
Overview and Scrutiny

Nursery Education and Childcare Review

Children and Young People Select Committee

December 2013

Membership of the Children and Young People Select Committee in 2013/14:

Councillor John Paschoud (Chair)

Councillor Jenni Clutten (Vice-Chair)

Councillor David Britton

Councillor Stella Jeffrey

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Councillor Stephen Padmore

Councillor Jacq Paschoud

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1. Chair's Introduction

Lewisham is a young borough, and Lewisham Council rightly places great importance on the care and influences that happen in the earliest years of the lives of our young residents. Recognising that for most children the first and most important carers and educators are good parents, the Children and Young People Select Committee wanted to undertake this investigation into Nursery Education and Childcare services, in all settings, that are available to support and work with parents.

In particular we wanted to find out:

- How much it costs in Lewisham, how it is paid for and whether the right services are affordable to all of those who need them
- How it is regulated and monitored, and how provision in Lewisham matches up to national standards
- What changes could be made to better meet children's' needs in Lewisham by providers, the Council and Government

Our findings and recommendations and how we reached them are explained in this report. Amongst the things which particularly impressed us was the overall professionalism of all of those working in all types of early years environments. We learned that poverty and other deprivations were amongst many pressures on families that might lead to 'poor parenting'; but that simply being in work did not necessarily mean that parenting skills would improve. We found that in addition to what they appeared to offer, childminders and nurseries can provide valuable support networks for parents who may not have family or friends in the local area.

The Select Committee is most grateful to everyone who has assisted this investigation by providing evidence to our formal meetings, allowing us to visit them and the children they look after and see how things work first-hand, and talking informally with members of the Select Committee about their views and concerns. As always we especially appreciate the work done by the Council's Scrutiny support staff to arrange all of these activities, record evidence accurately and then help us to turn it into a meaningful report and recommendations, and Andrew Hagger deserves our particular thanks in this case.

From the many children we saw who were clearly having happy experiences in different settings, we realised that having a mixed economy of provision in Lewisham, ranging from childminders who looked after one or very few children through to large specialised nursery schools with over 90 children attending at the same time, was a valuable choice to have. Children develop very quickly between the ages of 2 and 5 years, but they can develop in different ways and require different types of care and support for their own learning. Whilst in theory this choice seems to be available to most families, in practice because of geography, availability and affordability this is not always so.

There is probably significant scope for different providers to work together better to create packages of care that support the needs of particular children and families; and the Council could play a more significant role in encouraging and supporting them to do so. We looked particularly at progress so far in delivering the Government's offer to some families of childcare from the age of 2 years; and found that not enough thought may have been put into whether needs for this could be met using spaces that had been designed and workers who had been trained with even slightly older children in mind. I hope that all those to whom our recommendations are ultimately directed will take note of and act on them.



Councillor John Paschoud
Chair of the Children and Young People Select Committee

2. Executive summary

- 2.1 There have been a number of legislative changes and government initiatives that have altered the nursery and childcare landscape, including the introduction of 15 hours a week of free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds as well as for some disadvantaged 2 year olds. The forthcoming Children and Families Bill includes reforms aimed at increasing the supply of high quality, affordable and available childcare, including introducing childminder agencies and making it easier for schools to offer wrap-around care.
- 2.2 Charges for childcare can vary widely across the borough due to differences in the level of service offered and the location. The economic climate has created pressure on providers, as more parents are relying on the 15 hours of free entitlement and are not able to pay for additional hours. Large scale changes to the benefit system have impacted on Lewisham residents and potentially affected their ability to afford childcare. Lewisham Council also funds 257 full time nursery places for pupils from deprived postcodes.
- 2.3 The 2 year old free entitlement has been a challenge for many providers. This is partly because caring for a 2 year old is very different from caring for 3 and 4 year olds due to the different stages of their development, which means many current providers do not have appropriate facilities for 2 year olds. Therefore there is a shortage in the availability of places for 2 year olds, with parents either unable to access places or finding it very difficult. Administering the 2 year old entitlement for providers can be difficult and some providers, notably among childminders who may be best placed to supply the 2 year old entitlement, do not want to it as it is not economically attractive.
- 2.4 In terms of the quality of provision of nursery education and childcare, the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory framework sets out standards for providers, while Ofsted act as the arbiters of quality. Within Lewisham the private, voluntary and independent nurseries and childminders are below the national average for Outstanding and Good ratings, while schools with nurseries are above. Support from the Council for nursery education and childcare providers is carried out by the Early Year Improvement Team, whose role is to improve provision of all early years providers in Lewisham.
- 2.5 Early years providers generally have good levels of qualifications, including required safeguarding training, but have found it more difficult to pay for training for staff in recent years. Linkages between schools and pre-school providers for transition, while generally good, could be improved and there are opportunities for improvements in the provision of wrap-around care.
- 2.6 Demand for childcare places will depend on the necessity, affordability, locality and quality of childcare provision as well as parental preference of whether or not to use a childcare setting. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment carried out by Lewisham Council in October 2012 identified that 42% of parent/carers with children under the age 5 did not take up any childcare. The supply of childcare, especially that provided by the private, voluntary or independent sector, will adapt to market demands. Whilst

there may be an appearance of parental choice in terms of childcare, the reality is that due to the availability and affordability of childcare this is not the case for many parents.

- 2.7 The flexibility of childcare providers can vary for a number of reasons. Their resources, in terms of staffing and access to buildings will impact on the quality of service to children and hours of availability. The location of the setting near commuter routes will also have an impact. Generally childminders offer the most flexible provision, with private, voluntary and independent nurseries also offering flexibility. Pre-schools, schools with nurseries attached and nursery schools will more generally offer sessional activities that run in the morning or afternoon, so be less flexible.
- 2.8 Every nursery and pre-school must allow children with special educational needs to attend and nurseries and pre-schools must be able to demonstrate this to Ofsted inspectors through an SEN Policy and an Inclusion Statement. They must also set out their responsibilities and procedures for children with SEN and be able to state what provision they have for disabled children and children with special educational needs.

3. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

Flexible provision of childcare

- R1. Childcare providers should be encouraged and supported by the Council to take a flexible approach to delivering childcare with a range of available hours and locations.
- R2. Providers should be encouraged and supported to share their experiences of implementing flexible provision with other providers across the borough.
- R3. Flexible arrangements for the free 3 and 4 year old entitlement provision, including arrangements to extend provision to cover more weeks than the specified 38 weeks through fee top-up arrangements, should be explored.
- R4. Schools and nurseries should be encouraged to work with childminders in order to provide wraparound care for younger pupils.
- R5. Nursery and childcare providers should be encouraged to increase the number of children with special educational needs that they look after.

Transitions from pre-school provision to reception

- R6. Schools should be encouraged to improve their relationships with nursery and childcare providers in their local area to support transitions from pre-school settings to the reception stage.
- R7. Nursery and childcare providers should also be encouraged to improve their relationships with schools in their local area to support transitions from pre-school settings to the reception stage.
- R8. Schools should provide information to parents about childcare availability in the local area, including nurseries and childminders.

Role of Social Care

- R9. The priority places budget supporting nursery placements on social care grounds should be maintained at its current level.
- R10. Children's Social Care should further improve links with early years providers, with attention paid to childminders to address perceptions.
- R11. Officers should explore the possibility of increasing the role of early years practitioners in early intervention work to potentially reduce the escalation of cases to social care practitioners.

