It identifies new or different actions that the local authority and its partners will undertake to address the gaps in childcare. Where appropriate, it also signposts to existing initiatives or actions that are already in place within the local authority.

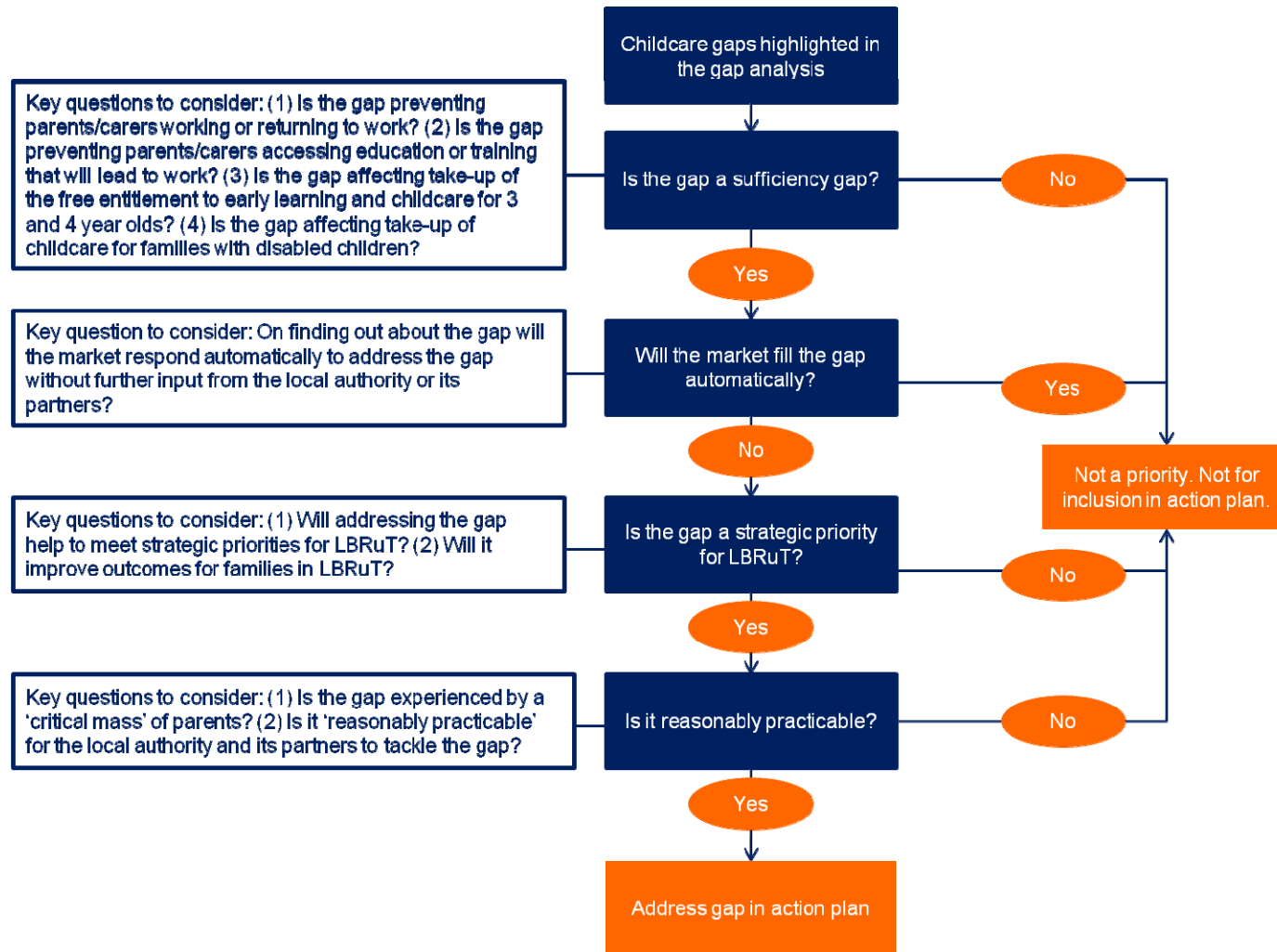
The action plan should be read alongside the following documents which are published separately:

- **Gaps analysis:** this report seeks to quantify the scale and extent of gaps within the childcare market. It examines income gaps, time gaps, age gaps, type gaps, specific need gaps and geographical gaps.
- **Profile of the supply of childcare:** information held by LBRuT was used to profile the childcare available in the borough. The analysis looked at number of places, number of children per place, opening times, vacancies, fees and quality. It looked at differences in the childcare market by type of provider, locality, age of child and time of year. The analysis of supply also included results from an online questionnaire sent to all childcare providers (and completed by 54) asking about their views on the childcare market.

