



Information Resilience and Transparency

Please ask for: Kelly Leeson
FOI Reference: 12199233
Phone: +443000415985
Email:
kcc.information@email.icasework.com
Date: 4 March 2020

Dear Ms Williams

Thank you for your request for information made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 relating to childcare. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your request: I appreciate that the Council has not complied with statutory timescales on this occasion. Please see the response provided below:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I'd like to make a request regarding your early years sufficiency reporting.

According to the DfE's Early education and childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities, in accordance to the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2016, LAs are required by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is 'reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children)'.

As part of this they should also encourage providers to take a sustainable business approach to planning and signpost providers to resources which can support them.

Local Authorities are requested to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. LA's are also obliged to make this data available and accessible to parents.

Therefore, I would like to request your most recent evidence of this reporting, and where parents are able to access this.

Childcare Sufficiency and Sustainability

Kent County Council (KCC) commissions The Education People (its education services company) to deliver a wide range of services and functions, including those provided by the Early Years and Childcare Service that support the sufficiency, sustainability, quality and inclusivity of the Early Years and Childcare sector.

The annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is produced within KCC (Strategic Commissioning ' Analytics), supported by the Early Years and Childcare Service. This is shared with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) prior to being made available on KELSI, an on-line education and related resource provided by KCC. Please find below a link to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019 on the Kent Education and Learning Skills Information website (KELSI).

<https://www.kelsi.org.uk/early-years/sufficiency-and-sustainability>

Additionally, and integral to The Education People's reporting to KCC in relation to the services and functions that have been commissioned, the Early Years and Childcare Service reports on childcare supply three times a year, in January, April and September.

Support for Childcare Providers

All early years group providers in Kent are offered a visit at least once a year by a Childcare Sufficiency Officer (CSO). During these visits providers are asked about the health of their business, whether they have any vacancies and whether they have any concerns about their sustainability. These questions are also asked three times a year as part of sufficiency, and vacancy audits. Any providers with sustainability issues are offered direct support from the CSO and we have a number of tools we can use to help them get a good view of their current situation, how they can mitigate any problems and, projections as to their long term viability. Providers can decline our support but currently less than 1% do that. We are contacted directly by new providers or notified of proposed new providers from Ofsted. Support is offered by the CSO including legal status, business models, financial management and market research. If support is declined at this early stage, a visit is arranged once the provider is registered with Management Information to deliver Free Early Education Places. At this visit providers are given compliance training to ensure they know how and when to claim free early education funding. Advice is also given based on the type of provider i.e. sessional pre-school, full day care, etc. as to the best patterns of delivery for free early education and the number of children required to ensure the setting at least breaks even in its first year. We also have a suite of training courses through Threads of Success (The Education People's Training and Support Framework for Early Years and Childcare Providers) which are commissioned by Kent County Council around business and finance, marketing and promotion and committee-run settings. In addition, we offer chargeable training around leadership and management, the quality of the provision, equality and inclusion and partnership with parents and families ' all of which are designed to help secure good or outstanding Ofsted judgements and make a setting attractive to parents.

When any new schemes are introduced by the Government, for example, 30 Hours of Free Childcare, The Education People on behalf of Kent County Council, will typically conduct seminars in each of the twelve districts in Kent ensuring that providers are aware of exactly what the scheme means for them and any potential risks to their business model. A toolkit for providers was developed following the introduction of 30 Hours of Free Childcare and this is available on The Education People's website. Regular information regarding changes to business practices such as workplace pensions, rises in the National Minimum Wage and the Living Wage, is shared in our termly (six times a year) Early Years and Childcare Bulletin. Information is also provided on external grants and funding streams available to providers and, if requested, support given in putting together a bid. Briefing and Networking Sessions are run in each of the four areas of Kent ' North, South, East and West ' three times a year where any relevant business information is shared. Providers are made aware of information that is available on both The Education People Website and KELS1.

If you are unhappy with this response, and believe KCC has not complied with legislation, you have 40 working days from the date of this response to ask for a review. You can do this by following our complaints process; details can be found at this link <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/complaints-and-compliments#tab-10> on our website. Please quote reference 12199233.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner, who oversees compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Details of what you need to do, should you wish to pursue this course of action, are available from the Information Commissioner's website <http://ico.org.uk/concerns>

Yours sincerely

Kelly Leeson
Information Access Officer