Free entitlement to childcare for 2 year olds

- R12. The sign up process for both parents and providers should be simplified in order to encourage further take up.
- R13. Regular monitoring of the availability of places should be carried out and publicised to provide up to date information about provision to parents. This should include information on the Lewisham website showing whether there are vacancies with specific providers.
- R14. The Mayor and Cabinet make representations to the government outlining some of the issues with the 2 year old free entitlement, including:
- The legislation has not been properly thought through, and is not having the intended impact.
 - Providing care for 2 year olds in a setting designed for 3 and 4 year olds requires different skills from staff and facilities, which many providers are unable to provide without further assistance.
 - The funding structure should be re-examined as the childcare market's response, especially from childminders, indicates that government funding is not in line with what the market requires.
 - As low income families are being targeted for this provision it is unlikely in many cases that they will be able to afford to pay for additional hours from providers, therefore providing less incentive for providers to offer the entitlement.
- All childminders should have DBS checks carried out every 3 years.

4. Purpose and structure of review

- 4.1. At its meeting on 9 April 2013, the Committee decided as part of its work programme to undertake an in-depth review into Nursery and Childcare Provision. The Committee agreed the scope of the review on 15 May 2013.
- 4.2. The Committee agreed that in order to understand nursery education and childcare provision in the borough, the Committee would need to first understand and answer the following key questions:

Funding and affordability

- How is nursery and childcare provision funded in Lewisham?
- What are the ranges in prices of nursery and childcare provision across the borough?
- How does the price of nursery and childcare provision compare to other nearby boroughs?

Quality

- What is the statutory framework and national policy for nursery and childcare provision and how has this recently changed?
- What is the range of quality of nursery and childcare provision in the borough, including private, voluntary and independent and school provided nurseries and childminding?
- What is role of the Early Years Improvement Team in monitoring and improving the quality of nursery and childcare provision?
- What is role of Ofsted in monitoring and improving the quality of nursery and childcare provision?

Availability and accessibility

- Where is nursery and childcare provision available within the borough?
- Where is the demand for nurseries and childcare?
- How flexible is the provision on offer in different types of settings such as private, voluntary and independent and school provided nurseries and child-minding?
- Is nursery and childcare provision available for children with extra needs?

- 4.3. Building upon this understanding, the Committee agreed it would then consider the following key lines of inquiry:

Funding and affordability

- Does the current mixed model of nursery and childcare provision provide affordable services for Lewisham residents?
- Does the support from central government in the form of funding and benefits provide affordability in nursery and childcare provision for Lewisham residents?

Quality

- How could changes to government policy and legislation improve nursery and childcare provision?

- What are the private, voluntary, independent and school nursery and childcare providers in the borough doing to improve the quality of their provision?
- What is the Early Years Improvement Team doing to improve the quality of nursery and childcare provision in the borough?

Availability and accessibility

- Is current nursery and childcare provision appropriate for the needs of the parents and children of Lewisham?
- How could the flexibility in the availability and accessibility of provision be improved?
- How are providers of nurseries and childcare seeking to meet the increase in demand for free places in September 2013 and 2014, as well as increasing demands due to a rising population?

4.4. The Committee received the following evidence:

First evidence-taking session (2 July 2013):

- Report from officers providing information around funding & affordability, quality and availability & accessibility, including evidence from the following officers:
 - Penny Cartwright (School Improvement Officer, Early Years)
 - John Green (Strategic Leader, School Improvement Team),
 - Kym Scott (School Improvement Officer, Early Years)
 - Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People)
 - Sue Tipler (Head of Standards and Achievement)

Second evidence-taking session (9 October 2013)

- Presentation from Mick Lear (Head of Benefits) and Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) highlighting the changes to benefit system and support available to families with children to access childcare.
- Evidence from Shirley Mucklow, Director of Bellingham Community Nursery.
- Further evidence from Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People) and Sue Tipler (Head of Standards and Achievement)

Visits to providers

- Bunny Hop Nursery, Deptford. Met with Natasha Ricketts, Manager (2 October 2013)
- Lammas Green Pre-School, Sydenham. Met with Lynnette Jefferies, Manager (3 October 2013)
- Chelwood Nursery School, Brockley. Met with Nikki Oldhams, Headteacher (8 October 2013)
- Kilmore Childrens Centre Childminding Group, Forest Hill. Met with Charmaine Palmer, co-ordinator for the group and 7 other childminders. (7 November 2013)
- Kilmore Childrens Centre, Forest Hill. Met with Maria Johnson, Childrens Centre Manager (7 November 2013)
- Perrymount Nursery School, Perry Vale. Met with Christine Keen, Headteacher, Karen Morgan, Nursery Teacher and Sara Handley, Reception Teacher (7 November 2013)

- Lewisham Childminders Association. Met with Jacqueline Latrelle, Chair, Susan Gordon, Treasurer, 8 other childminders and a parent of a child who attends a childminder (12 November 2013)

4.5. The Committee concluded its review and agreed its recommendations on 3 December 2013

5. Legislative Background

Free entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds

- 5.1. Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on the Delivery of Free Early Education for Three and Four Year Olds and Securing Sufficient Childcare was published in September 2012.¹ It set out that Local Authorities are required by legislation to make sufficient free early education available (15 hours a week over 38 weeks) for every eligible child in their area from their 3rd birthday until they reach compulsory school age, making the Free Entitlement Offer universal for all 3 and 4 year olds.
- 5.2. The free entitlement should be delivered in a way that reflects the local market through providers across the maintained, private, independent and voluntary sectors. Local authorities cannot refuse free entitlement funding to providers who have not yet been inspected by Ofsted, where the Local Authority is satisfied that the provision is of sufficient quality, but also cannot fund providers rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted, unless the local authority is satisfied that the setting is likely to improve significantly at re-inspection or within an agreed timescale. The local authority reimburses providers on the basis of a termly headcount and uses an hourly rate based on a formula that recognises the quality of the setting. The hourly rate is higher for good and outstanding providers and is intended to act as an incentive to satisfactory providers to improve.
- 5.3. From September 2013, children who are 2 years of age from families that would meet the Free School Meals criteria are now eligible for 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks a year. This two year old entitlement was outlined within the statutory guidance and is part of the Government's Fairness Premium, which is intended to drive up social mobility and improve life chances. The primary focus will be on disadvantaged children, who are currently less likely to access the benefits of early education.
- 5.4. This new entitlement will be implemented in two phases. In September 2013 (phase one), around 130,000 (20%) two year olds in England were able to access free early education places. From 2014 (phase two), the entitlement will be extended to around 260,000 (40%) two year olds. Lewisham has been a pilot authority for two year old funding since 2009, allowing disadvantaged two year olds to access 15 hours of free early education. The families must use providers who are registered with the local authority as eligible providers and these organisations then claim reimbursement from the LA for their costs. The costs are reimbursed on the basis of an hourly rate formula, which is current £6.00 per hour. Eligible providers can currently be of any Ofsted rating and there are 221 places identified across 67 providers as part of the pilot project that the borough participated in. From September 2013 the DfE have identified a target of 1,130 places for Lewisham and a provisional target estimated at 2,200 for 2014.

