

## **Report of the Assistant Director to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 7th June 2016**

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**Subject: Information on 2, 3 and 4 year old early education places in the district.**

**Summary statement:**

Evidence is clear that children's early years' experiences shape their development, educational attainment and life chances. Good communication and language skills combined with strong social and emotional skills are essential for children to be effective learners throughout life and achieve their potential.

Take-up of early education places is key to transforming outcomes for children. Recent expansion of funding for two year olds has meant that free early education places are now available to those children living in the poorest families across the district. Evidence shows that two year olds in good and outstanding Early Years provision see real benefits in terms of their early language skills and physical, social and emotional development. Pre-schools, nurseries, school nurseries and childminders all play a vital role.

This report provides an annual update to the Overview and Scrutiny committee following on from the previous report tabled on 9 June 2015.

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**  
**Children's Services**



## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Evidence is clear that children's early years' experiences shape their development, educational attainment and life chances. Good communication and language skills combined with strong social and emotional skills are essential for children to be effective learners throughout life and achieve their potential.
- 1.2 Take-up of early education places is key to transforming outcomes for children. Recent expansion of funding for two year olds has meant that free early education places are now available to those children living in the poorest families across the district. Evidence shows that two year olds in good and outstanding Early Years provision see real benefits in terms of their early language skills and physical, social and emotional development. Pre-schools, nurseries, school nurseries and childminders all play a vital role.
- 1.3 This report provides an annual update to the Overview and Scrutiny committee following on from the previous report tabled on 9 June 2015.

## 2. BACKGROUND

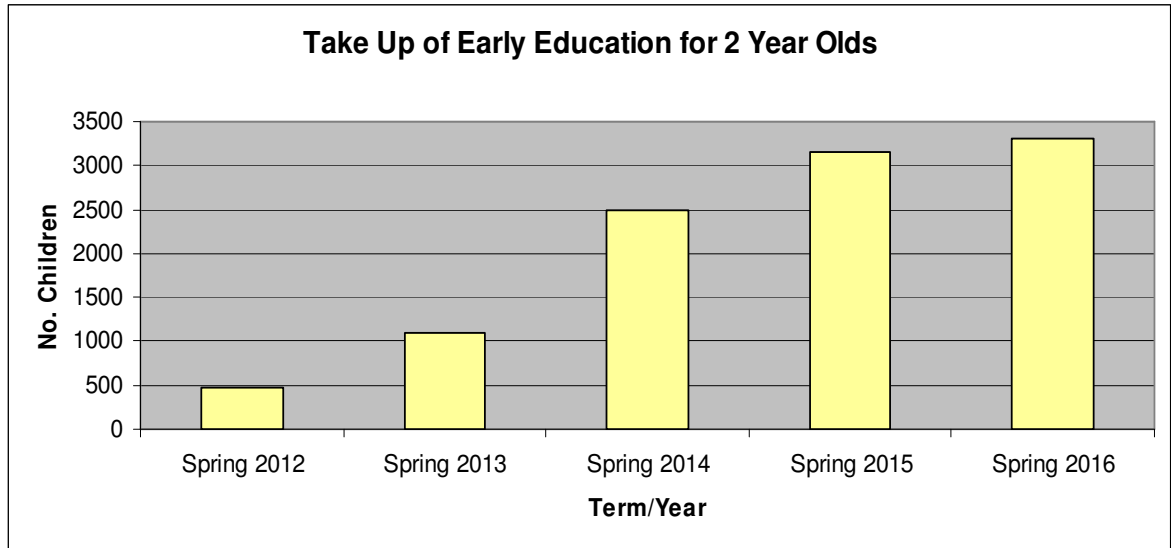
- 2.1 The Childcare Act 2006 requires that local authorities ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficiency of high quality early education and childcare provision within their area. Bradford's Early Years' Service has a lead role in ensuring the availability of effective, high quality early education and childcare across the District.
- 2.2 Local authorities have a duty to secure early education for disadvantaged two year olds. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, 4,581 Bradford two year olds were entitled to a funded early education place. The eligibility criteria for a funded two year old place are as follows:
  - Income Support
  - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
  - income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
  - Universal Credit
  - tax credits and you have an annual income of under £16,190 before tax
  - the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
  - support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
  - the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

A child can also get free early education and childcare if any of the following apply:

- they are looked after by a local council
- they have a current statement of [special education needs \(SEN\)](#) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- they get [Disability Living Allowance](#)
- they have left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

The extension of a legal entitlement to children living in low income working families is of particular significance to Bradford. In January 2016 60% of eligible two year old children were from low income working families.

