

# **Kent County Council**

## **Education, Learning and Skills**

### **Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 - 2017**

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## 1. Introduction

Education is central to improving the life chances of children and young people. Kent County Council (KCC) works in partnership with schools, early years and post-16 providers to deliver an outstanding education offer to Kent children and young people from the very earliest years.

In Bold Steps for Education, our vision is for Kent to be the most forward looking area in England for education and learning so that we are one of the best places for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve. We aim for Kent to be a place where families thrive and all children learn and develop well from the earliest years so that they are ready to succeed at school, have excellent foundations for learning and are equipped well for achievement in life, no matter what their background. The early years are a critical time of development and learning for children to get the best start in life.

In Kent we have the same aspirations and expectations for every child and young person to make good progress in their development and learning from birth, to achieve well and to have the best opportunities in life as they become young adults.

Every child and young person has the right to go to a good or outstanding early years setting and school and to have access to the best support for their learning and achievement. They should also benefit from schools and other providers working in partnership with each other to share the best practice as they continue to improve together. No child should be disadvantaged by not being able to attend a good quality early years setting or school.

The Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 – 2017 builds on significant success in the early years and childcare sector in Kent over the past decade and reflects KCC's forward looking priorities and targets for improvement in early years provision and outcomes for children by age 5, plus new approaches to achieving these. It incorporates our response to the changes the Government is introducing for early education and childcare and also comes at a time when KCC is developing more integrated early intervention and prevention services to support children and families, especially in the early years.

The main aims of this Strategy are to develop a more integrated approach to early years and childcare provision and services; to ensure better continuity of provision and services across the 0 – 5 age range; to ensure an increasing number of children are school ready at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage; and to mitigate the effect of poverty, inequality and disadvantage through the provision of high quality early education and childcare, including support for parents and carers and narrowing early development achievement gaps. The Strategy is also designed to ensure a system wide approach to further continuous improvement in early education and childcare provision by developing more self sustaining networks through collaboration and the use of traded services.

The scope of the Strategy also includes targets to continue to improve outcomes and to secure an increasing sufficiency of, and access to, high quality free early education places for all three and four year olds and for gradually more two year olds. It also includes plans to improve the sufficiency and quality of childcare for all children and young people aged 0 – 14 and up to 18 where the young person has a disability or special educational needs (SEND). This applies to early education and childcare provision of all types (pre schools, nurseries, nursery classes and Kent's one nursery school, childminders, before and after school and holiday childcare provision) and across all sectors, (maintained, voluntary,

private and independent). While the aims of the Strategy apply equally across the full range of providers, the priorities and implementation may vary across different types of providers. Furthermore, the centrality and importance of developing more integration between early years and childcare provision, children's centres and schools and with other partner agencies as part of this new Strategy cannot be over emphasised.

While the Strategy has a clear and specific scope, it aligns with a number of other key strategies and initiatives, particularly strategies for School Improvement, the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy, and plans for integrated early intervention and prevention services for 0-11 year olds including children's centres. A wide range of stakeholders and partners are engaged in the successful delivery of early education and childcare provision and play a part in implementing this Strategy.

## **2. Context**

### **National Context**

The national context for the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 – 2017 is the Government's document *More Affordable Childcare*. Published in July 2013, *More Affordable Childcare* sets out the Government's plans to:

- help families to meet the costs of childcare;
- increase the amount of affordable provision;
- improve the quality of provision;
- give parents the right information so they can make informed choices about childcare.

Implications for local authorities include:

- acting as champions for disadvantaged children and their families;
- a revised role in quality improvement, focusing on challenging and securing support for early years providers that are judged by Ofsted as 'requiring improvement' or being 'inadequate'; (This is a particularly significant driver for our new approach to continuous improvement);
- a continuing role in ensuring a sufficiency of provision.

Additional detail on *More Affordable Childcare* and its implications for local authorities is provided in Appendix One.