¹ Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on the Delivery of Free Early Education for Three and Four Year Olds and Securing Sufficient Childcare, Department for Education, September 2013

‘More Great Childcare’

- 5.5. Professor Cathy Nutbrown was commissioned by the Coalition Government to lead an independent review to consider how best to strengthen qualifications and career pathways in the foundation years. Her final report was published in June 2012, entitled Foundations for Quality. The review looked at qualifications and training, both for young people who are new to the early education and childcare sector and for those already employed. It also considered how to promote progression through an early years career and into leadership roles.
- 5.6. Following on from this, the report by the Department for Education released in January 2013, ‘More great childcare: raising quality and giving parents more choice’² sets out a plan of action for how the government will achieve its vision of a dynamic childcare market, delivering high quality early education. This focused on four key areas:
- Raising the status and quality of the workforce. Because the quality of staff is crucial in delivering high quality early education, there was a focus on raising the status of profession through the introduction of a range of new qualifications, including improving the quality of initial training to childcare trainees.
 - Freeing high quality providers to offer more places. This relates to a plan to increase the number of children that can be looked after by high quality childcare staff.
 - Improving the regulatory regime. This included the introduction of more experienced and well qualified Inspectors working to improve early years. Inspections targeting weaker providers were proposed, which will also provide the opportunity for earlier re-inspections where providers have taken rapid action to improve quality. There were also plans to make changes to the safeguarding and welfare requirements aspect of the EYFS statutory framework.
 - Giving more choice to parents. This relates to changes to the structural framework of registration for childcare providers to create a more straightforward process. This included making it simpler for people to become childminders and encouraging schools to offer more flexible early years provision. Proposals included the creation of childminder agencies to encourage more childminders by removing bureaucracy.
- 5.7. The changes to ratios of carers to children for pre-school children that were consulted on have not gone ahead, although plans to introduce childminder agencies, tax-free childcare, and the Early Years Educator and Early Years Teacher qualifications will proceed through the Children and Families Bill.

Children and Families Bill 2013

- 5.8. The Children and Families Bill 2013³ underpins the priorities set out in ‘More great childcare’ and aims to take forward the Government’s commitments to improve services for vulnerable children and support families. It also includes wider reforms covering the systems for adoption, looked after children, family justice and special

² More great childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice, Department for Education, January 2013

³ Children and Families Bill 2012-13

educational needs. The Government is reforming childcare with the aim of providing safe, high-quality care and early education for children. The enabling measures in the Bill support wider reforms to increase the supply of high quality, affordable and available childcare and include introducing childminder agencies and removing bureaucracy so that it is easier for schools to offer wrap-around care. The Bill is currently at the report stage in the House of Commons.

Good early years provision for all

- 5.9. Ofsted launched a consultation document 'Good early years provision for all'⁴ for consultation from April to May 2013. It came about because there had been little improvement in 2012 from the previous year in the proportion of early years providers judged as good or outstanding. While the large majority of the previously 'good' or 'outstanding' providers retained their grade in their most recent inspection, 40% of those judged satisfactory remained the same, which Ofsted felt was evidence that they are not improving fast enough. The consultation on the frequency of inspection did not include childminders, as the Government is considering new initiatives in this area, including the proposal for childminder agencies to be established. The documents proposed that from September 2013:
- A single judgement of 'requires improvement' will replace the current 'satisfactory' judgement for all early years providers
 - Early years non-domestic settings judged as 'requires improvement' will be the subject of a full re-inspection within two years; they will have a maximum of four years to become good.
 - Where an early years non-domestic setting fails to become 'good' following two consecutive inspections, this would be likely to lead to an 'inadequate' judgement and subject to the monitoring arrangements as set in the early years inspection framework.
 - Where any inadequate early years setting has failed to improve sufficiently and is still judged to be inadequate when re-inspected, it is likely that steps may be taken to cancel that setting's registration.
- 5.10. The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with the Ofsted proposals, including that if a non-domestic setting has not made sufficient progress to be judged good at its third consecutive inspection, it should be likely to be deemed as 'inadequate'. A large majority of respondents also agreed that if an inadequate setting remains inadequate after re-inspection within 12 months, and there exist statutory grounds for cancellation, Ofsted should take steps to cancel the setting's registration with a period of 3 to 6 months the most common response to how long they felt an inadequate setting should be allowed to remain open before steps are taken to cancel its registration. The proposed changes to the framework were introduced at the start of November 2013.⁵

⁴ Good early years provision for all

⁵ Good early years provision for all: A report on the responses to the consultation, Ofsted, August 2013.

6. Funding and Affordability

- 6.1. Funding for early years provision in Lewisham is received from the Department for Education through the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). For 3 and 4 year olds, the DSG is calculated on the basis of £3,488 per annum per child for 15 hours a week, making £16.4m in total. For 2 year olds, the DSG provides funding on the basis of the expected number of children that will be eligible for the new entitlement as well as an amount to expand capacity in readiness for the expansion of the entitlement for 2013/14 (£5.5m in total).⁶

Changes to the benefit system

- 6.2. The benefit system is currently undergoing some of the biggest changes that have been made to it in 60 years, with the Welfare Reform Act prompting changes that the government hopes will make the benefits and tax credits systems fairer and simpler. The reforms cover the following areas:
- Spare room subsidy (more commonly referred to as the bedroom tax)
 - Local support scheme
 - Council Tax reduction scheme
 - Benefit cap
 - Universal Credit
 - Personal Independence Payments
- 6.3. The benefit system is still complex, with multiple agencies of which Lewisham is just one of them. The estimated cumulative financial impact of welfare reform on residents within Lewisham is in excess of £80m per year.
- 6.4. In terms of support for families with children, the following is available if the parent is not in work:⁷
- Child benefit - £20.30 per week for 1st child and £13.40 for subsequent children.
 - Sure start maternity grant – one off £500 for the first child if in receipt of certain benefits.
 - Free school meals – for those in receipt of qualifying benefits.
 - Healthy start – vouchers to help buy basic foods (such as milk, fruit). These are for pregnant women or those with children up to 5 years old in receipt of certain benefits.
 - Childcare grant – Claimant must be in higher education (e.g. college or further education) and will receive help with childcare costs for children under 15 (17 if SEN) up to £148.75/week for 1 child, £255/week for 2 or more children. This is dependent on income and childcare costs.
 - Care to learn – Claimant must be under the age of 20 and in school, 6th Form or a 6th Form College, with help available to pay for childcare costs up to £175 per child per week.

⁶ Nursery Education and Childcare Review – Evidence session report, Children and Young People Select Committee, 2 July 2013.

⁷ Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting, 9 October 2013

- Parents' learning allowance – available to full-time undergraduates or those attending teacher training, it provides up to £1,508 a year to help with learning costs (e.g. books, travel). This allowance depends on household income but does not have to be paid back.

6.5. The following support is available if the parent is in work:

- Child benefit - £20.30/week for 1st child and £13.40 for subsequent children. From 2013 this depends on income and is only available if both parents in the household earn less than £50,000 each.
- Childcare vouchers – childcare costs are taken from their salary pre-tax, therefore saving parents the percentage difference between costs and the applicable tax rate.
- Childcare and tax credits – extra tax credits to help pay for childcare costs whilst working. Up to £122.50/week for one child and up to £210/week for 2 or more are available. Claimants must qualify for Working Tax Credit, will depend on income and cannot cover 100% of childcare costs.
- Free school meals – if in receipt of qualifying benefits and all yr 1 and yr 2 reception children from next September.

Helping families understand the welfare changes

6.6. In order to support residents who will be affected by these changes information has been provided to a number of key partners, including:

- Member and MP written briefings
- Caseworker & member face to face briefings
- Creation of information packs for key agencies
- A range of specific communications events

6.7. In addition there is public information available on the Council website that highlights what the changes are and who they will affect as well as what people can do to prepare. This includes online calculators to track the impact, budget planners and a local support tool which enables residents to self-identify needs and find websites and agencies that can help.

6.8. Children's Centres and Jobcentre Plus have been working together in order to provide further information for parents that are eligible for support and to help them through the changes, but feedback has been that parents find applying difficult and confusing. Therefore the Council has looked at how to simplify it by working towards developing a single assessment where people's eligibility can be sorted out in one go. To aim is to work with other agencies to share data and simplify the way the process works for the customer.

6.9. The benefits team have been working with colleagues in the Children and Young People Directorate in order to make sure that information is easily available for parents. Efforts have also been made to encourage people to take up other benefits that they are eligible for, such as free school meals. Increased take-up will also have a knock-on effect for schools as those eligible for free school meals would also be eligible for the pupil premium, attracting extra funding to schools.