2.3 In spring 2016, 3297 eligible children accessed a funded two year old early education place. This represents 73% take-up of the entitlement, up from 66% in spring 2015. This level of take-up is consistent with national trends.

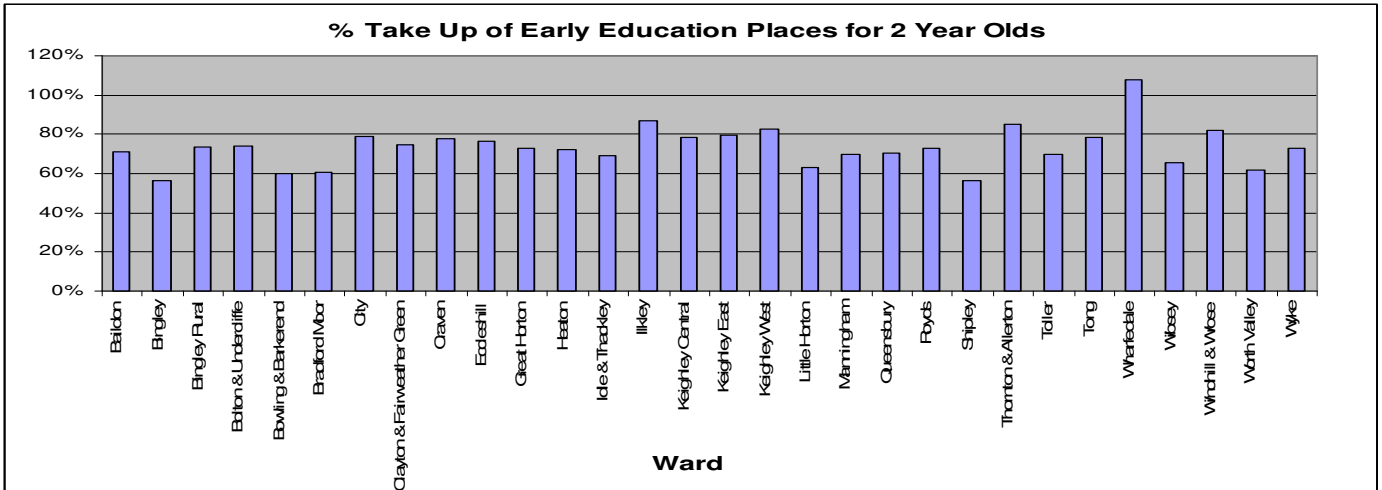


The target take-up rate for autumn 2016 is 80%. Although we aim to for all eligible children to access their entitlement, it remains to be seen just what the eventual maximum take-up rate will be. Analysis of the reasons given by parents for not taking up a funded place remains inconclusive. Training is being delivered to Children’s Centre outreach staff on how to maximise the take up of these funded places and overcome, in some instances, the reluctance of a small number of parents to take up the offer; feedback from these parents cites that their child is too young or they want them to remain at home with themselves or extended family (approximately 6-8% of parents contacted).

96% of children are currently accessing their entitlement in provision which is graded good or outstanding by Ofsted. It is important that children access high quality provision if they are to benefit educationally.