- **Parent/carer demand survey:** a telephone survey was conducted with 510 parents/carers in Richmond upon Thames to find out about their views and experiences of childcare. The questionnaire included (amongst others) questions on childcare that they use, reasons for not using childcare, improvements required, and financial support.
- **Focus groups with parents/carers:** three focus groups were held in October 2010 with: low income families in Barnes (11 participants); young parents living in Whitton/Heathfield area (6 participants); and families from Black and minority ethnic groups (6 parents)

Approach to developing the action plan

The flowchart below shows the key questions considered in deciding whether to address a childcare gap in the childcare sufficiency action plan.



A workshop on 17 January 2011 with key officers from the local authority considered these questions and drew the following conclusions:

- The principal childcare gap in LBRuT was affordability. A number of parents/carers highlight this as an area for improvement. Officers agreed that there is little direct influence that the local authority and its partners can have on the price of childcare. As a result, the action plan focuses on actions that will help to ensure that parents/carers are aware of the full range of financial support available to them.
- Provision for 11-14 year olds may be a gap, but this was being addressed through the Youth Action Plan so no further action was required
- That other gaps highlighted in the gaps analysis may be cause for concern but that further research was needed to fully understand the nature and extent of any possible problem. This relates to:
 - Financial sustainability of out of school provision
 - Specific needs of parents/carers with disabled children
 - Why parents/carers are more likely to report that the childcare that they use during school holidays does not meet their needs
 - Why parents/carers highlight flexibility as an area for improvement
 - Whether parents/carers from Black and minority ethnic groups experience different gaps in the childcare market
 - Why the data suggests there is relatively low take-up of the free entitlement to early learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds in Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside; and Heathfield and Whitton Sub-Local Authority Areas (SLAs)
 - Whether reported increases in demand for childcare over time will result in pinch-points in supply that the market cannot address automatically

Timescales and monitoring

This action plan covers the period April 2011 to March 2014, with a particular focus on April 2011 to March 2012. The action plan will be monitored via the Early years and Childcare management team.

Structure of the action plan

The action plan is structured as follows:

- Objective: this highlights the change in the childcare market that the local authority and its partners are hoping to achieve.
- Actions: this summarises the actions that will be undertaken to meet the objective
- Responsible officer and partners: this highlights who will be responsible for implementing the action and any other partners that will be involved in delivery
- Timescales: when the action will be completed by

- Additional resources required: whether additional resources are required to implement the action and, if so, which budget monies may be allocated from
- Outcomes improvement: whether meeting the objective will contribute to other strategic priorities within the local authority

Action plan

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
1. By March 2014, reduce by 50% (to 22%) the proportion of parents/carers who 'tended to disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that they know where to find information about financial assistance for childcare	1.1 Ensure relevant and up-to-date information on financial support is available on the LBRuT website	FIS manager	By September 2011	None	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i>
	1.2 Develop or source flyer about financial support to be able to distribute information to parents/carers	FIS manager	By July 2011	Funding from marketing budget for drafting and printing flyer	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities; and make a positive contribution</i>
	1.3 Raise awareness of the different options and help available to parents/carers with childcare costs. Distribute flyer on a regular basis to: (a) parents/carers who contact FIS; and (b) providers so that they can forward to parents/carers and include in relevant literature	(a) FIS manager (b) EY Office manager	From September 2011 onwards	None	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 3.1: support all children, young people and families to prosper, and reduce the impact of poverty</i> <i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i>

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
	1.4 Ensure financial assistance for parents/carers is a standing agenda item in provider and childminder forums and in information hubs in children's centres	Early Years team and Children's Centre strategy and development manager (CCSDM)	From September 2011 onwards	None	
	1.5 Investigate whether Service Level Agreements with all partner agencies can include role in disseminating information to parents/carers. Improve understanding of internal partners of the information and advice available	Head of Early Years and Childcare	During April 2011	None	
	1.6 Work with Marketing Team to investigate the possibility of including information about financial support in school prospectuses	Early Years team, Lead Inspector Curriculum and Learning (EYFS to KS3) and Marketing Team	From September 2011	None	
	1.7 Include on the IQC checklist of Ofsted registered providers whether there is accessible information available about financial support for childcare	EYFS strategy manager	From September 2011	None	
	1.8 Work with employers to encourage them to offer childcare vouchers	Business Support manager	From September 2011	None	

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
	1.9 Continue to monitor the awareness of financial support available amongst parents/carers, especially those from key groups	Early Years team	Ongoing	Resources may be needed to enable monitoring to take place	
2. Ensure a better understanding of the financial sustainability of out of school providers	2.1 Investigate whether to re-launch the regular provider survey and to include questions about sustainability	Play Development manager and EY Business Support manager	From September 2011	None	<p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities; and make a positive contribution</i></p> <p><i>Community Plan Priority 6: A vibrant and prosperous Richmond upon Thames</i></p>
3. Ensure a better understanding of the childcare needs of families with disabled children	3.1 Interrogate FIS data to understand number of enquiries from families with disabled children, type of issues encountered and whether issues have been resolved. Respond to data accordingly.	FIS manager	By July 2011	None	<p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.3: improve outcomes for those with special and additional</i></p>