### **Local Context**

Kent's Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 – 2017 links to the wider context of a range of local priorities and plans that affect families, children and young people. Information about these is provided in Appendix Two. Underpinning all of these is KCC's intention to more effectively integrate services for children 0 – 11. Early years and childcare providers are critical partners in this.

## **3. Our Ambition**

Our ambition for Early Years and Childcare in Kent is for an exciting, vibrant, increasingly diverse and thriving early education and childcare sector that is of good and outstanding quality, achieves very good outcomes for children and that is sufficient, affordable and easily accessible for parents and carers. In fulfilling this ambition we aspire to build on past successes and achieve the following:

- a new culture of collaboration between all providers, schools, the local authority, other professionals, and parents working together in partnership to support and achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families;
- every child and young person is supported to develop well, make good progress and achieve their full potential in a safe environment;
- providers are self- improving and evaluative and strive for continuous improvement;
- the voice and needs of children, young people and their parents and carers are central, with their needs being consistently identified early and effectively met.

#### **4. Our Strategic Aims**

The Strategic Aims of this Strategy are:

1. To develop a more integrated approach to early years and childcare provision and services
2. To ensure better continuity of provision and services across the 0 – 5 age range
3. To ensure increasing numbers of children are school ready at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and make a successful transition to school
4. To mitigate the effects of poverty, inequality and disadvantage through the provision of high quality early education and childcare, more effective support for parents and narrowing of the early development achievement gaps for the most disadvantaged children
5. To develop a system wide, new approach to continuous improvement in early education and childcare provision, including through more collaborative networks of providers and the use of chargeable services.

#### **5. Early years and childcare provision in Kent**

Early education and childcare in Kent is available through a large, diverse and regularly shifting market of maintained, private, voluntary and independent providers, including childminders. The successes that the sector has enjoyed over the past decade include the doubling of the number maintained nurseries, significant over exceeding of Government targets for developing new childcare places across the 0 – 16 age range, delivery of a major children’s centre programme and a steady increase in the quality of provision as judged by Ofsted.

##### **Early Years**

Early Years childcare provision for children age 0 – 4 for at least four hours a day is provided by sessional and full day care pre- schools and nurseries and with childminders. Embedded within this childcare provision will almost always be the free early education entitlement of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year. Levels of provision fluctuate regularly but are currently (as at date) (as registered with and informed by Ofsted):

- *Full day care provision:* 373 providers which are open for more than four hours per day, offering a total of 17,495 childcare and early education places;
- *Sessional provision:* 333 providers which are open less than four hours per day, offering a total of 9,591 childcare/early education places;
- *Childminders:* 1,533 childminders (i.e. providers who can care for children of all ages within their own home). The number of actual places is not available as Ofsted no longer makes this available. Of the 1,553, 407 are eligible to offer the free early education entitlement;
- *Maintained provision:* there are 67 maintained nursery classes and one maintained nursery school, offering a total of 3,536 free early education places for three and four year old children

## The Free Early Education Entitlement

### *Three and Four Year Olds*

The Free Early Education Entitlement is available for all children aged three or four years. It constitutes a part time place (15 hours a week) for 38 weeks a year and is free to the parent at the point of delivery. Free places can only be provided by Ofsted registered provision, all of which deliver the full EYFS curriculum.

### *Two Year Olds*

In September 2013, the Government introduced a duty for local authorities to provide places for disadvantaged two year olds. Kent's target was to make available 3,095 places from September 2013 with 7,000 places in total required to be available by September 2014.

## **Out of School Childcare**

Childcare provision for school aged children (universally up to 14 and up to 18 for those with SEND and/or who are in the care of the local authority) is provided through breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday provision, again provided across all sectors and also by childminders. Much of this provision is not required to be registered with Ofsted (due to the lower number of hours and/or weeks it operates) and is therefore a more difficult market to quantify.