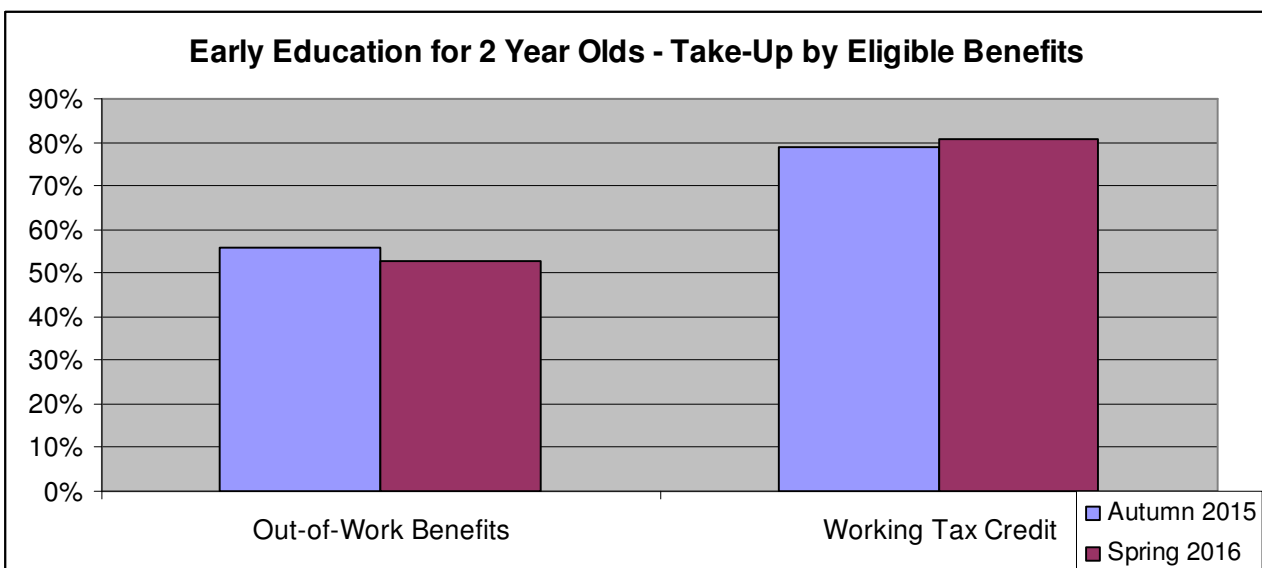
The Early Years’ Service, in line with the statutory guidance 2014, withdraws funding from settings which are graded “inadequate” by Ofsted and restricts delivery to settings graded “requires improvement” to those areas where there would otherwise be a shortage of capacity. Any setting graded less than good by Ofsted is required to participate in the Local Authority quality improvement programme aimed at securing a “Good” grade at re-inspection.

2.4 There remain significant differences in take-up rates by ward. The lowest areas are being targeted for more intensive marketing and outreach work by both the children’s centres staff and the Families Information Service.



There has been a significant capital development programme to create additional capacity in areas with a shortage of places. This work is now largely complete, although there remain two capital projects in the pipeline, one in the Tong ward at Bierley Life Centre and one at Cophorne Primary School which is in the City ward, these developments will ensure capacity of places and will support take up rates.

Across the Bradford District 40% of children eligible for a 2 year old place are in families claiming out-of-work benefits. Outreach work contacting the parents focusses in the first instance on these families and they are also being invited to two year old Birthday Parties across the District (see below).



Over the last two years a comprehensive marketing campaign has taken place across the Bradford District to promote Early Education Places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. This has included:

- corporate branding with free leaflets, outdoor and indoor banners and posters provided to childcare providers, children’s centres and schools – with materials also in Urdu, Polish and Slovak and messages targeted specifically at those communities.

- face-to-face events (taster sessions at play events, Oastler Market, stands in supermarkets, soft play areas, community centres, partner organisation events etc.);
- adverts – on buses/stops, radio adverts, plasma screens, bus tickets and Argos tickets;
- printed media – articles in the press and on council media;
- on-line presence – bradford.gov, Facebook / Twitter;
- targeted marketing initiatives via grants to childcare providers.