6.10. Officers in the Children and Young People directorate have also been working with schools to encourage them to get information on welfare changes out to parents, including meeting with headteachers to emphasise the importance of this. Officers emphasised that schools have an important role to play in getting this information across to parents due to their frequent contact with parents and their role as important parts of the local community.

Charges for childcare

6.11. Within Lewisham, childcare provision varies in price and is mainly driven by market influences. Childcare providers will look at their overheads such as rents, rates and staff costs to determine what they charge. These could differ from one area to another and the fees other childcare providers charge in the local area for a comparable service will also have an impact, as will the demand and availability of childcare.

6.12. Fees for sessional care range from £57.50 to £225 per week, while full daycare ranges from £57.50 to £322.50 per week and Childminders £130 to £300 per week. The following table shows the average childcare charges by providers across different areas of the borough.⁸

Childcare charges by providers in Lewisham (average)	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
	£ per hour	£ per hour	£ per hour	£ per hour
Childminders	6.50	6.53	6.00	5.92
Full Daycare (PVI's)	4.48	4.36	4.44	4.12
Pre School – sessional (PVI's)	6.00	4.52	6.00	4.12
Area 1 comprises the following wards: Brockley, Evelyn, New Cross and Telegraph Hill.				
Area 2 comprises the following wards: Blackheath, Crofton Park, Ladywell, Lee Green, Lewisham Central and Rushey Green.				
Area 3 comprises the following wards: Catford South, Downham, Grove Park and Whitefoot.				
Area 4 comprises the following wards: Bellingham, Forest Hill, Perry Vale and Sydenham.				

6.13. Fees in more affluent areas are likely to be higher, especially if there are more working parents who would require childcare. Sessional fees are also affected by demand and can vary according to provider's different type of specialism. The economic climate in recent years has resulted in a fall in demand for formal childcare and many childcare providers have not raised fees to attract parents where vacancies exist in their nurseries.

⁸ Nursery Education and Childcare Review – Evidence session report, Children and Young People Select Committee, 2 July 2013.

- 6.14. Information from visits to providers found that fees varied around the borough and, as would be expected, varied depending on the hours that providers were open or that parents purchased. Private nurseries visited ranged from £125 per week (for 5 days, 9am to 3 pm) to £180 per week (for 5 days 8am to 6pm).
- 6.15. Information from childminders showed that fees ranged from £40 per day to £55 per day and from £170 per week to £260 per week, with weekly fees often lower per day than day rates. Many offer reduced rates for siblings and did not include charges for spare nappies/clothes. Evidence from childminders indicated that they rarely charge late fees to parents.
- 6.16. Information from officers found that average childcare costs in Lewisham are lower than those in nearby boroughs for nurseries offering full day provision, while childminder fees in Lewisham are higher. Officers emphasised that there is no clear pattern of charges in comparison to nearby boroughs and fee variations may be due to additional services/activities that the nurseries and childminders can offer. The table below shows the average childcare cost comparisons using information from each local authority Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, where available.⁹

LA	Nursery settings hourly rate(full time) £	Childminders hourly rate £	Pre -school hourly rate (sessional) £
Lewisham (average)	4.35	6.23	5.16
Lambeth (average)	4.96	5.76	3.59
Bromley (average)	5.00	5.00	4.00 to 5.00
Southwark (average)	5.67	5.80	7.00

Free entitlement

- 6.17. The hourly rates for the 3 and 4 year old free entitlement are based upon the cost of provision based on information that providers supplied. Providers are reimbursed for the 3 and 4 year old entitlement at the agreed hourly rate and incentives for improved quality are included through higher rates for good and outstanding rated providers. Providers are able to charge for those parents buying services beyond entitled hours, which will be driven by the circumstances of the individual provider. The current hourly rate rates for the three and four year old free entitlement are shown in the table below.¹⁰

⁹ Nursery Education and Childcare Review – Evidence session report, Children and Young People Select Committee, 2 July 2013.

¹⁰ Nursery Education and Childcare Review – Evidence session report, Children and Young People Select Committee, 2 July 2013.

Hourly rate for the 3/4 Year Old Free Entitlement Offer	Providers With “Satisfactory” OFSTED Judgement	Providers With “Good” or “Outstanding” OFSTED Judgements
Nursery Schools	£7.35	£7.70
Primary School Nurseries	£4.85	£5.13
Private, Voluntary & Independent Providers	£3.84	£4.67
Childminders	£3.84	£4.67

- 6.18. Funding for the free entitlement is provided by central government via the DSG, with the rate set by central government. Central government currently thinks the amounts devolved are appropriate. This money is then paid to the providers by the local authority. There is a need to balance the affordability of the hourly rate for the free entitlement based on what Lewisham receives from central government and what the market rate is for the area. There may be a need to review the current differentiation in pricing between good, satisfactory and outstanding, because if a lot of providers raise their status it could affect overall affordability.
- 6.19. When members visited nurseries such as Bunny Hop they were told how some nurseries had struggled since 2009 as the poor economic situation led to local people losing jobs and being either unable to afford childcare or not requiring it. Many parents have cut back to the free 15 hour provision, whereas before they would have paid for the extra hours. This meant there were fewer children in the nursery at full time hours and as a result staffing capacity was reduced by two. Bellingham Community Nursery supported this and highlighted that there has been reduction in the number of parents paying for additional hours above the free 15 hour entitlement, which has been a factor in them now signing up to provide the two year entitlement. Bellingham Community Nursery also explained that more parents have started to struggle with meeting childcare costs and that managers have had to put payment plans in place for some parents and chase others for payment. At Perrymount Nursery, which is attached to a primary school, they have seen a reduction in numbers as parents restrict themselves to the free 15 hours.
- 6.20. Other nurseries, such as Lammas Green, are open for 42 weeks a year and have negotiated with the Council to stretch out funding of the 15 hour 3 and 4 year old provision by charging parents a small amount per week (£2 a week) to cover the extra opening. This change occurred following requests from parents that arrangements be made to incorporate this.
- 6.21. Lewisham has continued to fund 257 full time places (up to 30 hours) that have been made available to providers that take pupils from deprived postcodes and are allocated to children by the providers on the basis of criteria set down by the local authority, with deprivation used as a proxy for children with additional needs. Where

possible full time places are only awarded to settings with 'good' or 'outstanding' OFSTED judgements. The current rates per hour are the same as provided to those children who have an entitlement to 15 hours. The estimated annual cost of this is £890,000 and is funded from the DSG. The visit to Chelwood Nursery School highlighted this, with over half the places at Chelwood filled with pupils funded in whole by the local authority, with many of the other places filled through the free 15 hours and only a handful of places paid for by parents. The introduction of fee paid places is recent for Chelwood as they have traditionally not had spare places.

- 6.22. The criteria used for funded places are designed to support providers to target disadvantaged children. Officers are reviewing the methodology for deciding on this funding, as the expansion of entitlement to 2 year olds means that there is a chance to examine how to better target provision towards those most in need. The previous approach was to fund full time places for those from deprived postcodes and was based on Super-Output Areas. The Council also has a "Priority Places Budget" within Children's Social Care to support placements on social care grounds which cannot be funded through the Free Entitlement Offer. In 2013/14 the budget is £97,000. In 2012/13, 22 children were supported in this way.

