

Update on: Free early education – take up of places for 3 and 4 year olds, increasing take up and engaging parents.

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Take up FEE has been increasing steadily across Leeds. In areas where take up has been traditionally low particularly where BME children are resident, a number of initiatives have increased take up particularly within target populations. GRT have built good relationships with their local children's centres and particularly in Harehills GRT take up has improved. Remaining barriers to take up are:

- Transient populations where families move in, are registered with health and then move on to other areas. These families do not always access FEE . Relocation happens fast and these families do not always show up in the system. New Early Start Transfer in and allocation meetings should pick up on these earlier so we are able offer places more quickly and efficiently.
- Lack of places in inner city areas due to lack of private sector childcare. There is a current review of children's centre childcare provision in Leeds inner city with an emphasis on ways to deliver more 2-4 year old places in the existing space. There is also a review of school nursery provision and Sufficiency and capacity are looking at maximising registered numbers against available space in schools While LCC fees remain low PVI providers will not find moving into inner city areas an attractive proposition because they cannot compete with such low fee levels. This means that unless fee levels are equitable LCC continue to be the only provider of FEE in these areas
- LCC have a duty to outreach and increase take up of 3-4 year old FEE . The 0 -11 partnership has required that a plan is put together to increase assertive outreach to parents of children in this age group. This plan is in process. Early Start will improve take up by making parents aware of the offer at the earliest opportunity and to give a comprehensive universal offer of information and support for parents of vulnerable children
- The ability to claim 10 hours a day FEE would improve the ability of CC's to deliver more places however there are a number of tensions not least with the child's experience in a setting for 10 hours, the difficulty with staffing 10 hour days, the ability of children to come in as early as 8am or stay as late as 6pm to access their entitlement and how to deliver a quality experience for the child that maximises their learning.
- Extension of free early education to 2 year olds (Sept 2013) – Preparation, promotion and strengthening the quality of providers
- Sufficiency and capacity are working on final numbers for this offer. Indicative numbers from DFE indicate we will need 5000 places but local intelligence suggest the real figure may be substantially less.

- Plans are in place to improve promotion of the offer and increase the number of places within PVI over the next 6 months. These places, however may not be in the right areas.
- A project group has been set up to address the extension to the 2 year old offer and will meet every two weeks until the plan is implemented.
- The review of Childrens centre childcare is also looking at two year old provision and the possible strengthening of numbers in children's centres. There may be a need to look at how we reduce baby places to accommodate 2 year olds.
- In order to deliver the 2 year old offer, providers are required to go through an independent Quality assessment. This ensure that all providers are of sufficient quality to deliver the offer to 2 year olds. Those that are unsuccessful in the first instance are required to undergo further work before they are reconsidered. This should result in an improvement in quality that extends to 3-4 year old provision.
- A revised early years improvement strategy to be implemented formally from January 2013 provides a framework for focussing quality improvement work on those settings judged satisfactory by Ofsted.
- Capital funding for two year old places has been announced by the DFE but no further details are forthcoming. Until we have the amount and criteria we will be unable to plan for capital expansions, however work is already ongoing on the thinking around how to use this capital, which is likely to be very limited, to the best effect.