In the last few months as the universal message has become widespread, the focus has shifted to engage with those families who are harder-to-reach. This targeted marketing is taking the form of events (e.g. 2 year old birthday parties involving all childcare providers in an area working together to show the type of activities a typical session would involve) in specific communities particularly in areas of lower than average uptake, more intensive work with partners (e.g. Health, Job Centre Plus, Better Start Bradford, local organisations, the Looked After Children Team) and outreach work in the community at times more convenient to families.

A marketing grant is also being offered to children's centres which can demonstrate their impact on increasing the uptake of places including additional capacity to enhance their outreach with workers with relevant community language skills, resources to support the events / birthday parties, case studies showing success stories of children from certain communities accessing a place.

Other strategies include:

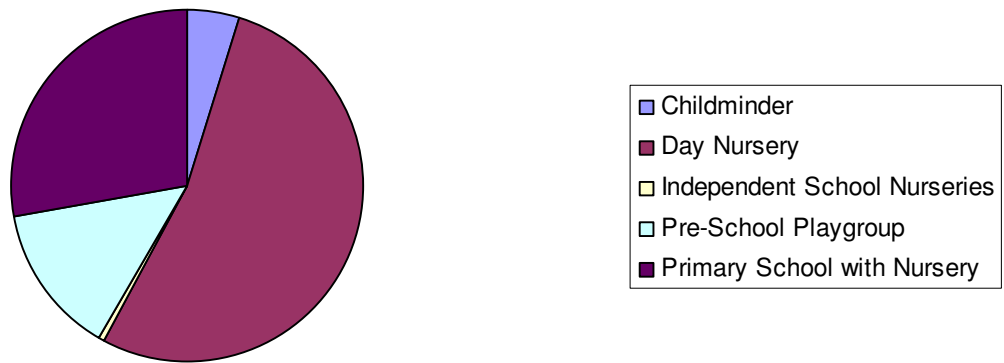
- Every children's centre has a link Families Information Services team member who supports them to further develop and monitor their take-up plan, is the key contact for any outreach support, promotes and supports events at the centre, ensuring they have all the up-to-date marketing materials etc. It is important that all centres continue with this universal marketing as there are always new parents to reach as their child approaches the age of eligibility.
- More intensive support for those centres in areas of low uptake.

These strategies should contribute to improving take up of the early education places.

The impact of the marketing initiatives and the barriers families cite for not wanting to take up a place are monitored on a regular basis in order to influence and inform strategy.

- 2.5 Although the majority of children access provision at a private or voluntary (PVI) setting, 908 children (28%) accessed a funded two year old place in a school or nursery school in spring 2016. This is likely to increase when three further schools open provision in the summer term 2016.