## **6. Where we are now**

The considerable development and improvement over recent years concerning both the sufficiency and quality of provision and also in relation to outcomes for children have brought us to where we are today. Most recent successes reflected in Bold Steps for Education include:

### **Early Education for Two Year Olds**

As part of the Government's policy for free early education places for disadvantaged two year olds, we have introduced the 'Free for Two' scheme in Kent. During 2012/13 more than 1,200 two year olds accessed a free early education place. This has already risen to over 3,200 by December 2013.

## Quality of Provision

For Early Years providers in the private, voluntary and independent sectors there has been continuous improvement over a number of years in the percentage of providers judged as good or better by Ofsted. The current profile for group early years providers is:

- Outstanding, 17%
- Good, 70%
- Satisfactory, 12%
- Inadequate, 1%.

The majority of EYFS classes in schools are judged as good or better with only a small number judged as requiring improvement.

The current profile for Kent's childminders is as follows:

- Outstanding 12%;
- Good 66%;
- Satisfactory 21%
- Inadequate 1%.

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The new EYFS introduced in 2012 consists of 17 Early Learning Goals across seven areas of learning. There are three possible assessment scores for each of the early learning goals: 1 for *emerging* : 2 for *expected* : 3 for *exceeding the expectations for a good level of development*.

The main overall indicator for the new EYFS framework is for pupils to show a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). In 2013, 64% of children in Kent achieved this (well above the national average of 52%) with a range across districts of 55% to 69%.

### *Achievement Gaps*

At national level, the achievement gap is defined as being the difference in achieving a GLD between the lowest attaining 20% of children and the mean, which for 2013 is 36.6%. In Kent, this gap has been progressively reducing over the previous six years with the figure for 2013 of 25.2% being better than the national figure.

The achievement gap in Kent as measured by the difference in children in receipt of free school meals and all children achieving a GLD is currently 19%. This is the third best figure nationally and well above the national average.

The gender gap is significant, with 72% of girls and 55% of boys in Kent achieving a GLD. This is a significant issue for closing the achievement gap and ensuring more children develop well in the early years and are well prepared for starting school.

Whilst the direction of travel in Kent is good overall, there is clearly more work to be done to further narrow the gaps for all children and ensure more children develop well before the age of five.

## **7. Our Priorities**

The priorities to fulfil our Strategic Aims are:

### **1. Integration of provision and services**

- Ensure more effective joined up working across and between early education and childcare providers, schools, children's centres, the local authority, health and all other relevant agencies and professionals
- Develop collaborative working and improve information sharing and communication with and between providers of early education and childcare
- Improve communication with and the provision of information for parents and carers in relation to early years and childcare matters.

### **2. Continuity across the 0 – 5 age range**

- Ensure the provision of support for parents to better engage in their children's learning in the very earliest years
- Ensure the availability of free, quality early education places for specified two year olds in line with Government targets and timescales
- Extend the Free Early Education Entitlement offer for two, three and four year olds so that is available during the school holidays, in line with the availability of provision
- Support improved continuity and progression in learning for all children by improving current approaches to transition.

### **3. School readiness**

- Ensure that more children achieve a Good Level of Development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are resilient and well prepared for school.

### **4. Mitigating the effects of disadvantage**

- Accelerate the narrowing of gaps in achievement by ensuring that children in the early years who may be vulnerable to poorer outcomes (including those with SEND) have their needs identified as early and possible and receive appropriate additional support to develop well
- Ensure there is a sufficiency of high quality and accessible out of school childcare places for school aged children to age 14 (up to 18 where a young person has a SEND and/or is in the care of the local authority) so that parents are not inhibited from work or training by the absence of childcare.



## 5. System wide continuous improvement

We need to ensure that increasing levels of provision are good or outstanding and that providers seek to continuously improve the quality of their provision through the development of their workforce by:

- Supporting providers receiving an Ofsted judgement of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' to quickly move to 'good' or better
- Delivering a comprehensive and highly flexible early years and childcare chargeable improvement service
- Ensuring a comprehensive work force development offer, designed to address gaps in qualifications and other training, including those related to inequalities.