Two year old entitlement

- 6.23. In order to be eligible to deliver the free two year old entitlement, the provider has to opt in to be included. Lewisham Council is currently working with providers to encourage them to offer two year old places. Visits to providers in the borough and information received by councillors highlighted a number of issues with the two year old free entitlement.
- 6.24. For nurseries such as Bunny Hop and Bellingham Community Nursery the 2 year old entitlement has opened up further opportunities as they have always taken in 2 year olds. Now that people can access the free provision they have seen an increase in the number of 2 year olds as eligibility letters are sent to parents.
- 6.25. Some nurseries had a small number of children as part of the 2 year old free provision offer. However nurseries that were spoken to as part of the review advised that this can cause problems in terms of staffing as 2 year olds are very young and require a different level of care from 3 and 4 year olds due to the different stage they are at in their development. It was felt that provision for under 3s could have more of a care focus rather than early years education which is what 3 and 4 year olds would require. This was backed up by evidence from other providers, such as at Perrymount, who felt that taking 2 year olds would be difficult to do and by Bellingham Community Nursery, who had found delivering the 2 year old entitlement added extra pressure on workers, especially if 2 year olds are all at the same age within their second year as a child who has just turned 2 has greater care needs than a child who is almost 3. Chelwood Nursery School doesn't provide for 2 year olds, although it does have 'rising 3s'. There isn't a separate rest space 2 year olds and the funding for the 2 year old entitlement is not high enough to cover the cost of staff at local authority pay and conditions level at Chelwood. Many providers highlighted that if the free entitlement started at 2 years 6 months this could make a difference as 'rising 3s' have much more similar needs to 3 and 4 year olds and would not require such a significant re-shaping of the services the providers offer.

- 6.26. Bellingham Community Nursery had found administering the 2 year old free entitlement difficult, particularly as they had been asked to take children before the funding was agreed. Bellingham Community Nursery highlighted an example where a child had been placed with them, then the funding had been withdrawn. This meant that unless some sort of solution was found the child would have to leave a setting the child had settled into or the nursery would be forced to take a loss against that child and miss out on another child that would attract funding or pay fees.
- 6.27. Officers advised that in Lewisham many child-minders don't want to provide the free entitlement and don't apply to be eligible. Officers explained that this is because childminders can often get a better income by going to the wider market. Also child-minders often look after children for 30 to 40 hours a week so looking after a child for only 15 hours means they need to fill in gaps. There are currently only 9 child-minders signed up, which is an issue as Lewisham is looking to expand provision for 2 year olds and officers are trying to encourage more child-minders to sign up. Evidence collected by the Committee found that many childminders either did not know about their eligibility to deliver the free 2 year old entitlement, thought they were not eligible to deliver it or decided it was not viable to deliver it. Very few of the childminders the Committee spoke with were delivering the free 2 year old entitlement. Those that were delivering it had found the paperwork and forms overly complicated for both parents and the provider (particularly highlighting the 'Income tax status questionnaire' form) and significantly added to their administrative burden. It was felt that the rates were quite low and that because it only covered 15 hours it was not an attractive offer from a business point of view. Additionally, while childminders generally received payment weekly, payments for the 2 year old entitlement were made termly and were paid 70% upfront with 30% at the end of the period, which could also be off-putting.
- 6.28. At Kilmore Children's Centre the Committee found there was information readily available and prominently displayed for parents about the 2 year old entitlement offer. Staff there highlighted to the Committee that while they are required to monitor and track 2 year olds under the new provision (and have developed a system to do so) and report it to Ofsted, they were unclear if the Council has a centralised monitoring and tracking system. Staff advised that, anecdotally, it seems there are not enough available places to fulfil demand for the free 2 year old entitlement and that parents have reported ringing around many providers only to find that there are no available spaces. The ability to centrally monitor places available would be useful for directing parents to the correct places. This was supported by evidence from childminders, as those few eligible to provide the two year old entitlement received many calls from parents, despite having no spaces. It was thought that if it was possible to be able to easily and quickly put information on the Lewisham website about vacancies and availability this might provide better information for parents.

Recommendations:

Flexible arrangements for the free 3 and 4 year old entitlement provision, including arrangements to extend provision to cover more weeks than the specified 38 weeks through fee top-up arrangements, should be explored.

The priority places budget supporting nursery placements on social care grounds should be maintained at its current level.

The sign up process for both parents and providers should be simplified in order to encourage further take up.

Regular monitoring of the availability of places should be carried out and publicised to provide up to date information about provision to parents. This should include information on the Lewisham website showing whether there are vacancies with specific providers.

The Mayor and Cabinet make representations to the government outlining some of the issues with the 2 year old free entitlement, including:

- The legislation has not been properly thought through, and is not having the intended impact.
- Providing care for 2 year olds in a setting designed for 3 and 4 year olds requires different skills from staff and facilities, which many providers are unable to provide without further assistance.
- The funding structure should be re-examined as the childcare market's response, especially from childminders, indicates that government funding is not in line with what the market requires.
- As low income families are being targeted for this provision it is unlikely in many cases that they will be able to afford to pay for additional hours from providers, therefore providing less incentive for providers to offer the entitlement.
- All childminders should have DBS checks carried out every 3 years.

7. Quality

Early Years Foundation Stage

- 7.1. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. As mentioned previously, the EYFS Statutory Framework underwent a review in 2010 and changes to the framework came into force in September 2012. The EYFS specifies requirements for learning and development and for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The learning and development requirements for 2014 cover:¹¹
- The prime areas of learning:
 - communication and language
 - physical development
 - personal, social and emotional development
 - The specific areas of learning:
 - literacy
 - mathematics
 - understanding the world
 - expressive arts and design
 - Characteristics of effective learning:
 - playing and exploring
 - active learning
 - creating and thinking critically
- 7.2. Because the quality of early years provision has a significant influence on outcomes for children, the EYFS stresses the need for high quality qualifications and well trained staff that will be able to offer better support for young children. There are qualification requirements in the EYFS and these requirements are regulated by Ofsted. In group settings the following is required:
- the manager must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold at least a full and relevant level 2 qualification.
 - for children aged two and under at least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification
 - for children aged three and over in a registered early year provision, where a qualified teacher is working directly with the children, at least one other member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification.
- 7.3. Childminders must have completed a local authority approved training course which helps them understand and implement the EYFS before they can register with Ofsted. At least one person must be on the premises at all times with a current paediatric first aid certificate and must accompany children on outings.

¹¹ Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook 2014, Standards and Testing Agency, 2014

- 7.4. For after school clubs one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification. For schools at least one member of staff must be a qualified teacher and at least one other member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification.

The role of Ofsted in regulating quality

- 7.5. Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspects and regulates services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages. As such they carry out hundreds of inspections and regulatory visits throughout England and play an important part in the monitoring and regulation of childcare providers. It is the role of Ofsted to register and inspect all childcare providers including:
- nurseries in schools
 - nursery schools
 - childminders
 - nurseries
 - pre schools/playgroups
 - breakfast, after school and holiday clubs
 - registered crèches.
- 7.6. Before September 2008, settings could offer childcare and/or education. Some settings only offered childcare (and did not provide the 12.5 hours free entitlement of early education). These settings were inspected by Ofsted against the Childcare Standards only. Other settings offered both childcare and education (providing the 12.5 hours of free early education) and these settings were inspected against the Childcare Standards and Education.
- 7.7. When the Early Years Foundation Stage was introduced in September 2008 it became mandatory that all schools and early years providers in Ofsted registered settings followed the Welfare Requirements and the Learning and Development Requirements. In order for settings to be registered and to remain registered, they must comply with the requirements as set out in the EYFS.
- 7.8. Childcare providers are checked once by Ofsted before they are registered, and then inspected to ensure that they maintain their standards. Providers are inspected on a four year cycle unless they are judged to require improvement or to be inadequate. Other triggers for inspections include complaints or a change of manager.
- 7.9. Prior to September 2012, schools were given a separate EYFS grade on the same basis as other providers. Since September 2012, inspection of the EYFS forms a part of the whole school inspection and there are no separate judgements of the phases. Judgements are now of all phases and works so that the weakest phase determines the judgement.¹²

¹² Evaluation schedule for inspections of registered early years provision, Ofsted, September 2012

- 7.10. All childminders must be registered with Ofsted in order to be eligible to provide childcare. While meeting with childminders the Committee was informed that there are a number of unregistered childminders operating in the borough.
- 7.11. Ofsted also has a separate inspection framework for the inspection of Children's Centres focusing mainly on their targeted work with children and families.
- 7.12. Officers noted that parents' awareness of Ofsted judgements may not necessarily influence their choices for nursery provision or child minder. Parents build up relationships with nurseries and schools and a poor Ofsted report will not necessarily put them off. During visits providers noted that changes to Ofsted inspection requirements has resulted in increased administrative pressures so they can comply with Ofsted regulations.