**Take-Up of 2Y Early Education Places by Provider Type  
Spring 2016**



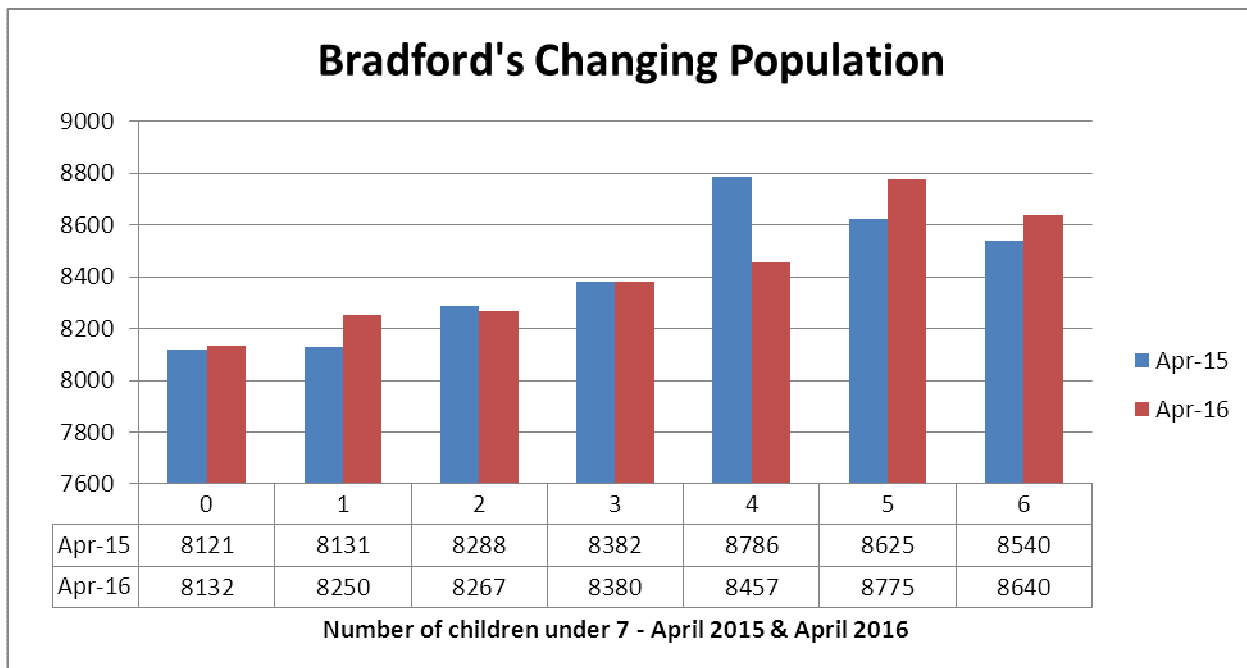
All children are entitled to 15 hours a week of funded early education from the term after their third birthday. The vast majority of children go on to access a full-time school place when they enter a Reception class. In spring 2016, 92% of 3 year olds and 95% of 4 year olds were accessing funded early education. National figures are not yet available to make comparisons.

2.6 There has been an increase in the take-up of 3 year old places since 2013. This has been driven by the introduction of the new two year old entitlement, the majority of which is delivered by the PVI sector.

Take up of early education	3 year olds maintained provision	3 year olds PVI Sector	4 year olds maintained provision	4 year olds PVI Sector
<b>Spring 2013</b>	59%	29%	84%	9%
<b>Spring 2014</b>	59%	31%	83%	10%
<b>Spring 2015</b>	60%	35%	87%	11%
<b>Spring 2016</b>	58%	35%	85%	10%

Although the school sector has largely maintained its share of delivery of 3 and 4 year old early education, occupancy of some school nursery classes has been affected by a reduction in the size of the age cohort over the past five years. Early Years are closely monitoring the situation and supporting schools wishing to look at options to reconfigure their provision including offering the funded hours flexibly to better meet the needs of their families and/or offering paid for childcare services.

2.7 A marked year-on-year decline in the number of three year olds was reported in June 2015. Although birth rates are notoriously difficult to predict, it seems, for the time-being at least that the size of the early education age cohorts has settled at a lower rate.



The extent to which this lower population level may lead to surplus capacity in early education places is unclear. The government is currently consulting on plans to introduce a new entitlement for up to 15 hours a week of funded childcare for 3 and 4 year old children of working parents from September 2017 (see 3.1). Any spare capacity in the system arising from the reduction in the numbers of 3 and 4 year old children will help to support implementation of this new entitlement.

### 3 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1 Extension of funded entitlement for working families

Currently, all three and four-year olds in England are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year, which works out as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year. Proposals to extend this entitlement to up to 30 hours a week from 2017 were outlined in the Queen's Speech on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

Bradford LA has also been identified as an Early Implementer Innovator for the 30 hours and has to use all reasonable endeavours to achieve the following objectives:

- Explore the extent to which the new entitlement incentivises work, particularly focussing on female working patterns
- Quantify the anticipated impact on the childcare market, by provider type and geographic area
- Test the impact of the entitlement on working patterns in areas of low and part-time female employment by developing flexible school-based provision
- Develop communications plan to support parents to take informed decisions around work-life balance acknowledging their role as primary carer and educator
- Share the learning experience of being an Early Innovator with relevant stakeholders, including other local authorities through local/regional/national and virtual networks. Develop case studies and tool kit materials for use by other local authorities.