## 8 The Way Forward

In order to fulfil our ambition and achieve our strategic aims and priorities, we will act as follows:

### 1. Integration of provision and services

#### a) More effective joined up working

In the early years, Children's Centres play a critical role in relation to early intervention and prevention and work closely with local early years providers and primary schools to ensure that the most disadvantaged children and their families receive the early support they require. More integration of this work is a priority for this Strategy.

#### **We will**

- **Ensure that early years and childcare providers are at the heart of the integration of services for children aged 0 – 11** Integration
- **Facilitate and support more effective, locally based networking and links between early years and childcare providers, children's centres, schools and other agencies**
- **Ensure that joint health and education reviews for two year olds are embedded and effective** (triggering common assessment referrals where needed)

#### b) Collaborative working and information sharing and communication

We aim to improve the way we work with and communicate with early education and childcare providers. To improve communication and engagement further KCC is developing more collaborative models for providers to work together, and with the local authority, to share best practice and build capacity for improvement.

#### **We will**

- **Introduce an Early Years and Childcare Bulletin**, incorporating all information that needs to be made available to providers in relation to education, childcare, social care and health

- **Ensure that providers can access the new Kent, Education, Learning and Skills Information (KELSI) website**
- **Further develop locally based provider networks**
- **Introduce secure email systems for providers.**

c) Information for and communication with parents and carers

KCC has a Parent's Charter to support partnership between parents and carers and those responsible for providing support and assistance to them. The Charter outlines a joint responsibility to make sure that children and young people are safe, happy, learning and achieving good outcomes.

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to make information available to the public on childcare and related services. KCC primarily delivers these responsibilities via the Kent Children and Families Information Service (CFIS). A range of supplementary information about the availability of other relevant activities for families is also provided by KCC Libraries.

**We will**

- **Improve support for parents and carers by ensuring they have up to date information about childcare and early**
- **Review and improve the current model of delivery for CFIS** to ensure we deliver an improved service response to parents' enquiries via telephone, e-mail, and online access and enable parents, carers and families to find the right information and advice.

**2 Continuity across the 0 – 5 age range**

a) Parents engagement in their children's learning

Parents are a child's first and most enduring educators. Supporting parents' engagement in their children's learning is the most effective way to make a difference to children's lives and outcomes. When parents have the knowledge, skills and confidence to provide the kind of relationships and experiences that children need to learn and develop it can make a real difference to children's outcomes and futures. There is a wide range of often excellent and effective practice across the county, supporting parental engagement in their children's learning.

**We will**

- **Disseminate the best practice for engaging parents in their children's learning**
- **Support providers do more to develop the engagement of parents, carers and families in their children's learning.**

b) Free early education places for two year olds

Currently, 79 percent of two year olds eligible for a free place are accessing this. Capital funding to support the development of new places is available, the allocation for Kent being £2.4m. This will support the development of a small number of projects in key areas whilst the majority will provide small grants to providers needing small scale refurbishments or additional equipment to take two year olds in their settings.

## **We will**

- **Increase the number of places for two year olds through the following activities:**
    - county-wide provider audits at least twice each year
    - provider information briefings
    - presentation and publicity materials
    - training workshops and surgeries
    - seminars and networking events
    - individual business planning support for group settings
    - capital development plans.
  - **Continue to promote free places for two year olds to eligible families in order to increase take up.**
- c) Free Early Education Entitlement for two, three and four year olds

Free Early Education for three and four year olds and specified two year olds is currently available for 38 weeks a year in line with school terms.

**We will extend the Free Early Education Entitlement** through plans already underway so that funded places are available on a year round basis rather than on a term time only basis. This will be implemented on a county-wide basis from April 2014.

d) Transition

Early years providers have been supported to embed effective transition practice so that children are ready for school and make a good transfer to the Reception year. Schools and providers work together to build robust and effective working relationships that support the transition process. A priority is to make this practice more consistent across the county.