Quality of provision within Lewisham

- 7.13. The table below shows Ofsted inspection grades across the sector. Not all providers are included as some are yet to be inspected.¹³

Type of provider	Number of settings	% of Outstanding	% of Good	% of Satisfactory/ Requires Improvement	% of Inadequate
Schools with nurseries <i>(pre 2012 inclusive judgements)</i>	45				
Schools with nurseries <i>(post 2012 ie whole school inclusive judgements)</i>	11	28% (18%)	60% (56%)	12% (23%)	0% (3%)
Nursery schools	2	50% (53%)	50% (40%)	0% (4%)	0% (0%)
Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers	114	16% (29%)	59% (53%)	23% (18%)	3% (3%)
Childminders	455	8% (10%)	53% (62%)	25% (27%)	1% (1%)

* National figures are in brackets as at 3rd December 2012

- 7.14. As can be seen, the percentage of good or better providers are above the national rate for schools with nurseries and just below for PVIs and childminders. Officers have incentivised good and outstanding providers by paying higher rates, however from September it will be possible to use satisfactory providers, which could create more providers for free entitlement places.
- 7.15. There is a statutory requirement that there are established working practices and linkages between providers and the next stage of education. Within Lewisham there

¹³ Nursery Education and Childcare Review – Evidence session report, Children and Young People Select Committee, 2 July 2013.

operates a model of feeder schools from primary to secondary and from nurseries (including PVI) to primary schools.

- 7.16. During visits to providers Chelwood Nursery School explained that they have good links and partnerships with other institutions, including Goldsmiths University, local primary schools, Drumbeat School and local childminders and childminding groups. They are part of the South Thames Early Education Partnership with another 5 providers. Providers such as Bellingham Community Nursery, Lammas Green Pre-School and Bunny Hop Nursery felt that the relationships with local primary schools were generally good, while Perrymount Nursery felt that these could be better with scope for more visits and more in-depth conversations about the child before they join the school.
- 7.17. Ofsted identified that the relationship with child-minders has to develop to fulfil the requirements. This was supported by evidence from childminders themselves, who felt that they could be left out of conversations with schools when a child joined the school. Childminders identified that there could be better working with schools in order to encourage linking up with childminders, especially around the potential for 'wrap-around' care provision, although childminders were hesitant to support the idea of school-run childminder agencies. They also felt that more information could be provided about local childminders to parents by schools, highlighting the frequent availability of information about after-school clubs and nurseries, but often very little about childminders. They generally found that information supplied varied from school to school and were not consistent.
- 7.18. Officers emphasised that the Council does not carry out quality inspections themselves and that Ofsted are the arbiters of the quality of provision. Officers collect evidence to see what support providers need in order to improve provision and have an understanding and knowledge of what quality is and if it is being provided, but do not provide any official quality judgement. If a childcare provider was given a 'required to improve' grade by Ofsted it would not be possible for the local authority to prevent that provider taking in more children as they are private businesses and can look after children if parents are willing to send them there.
- 7.19. Visits to providers and evidence supplied by providers to the Committee highlighted that staff generally have high levels of relevant qualifications, with most staff having level 3 NVQ qualifications or working towards them. Staff at nurseries attached to a school or dedicated nursery schools had direct access to qualified teachers. Many nurseries have information about their staff and qualifications readily available to parents either through information sheets or on their websites.
- 7.20. Some nurseries, such as Bunny Hop, Chelwood Nursery School and Lammas Green Pre-School, have also take on apprentices, although Lammas Green emphasised the difficulty they had in getting the funding for this paid to them. Chelwood also have 3 PGCE students from Goldsmiths University undertaking placements with them and have parent volunteers as well.
- 7.21. In addition, many staff have additional training to further develop their skills, such as Makaton and BSL training to help with communication. Providers emphasised the safeguarding training that their staff had undertaken as well as specialist training for

particular needs. For example, visits to providers showed staff with specialisms in working with children with additional needs and others with specialist training in dealing with boys, especially transition stages for boys. Many nurseries have bilingual staff, and a number of nurseries visited highlighted the value in having a Polish speaker which allows these children to have a space where they feel comfortable talking in their first language.

- 7.22. The childminders at the Kilmorrie Childrens Centre and the Lewisham Childminding Association (LCA) were mostly qualified up to level 3 NVQ, with those at level 2 taking courses for level 3 as this will be a requirement in 2015. The LCA seeks out training for its members from other childcare experts and operates mentoring and peer support programmes to develop and share skills and knowledge.
- 7.23. Training was previously funded by the local authority, however childcare providers are now required to fund training themselves. Nurseries such as Lammas Green Pre-School emphasised that this has added an extra cost pressure for the business and that supporting higher level qualifications such as university level education is now even more difficult to provide for employees.
- 7.24. While visiting Perrymount Nursery, Committee members had the chance to speak to a reception teacher about children coming from different settings into reception. The reception teacher highlighted that those coming from nurseries are generally more settled, especially if they come directly from Perrymount nursery as the children are familiar with the setting and relationships with parents have been established. New children who have had no pre-school experience will vary depending on the child and the family. Some may not yet be ready and this can show in their academic work. However the reception teacher stressed that the social aspect is not an issue and that by the time the children enter Year 1 a teacher would not be able to differentiate between a child who had attended an early years setting and those that had not.

Support for childcare providers from Lewisham Council

- 7.25. Lewisham has an Early Years Improvement Team (EYIT), whose role is to improve provision of all early years providers within Lewisham. The team mirrors the practice of the school improvement team through monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervention. This is delivered through training and advice for registered early years providers and the use of a self-evaluation process with the providers to develop the overall impact of leadership and management which enables sustainable improvements.
- 7.26. The EYIT is the main support to help ensure all providers interpret and carry out the EYFS statutory requirements. With the revised EYFS and the changes this year, the focus has been on the implementation of the revised EYFS. This has included developing, planning, assessment and tracking systems as well as moderating providers on making judgements on the EYFS Profile to ensure these are accurate across Lewisham and in line with national expectations.
- 7.27. The team works with providers to ensure they can provide the free entitlement of 15 hours for all 3 and 4 year old children and for targeted 2 year old children. Currently

they are liaising with other services to ensure the Local Authority meets the number of places for 2 year olds which is due to come on line in September. There is a particular focus on working with providers to improve the quality of the provision in order to raise attainment and to narrow the gap of under achievement. There is also a key focus on school readiness, improved parenting and prevention of escalation to other services in line with our Targeted Early Years services through Children Centres.