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
	3.2 Tap into findings of research being undertaken with social workers on placing disabled children in childcare	Ian Sutton	From July 2011	None	<i>educational needs</i> <i>Children and Young People's Plan</i> <i>Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities; and make a positive contribution</i> <i>Children and Young People's Plan</i> <i>Commitment 4.3: ensure children, young people and their families are engaged in improving services to meet their needs</i> <i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i> <i>Community Plan Priority 7: Improving access and participation</i>
	3.3 Tap into findings from the work currently being undertaken on Information, Advice and Guidance	CCSDM and FIS manager	From July 2011	None	
	3.4 Respond to evidence accordingly	Head of Early Years and Childcare	From September 2011	None	
4. Ensure a better understanding of the needs of those parents/carers who use childcare during school	4.1 Tap into data held by Ann Aspinall on sport – does this provide additional information on why needs are not met?	Play development manager and Performance, data quality officer	By July 2011	None	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i>

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
holidays but report that it does not meet their needs	4.2 Use the provider forums to ask providers what they understand to be the reasons for parents/carers needs not being met in school holidays	Play development manager and Performance, data quality officer	By next Provider Forum	None	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities and make a positive contribution</i>
	4.3 (a) Develop a questionnaire for parents/carers who use childcare during school holidays to investigate need further; (b) Use provider forums to distribute questionnaires to parents/carers; (c) Collate and analyse responses	Play development manager and Performance, data quality officer	(a) By next Provider Forum; (b) During next Provider Forum; (c) by second Provider Forum	None	
	4.4 Undertake an audit of the information on school holiday provision held by FIS and put forward proposals on how this may need to be improved	FIS manager	By September 2011	None	<i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i> <i>Community Plan Priority 7: Improving access and participation</i>
	4.5 Respond to the findings of the research accordingly	Head of early years and Childcare	From January 2012	None	

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
<p>5. Develop a better understanding of why flexibility was highlighted as an area for improvement in consultations with parents/carers</p>	<p>5.1 Interrogate FIS data to understand issues around flexibility. Respond to findings accordingly. If data is not collected then develop an approach to log problems experienced by parents/carers</p>	<p>FIS manager</p>	<p>Interrogation by September 2011</p>	<p>None</p>	<p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities; and make a positive contribution</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 4.3: ensure children, young people and their families are engaged in improving services to meet their needs</i></p> <p><i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i></p> <p><i>Community Plan Priority 7: Improving access and participation</i></p>

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
6. Better understand the childcare needs of Black and minority ethnic parents/carers	6.1 The 2012 refresh of the childcare sufficiency assessment to include research into the needs of BME parents/carers. This could include: improved profiling of the population, data from FIS on enquiries from BME parents/carers; and new primary research with BME parents/carers	Performance data and quality officer on mapping; and FIS manager and CCSDM on research on need	By April 2012	None	<p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities; and make a positive contribution</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 4.3: ensure children, young people and their families are engaged in improving services to meet their needs</i></p> <p><i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i></p> <p><i>Community Plan Priority 7: Improving access and participation</i></p>

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
7. Better understand whether relatively low take-up of free entitlement to early learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds in Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside SLA and in Heathfield and Whitton SLA reflects poor take-up or whether parents/carers are taking-up a place in a neighbouring authority	7.1 Liaise with neighbouring local authorities to understand take-up of free entitlement by LBRuT resident children	FIS manager	By September 2011	None	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.2: reduce the achievement gap</i> <i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i>
8. Develop a better understanding of average fee rates across types of providers and SLAs	8.1 See action 2.1; and consider making it a requirement of inclusion in the Directory of Providers to give this information to the local authority; or consider mystery shopping exercises to gather the data	Play development manager and EY Business Support manager	From September 2011	None	<i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 3.1: support all children, young people and families to prosper, and reduce the impact of poverty</i>
9. Develop a picture of potential pinch-points in supply as a result of increases in demand over time as reported in the parent/carer demand questionnaire	9.1 2012 childcare sufficiency assessment refresh to include a section that maps reported increases in demand with vacancies and places	FIS manager and Performance and data quality officer	By April 2012	None	<i>Community Plan Priority 6: A vibrant and prosperous Richmond upon Thames</i>

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer and partners	Timescale	Additional resources required	Outcomes improvement
10. Improve out of school provision for 11-14 year olds	Please refer to Youth Action Plan			None	<p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Priorities for 2010-11: Priority 6 on ensuring more things to do and places to go</i></p> <p><i>Children and Young People's Plan Commitment 2.4 and 2.5: ensure all children and young people are able to enjoy a range of play, sports and cultural opportunities; and make a positive contribution</i></p> <p><i>Community Plan Priority 1: tackling disadvantage</i></p>