### 3.2 Children's Centre review and procurement

Following a thorough procurement process for the contracts to manage these clusters, the Council has awarded the BD5 cluster to the charity Barnardo's and the East Bradford Cluster to Action for Children Services Ltd. We are now working closely with both organisations to ensure there is a smooth transition of services.

The Council did not receive a bid for Bradford South cluster that met the requirements that were set out in the tender. The Council is now putting in place arrangements to bring that cluster in-house so that we can continue to deliver the services families need.

Services are being delivered differently from sites across seven areas of the district. Each area contains a cluster of delivery sites and will:

- Have a team of experienced staff to provide services
- Take account of local community needs
- Ensure that parents have a strong voice

Four of the seven areas are already in operation and the remaining three clusters will come into operation in August 2016. The seven clusters, the sites they contain and who runs them are as follows:

#### Keighley cluster

Run by Bradford Council, the Cluster is made up of five sites: Highfield, Low Fold, Treetops, Daisy Chain and Rainbow.

#### Lister Park cluster

Run by Midland Road Nursery School and Children's Centre, the cluster is made up of the following sites: Abbey Green; Farcliffe/Lilycroft; Frizinghall, Midland Road; and Heaton.

#### West Bradford cluster

Run by St Edmunds Nursery School and Children's Centre the cluster is made up of the following sites: Allerton; Crossley Hall; Thornton; Farnham/Grange; Lidget Green; Princeville; and St Edmunds.

#### Airedale and Wharfedale cluster

Run by Strong Close Nursery School and Children's Centre the cluster is made up of the following sites: Baildon; Little Lane (Ilkley); Menston & Burley; Owlet; Bingley Rural; Hirst Wood; Strong Close; and Trinity 5 Rise.

#### BD5 cluster

Will be run by the charity Barnardo's. The cluster contains the following sites: Burnett Fields Children Centre; Canterbury Centre's Children and Woodroyd Children's Centre.

#### East Bradford cluster

Will be run by Action for Children Services Ltd. The cluster contains the following sites:

Barkerend Children's Centre; Communityworks; Fagley Children's Centre; Gateway Children's Centre; Mortimer House Children's Centre; Parkland Children's Centre.



### South Bradford cluster

Will be run by Bradford Council. The cluster contains the following sites: Bierley Children's Centre; Holme Wood Children's Centre; Reevy Hill Children's Centre; Tyersal Children's Centre; Victoria Hall Children's Centre; Woodside Children's Centre; Wyke Children's Centre.

At some of these sites, children's centre services are delivered on a part-time basis and so the sites have limited opening. These sites are:

Frizinghall; Thornton; Bingley Rural; Bingley Trinity 5 Rise; Menston and Burley; Little lane Ilkley; Baildon; Haworth Treetops; and Victoria Hall

### **Services available**

The early years offer is available to all families. This offer includes:

- The Family Links antenatal programme: an 8 week course for pregnant women and their partners to prepare for the birth and parenthood
- Introductory children's centre visits with breastfeeding support
- A home safety visit at 3 – 4 months
- Weaning advice
- Early language development session (6 months of age)
- Developmental movement and play session
- Early language development session (18 months)
- A development review at two-and-a-half years
- Access to a free early education place in the term after their child's third birthday
- Free Book Start packs
- Access to information through the Families Information Service

Further additional support will be provided for families who qualify for it, such as two-year-old early education places.

## **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 Bradford Early Years has been awarded £150k funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to test early implementation of the proposed new entitlement to 15 hours of funded childcare for working parents. An expression of interest for capital funding has been submitted to the DfE. Although there may be a shortage of capacity in some areas, the challenge is not as significant as it was in respect of the two year old early education entitlement, which required 31 major capital developments to address the lack of capacity in disadvantaged areas.

## **5. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 5.1 From April 16 the process to lower the age limited of a school by up to two years reverts back to the formal statutory process for voluntary, foundation, community and community special schools ( DfE Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools – April 2016). Academies must follow the business case process set out in the guidance 'Making significant changes to an open academy'.

**6. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None.

**7. OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the information in this report be noted

**9. APPENDICES**

9.1 None.

**10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.