- 7.28. The team offers a training programme for schools, private, voluntary and independent settings and childminders on all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Before 2012 support and free or subsidised training was available from the Council, however since 2012, childcare providers pay for any training and development work that is given, as this is offered as a traded service. This includes training and support for managers/owners of registered early years providers practitioners to support in the development of high quality provision and to challenge leadership through the development of self-evaluation and leadership skills. The Service Level Agreement is offered to providers at a fixed cost and there is an additional charge for all training. 90% of settings subscribe to the Early Years Improvement Team's Service Level Agreement and attend training provided by the team. 40% of childminders have bought into training provided by the EYIT. Information supplied by childminders found that many of them feel the SLAs do not offer good value.
- 7.29. The EYIT provides targeted support, which includes visits to those childminders where there are concerns, complaints or where a childminder has received an inadequate judgement from Ofsted. Childminders generally felt that they were not supported by the local authority and that this was a result of their status not being as high as those providers who are regarded as more 'formal', such as nurseries and schools. Because of the increase in targeted services aimed at disadvantaged families and the relative reduction in more universal services, childminders felt that they were not able to access support that they were once able to and that some of the balance between the two types of provision had shifted. Childminders highlighted the support that was once on offer from the Council, such as a childminders network with co-ordinators employed by the Council. The group at Kilmorie Children's Centre stressed the importance of meeting up and sharing information and practice among childminders to improve knowledge and skills
- 7.30. The EYIT also provides targeted support to those new settings prior to their first Ofsted inspection and those settings who are Inadequate or Satisfactory or where there are concerns.
- 7.31. The EYIT works with a wide range of partners to ensure a joined up approach across other services with Children's Centres as key partners. This promotes development work to create a seamless process for families. SEN links have become part of the team's remit and work is carried out with Educational Psychologists to ensure that they are developing the work done by practitioners in the support of children with SEN. The team liaises with health and social care to support providers to ensure that their child protection procedures are effective and to support children's health and safety. The EYIT also liaise with the Healthy Child's Programme Board to ensure it influences future practice of health visitors, including the two year old check and the

wider context of health work. In addition the team supports providers to develop their links with other providers to ensure that effective transitions are in place.

- 7.32. Previous support and funding from the local authority has helped improve provision in the borough. Bunny Hop Nursery emphasised that early years funding had helped the nursery to put up a sign outside the nursery, develop flyers and provide uniform for staff, which has been a catalyst for the business to pick up. Funding enabled the nursery to replace the flooring, which had not been carried out by the landlord and had been identified previously as an issue by Ofsted. Early Years Funding from the council allowed Lammas Green to build a canopy over part of the outside play area and install safety flooring as well as put in cupboards for storage inside.
- 7.33. Despite support on offer from the EYIT, some nurseries have experienced difficult relationships with other areas of the Council. Bunny Hop Nursery has had problems with the council as a landlord (Bunny Hop rents their premises from the Council), including issues with heating and hot water maintenance, the lack of a thermostat and other users of the premises. There are also concerns over the standard of decoration. Bellingham Community Nursery had also experienced problems with the Council as landlord as they share a building that is owned by the Council. Specific concerns included the new lease and increased cost associated with it that had resulted in legal action. This has placed large demands on the directors and staff that have had to dedicate a lot of time and effort to this issue.
- 7.34. The manager at Lammas Green Pre-School highlighted to the Committee that as practitioners gained more qualifications and knowledge, there was potential for them to have an increased role in terms of early intervention. This could ease pressure on social workers who deal with the more urgent and pressing cases which need immediate and possibly more serious intervention.
- 7.35. Information about registered childcare providers is also available on the Lewisham website.

Safeguarding

- 7.36. The Lewisham Children and Young People's Plan sets out that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and that it is vital that partners across all agencies who work with children, young people and families in Lewisham work together to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded and achieve good outcomes. Every child has the right to live in a safe and secure environment, free from abuse, neglect and harm.¹⁴
- 7.37. The Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a partnership between all agencies, organisations and services in Lewisham with responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The board is made up of representatives from the agencies and bodies that have regular contact with children or responsibility for services to them in the local area. This includes children's social care, police, education, early years and Sure Start, health services, youth offending teams and probation services.

¹⁴ Lewisham Children and Young People's Plan 2012-15,

- 7.38. During additional evidence gathering from childcare providers it was stressed that all staff have safeguarding training and that the providers' safeguarding responsibilities are taken seriously. Providers were aware of the importance of not providing services in a vacuum, and that they should be aware of how and when to refer on to Team Around the Child (TAC) or Children's Centres. Practices highlighted included cause for concern log where any incidents/causes for concern are registered, reporting to management who can then look across previous incidents and decide whether this should be reported as a safeguarding concern. Linkages into Children's Social Care, Children's Centres and into TAC/TAF are also present. Lammas Green Pre-School submit around 6 CAF forms a year, while staff at Chelwood Nursery School participates regularly in TAC and TAF meetings with other support staff.
- 7.39. Childminders highlighted that while they have few incidences of safeguarding concerns, their perception is that when they do need to report something they can sometimes have difficulties. Childminders felt that they may not be seen as important by social workers and related one experience where concerns raised by a childminder were not addressed until a school also reported concerns. Childminders felt that improved knowledge of the role and professionalism of childminders among social workers could help with this, as could improved links between childminders and social workers, particularly around the sharing of information. While childminders can access the online training offered by the LSCB, this can be basic and not advanced enough for people who are qualified early years practitioners. Better safeguarding support for childminders would also help and it was felt that national guidance on the level of safeguarding training needed would be a solution. In addition, childminders highlighted that they are not subject to regular 3 year DBS checks.

Recommendations:

Children's Social Care should further improve links with early years providers, with attention paid to childminders to address perceptions.

Officers should explore the possibility of increasing the role of early years practitioners in early intervention work to potentially reduce the escalation of cases to social care practitioners.

Schools and nurseries should be encouraged to work with childminders in order to provide wraparound care for younger pupils.

Schools should be encouraged to improve their relationships with nursery and childcare providers in their local area to support transitions from pre-school settings to the reception stage.

Nursery and childcare providers should also be encouraged to improve their relationships with schools in their local area to support transitions from pre-school settings to the reception stage.

8. Availability and accessibility

Demand for childcare

- 8.1. Demand for childcare places will depend on necessity, affordability, locality, quality of childcare provision and parental preference of whether or not to use a childcare setting, childminder or school.
- 8.2. Working parents or full time student parents with children under the age of 5 will mainly require full day care and would therefore use PVI full day care nursery settings and childminders who can offer up to 10 hours per day of childcare. Schools will offer five sessional three hours per day between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. for nursery provision which is not suitable for parents that require longer hours unless they can access wraparound services.
- 8.3. The PVI Nurseries provide some early education and childcare over an extended day 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. usually full time but including half day sessions. There are 58 school nursery classes where provision is usually offered in either a morning or afternoon session. Childminders provide a range of hours support as agreed with parents.
- 8.4. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) carried out by Lewisham Council in October 2012 identified that 42% of parent/carers with children under the age 5 did not take up any childcare. The table below identifies the number of childcare places for under 5s in each area as well as and the number of vacancies. The table also shows that there are a number of vacant childcare places totalling 13% vacancies across Lewisham.¹⁵

Demand for childcare places in Lewisham					
	Lewisham Total	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Number of childcare places	9314	2210	2865	2070	2169
Number of vacancies	1205	291	341	316	257
Vacancies as percentage	13%	13%	12%	15%	12%
Area 1 comprises the following wards: Brockley, Evelyn, New Cross and Telegraph Hill.					
Area 2 comprises the following wards: Blackheath, Crofton Park, Ladywell, Lee Green, Lewisham Central and Rushey Green.					
Area 3 comprises the following wards: Catford South, Downham, Grove Park and Whitefoot.					
Area 4 comprises the following wards: Bellingham, Forest Hill, Perry Vale and Sydenham.					

¹⁵ Lewisham Childcare sufficiency assessment, London Borough of Lewisham, October 2012

8.5. Visits to providers highlighted that demand across the borough varied. While places such as Bunny Hop Nursery, Lammas Green Pre-School and Chelwood Nursery were nearly always full and often had waiting lists, Perrymount had vacancies in their provision. Providers identified that there is demand in the community for nurseries and identified new nurseries that had recently opened nearby or, in the case of Lammas Green, were expanding to additional premises to provide services.

Supply of childcare

8.6. The table below summarises the availability of early education and childcare by type of provider. The table also identifies that PVI early education and childcare providers will react to market demands developing their business based on four main criteria:¹⁶

- Demand for early education and childcare and ability of parent to afford childcare.
- Availability of early education and childcare in a particular area
- Availability of affordable and suitable premises
- Transport connections for working parents

	Lewisham Total	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Childminders	2282	416	676	624	566
Day nurseries	3523	944	1417	424	738
Pre Schools	655	0	193	224	238
School nurseries	2854	850	579	798	627
Number of places	9314	2210	2865	2070	2169

8.7. Out of the 683 childcare providers in the borough there are 174 providers in the borough eligible to provide the free entitlement offer for 2 year olds.¹⁷

Type of childcare provider	Eligible provider	Non Eligible provider	Total number of providers
Nurseries (PVI's)	107	13	120
Childminders	9	496	505
Schools with nurseries and nursery schools	58		58
Total	174	509	683

8.8. Childminders highlighted that certain areas of the borough do have a lack of childminder provision. Areas such as Blackheath, Lee and Hither Green that are more affluent or have good connections to central London do not have as many childminders. Childminders felt that as the profession does offer high pay it may not be seen as attractive for those people who live in these areas who may have access to better paid jobs in central London.

¹⁶ Lewisham Childcare sufficiency assessment, London Borough of Lewisham, October 2012

¹⁷ Nursery Education and Childcare Review – Evidence session report, Children and Young People Select Committee, 2 July 2013.

- 8.9. Whilst visiting Chelwood, the Headteacher advised that while there is a notion of parental choice in terms of the supply of nursery provision, this is not the reality for many parents due to the availability and affordability of childcare.

Flexibility of provision

- 8.10. The flexibility of childcare providers can vary for a number of reasons. Their resources, in terms of staffing and access to buildings will impact on the quality of service to children and hours of availability. The location of the setting near commuter routes will have an impact too.
- 8.11. Most schools offer early education childcare for only 15 hours a week for children aged 3 and 4, and this will mainly be for 3 hours per day, term time only, either 5 mornings or 5 afternoons. Some may choose to deliver 2 full days and a half day with a child attending 2.5 days and another child attending the other 2.5 days which will equal 1 full time equivalent place.
- 8.12. This pattern of provision is in part driven by accommodating the activity within the existing school day. The terms and conditions of staff do not lend themselves easily to an extended day. Schools see the organisation of lunch for a full time place as a challenge with existing facilities. This was borne out by the visit to Perrymount Nursery, where sessions are delivered separately in the morning and the afternoon with no lunch provision. Chelwood Nursery School offered full time all-day places, although this was partly due to local authority funding to provide these. Chelwood kept the traditional AM/PM structure when the free 15 hours provision was introduced. Chelwood acknowledged that there needed to be a range of access across the borough in terms of flexibility but that due to their focus on education the hours Chelwood operated from suited what their aims were. Officers emphasised that a number of schools subscribe to the view that a full day is too long for the children in this type of setting.
- 8.13. Full day care providers and childminders will take children from birth to 5 years, and will be able in most cases to offer very flexible arrangements. Most full day care providers and childminders offer early education and childcare for 10 hours each day, and therefore can offer a 50 hours per week all year round service which many working parents require to enable them to travel to and from work and have a full time job. Full day care providers are able to offer flexibility that enable parents to work or study and are able to offer childcare places at affordable rates. Bunny Hop nursery emphasised their flexibility with their hours, for example offering the free provision over 3 days at 5 hours, rather than simply 5 days at 3 hours, as well as being open 8-6 every day and offering after school care for slightly older children.
- 8.14. Pre-schools (sessional providers) mainly deliver childcare services to children aged 3 and 4. Most pre-school providers have limited flexibility due to the limitations of staffing contracts, or restrictions on access to buildings if shared with another user. Therefore, it is most common for pre-schools to deliver early education and childcare in the same format as schools using the 5 morning or 5 afternoons format. There is evidence that pre-schools are beginning to review this position in order to improve the focus of the business model they are operating. Lammas Green Pre-school offers sessions from 9-3 and will offer sessional activities at their new site.

- 8.15. Childminders from the LCA emphasised their flexibility in what they offer. Childminders can offer services such as dropping a child off at school, nursery or other activities, as well as picking them up from them. Some childminders are also able to look after a child overnight, which can support parents who undertake shift work or have jobs that require them to work away from their home. Childminders emphasised that that they can also act as a go-between for parents between schools and are allowed to meet with teachers and pass on information if a parent is unable to do so. The Committee also heard from a mother who makes extensive use of the services that childminders offer. She stressed the importance of the flexibility that allows parents to work in jobs that are not necessarily child friendly and that a childminder can be a constant presence and part of a child's routine, particularly if there is family upheaval. Childminders emphasised that because of their flexibility there is scope for them to offer 'wrap-around' services filling gap between nursery/pre-school for parents and that they can offer flexibility in terms of the free 15 hours provision.

Provision for children with SEN

- 8.16. Every nursery and pre-school must allow children with special educational needs to attend and be able to demonstrate this to Ofsted inspectors. They must have an SEN Policy and an Inclusion Statement setting out their responsibilities and procedures for children with SEN. All childcare providers must state what provision they have for disabled children and children with special educational needs when they register with Ofsted. Officers are supporting schools to ensure settings do have capacity to provide for children with SEN. This is being done free of charge until enough capacity is there and then introduce charges, although due to budget pressures charges may need to be introduced sooner. There is also support from the educational psychology team within PVI's and the SEN review recommended additional educational psychologists with specific early years needs to support PVI's. However, early years providers are sometimes not willing to take children with SEN due to levels of care required.
- 8.17. Officers highlighted that the current provision for children with more complex needs at Ladywell, Honor Oak and Rushey Green early years centres has a good record of supporting families and children with extra needs. At the present time, children with additional needs represent 20% of the total. Officers also highlighted that early years providers may not be as willing to take children with SEN due to the high levels of care required.
- 8.18. During visits to providers the Committee heard how different settings worked to provide services for children with SEN and to be open and welcoming for those children. Many have staff trained in SEN provision which can help with providing suitable services for these children, as well as identifying children who may have additional needs. Bunny Hop Nursery have previously identified children, while Lammas Green Pre-School have helped obtain a statement for a child before they entered school. Perrymount Nursery is attached to a primary school that specialises in providing for children with SEN and as such is well placed in their provision. Chelwood Nursery School works on identifying children with additional needs and

have training in recognising this. Chelwood Nursery School also receive referrals from health visitors and have contacts with them if they do identify something.

- 8.19. Childminders do not look after children with SEN as regularly as nurseries, partly due to the smaller numbers they look after as well as the younger ages they often deal with. However, some childminders do specialise in looking after children with SEN.
- 8.20. Many nurseries had techniques to enable communication for those that may have communication difficulties, such as PECS boards, which can also be useful for those that do not speak English as a first language.

Recommendations:

Childcare providers should be encouraged and supported by the Council to take a flexible approach to delivering childcare with a range of available hours and locations.

Providers should be encouraged and supported to share their experiences of implementing flexible provision with other providers across the borough.

Nursery and childcare providers should be encouraged to increase the number of children with special educational needs that they look after.

Schools should provide information to parents about childcare availability in the local area, including nurseries and childminders.

9. Sources

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