## **We will**

- **Consult on a 'Transition Protocol', outlining the nature, purpose of and principles of effective transition across the full education spectrum**
- **Review and re launch advice and guidance for ensuring effective transition across all ages and all types of provision, including examples of best practice.**

## **3 School readiness**

We need to ensure that more children achieve a Good Level of Development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are resilient and well prepared for school. The priority is to significantly increase the overall number of children achieving a Good Level of Development whilst closing achievement gaps, including those between boys and girls and children eligible and not eligible for Free School Meals.

**Achieving this is dependent upon the success of all other actions in this Strategy.**

## 4. Tackling inequality and disadvantage

### a) Narrowing gaps in achievement

New Early Years and Childcare Statutory Guidance for local authorities identifies a clear role for local authorities as champions of all children and families but with particular focus on the most disadvantaged. Local authorities are encouraged to promote inclusion and improve outcomes for vulnerable groups, including (but not necessarily exclusively):

:

- families considered to be hard to reach
- families where children are in receipt of free school meals
- children in care
- children in need
- children with SEND
- minority ethnic groups
- gender inequalities.

We need to ensure earlier identification of need and an appropriate response to this and reduce the number of children arriving in Reception classes with unidentified special educational needs and those with below age appropriate communication and language skills.

**We will deliver an intensive programme of support and advice for all early years and childcare providers in order to respond to all of these issues and to continue to narrow gaps in achievement**

### b) Out of School Childcare

We need to ensure that there is sufficient high quality out of school provision for school aged children to age 14 (up to 18 where a young person has a SEND and/or is in the care of the local authority) so that parents are not inhibited from work or training by the absence of childcare

**We will increase the supply of Out of School Childcare** by mapping demand, supply and identified gaps against the geographical area covered by each collaboration of schools. This will allow each school collaboration to consider its own profile and, if considered to be necessary, plan and work together to close identified gaps. Where a school collaboration agrees that there is need and chooses to act to meet this need, the local authority will make support available if required.

## 5. Continuous Improvement

### a) Improvement Strategy

The role of the local authority is to make available support for all providers should they seek this and particularly to intervene where Ofsted judges a provision to be 'requiring improvement' or 'inadequate', in order to support that provider to improve to good or better as quickly as possible. We need to ensure that increasing levels of provision are good or outstanding and that providers seek to continuously improve the quality of their provision through the development of their workforce by:

- a) Supporting providers receiving an Ofsted judgement of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' to quickly move to 'good' or better
- b) Delivering a comprehensive and highly flexible early years and childcare chargeable improvement service

**We will implement a new Improvement Strategy which incorporates**

- A high quality and flexible portfolio of advice, support and training, made available on a chargeable basis
- For providers judged by Ofsted as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate', an intensive programme of support and challenge, quickly developing an action plan to take forward issues identified by Ofsted in order secure rapid improvements
- The introduction of and support for early years and childcare provider collaborations, designed to build capacity and drive further improvement.

*Safeguarding*

Early years and childcare providers have a crucial role to play in safeguarding children, ensuring their welfare needs are met and their wellbeing is developed. They have a duty to comply with section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006 and statutory guidance enshrined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013* when working in partnership with parents and other agencies. Standards laid out in the welfare requirements of the EYFS provide further prescription about what is expected of settings in relation to their safeguarding responsibilities.

**Action continue to provide support, training and advice to providers on all aspects of safeguarding or concerns of a child protection nature, including advice on staff conduct issues**

c) Work Force Development.

There is a minimum qualification requirement for staff working in the early years sector and Government targets to increase the number of graduates in private, voluntary and independent provision. The requirements of the EYFS (2012) state that staff qualifications must be full and relevant, with managers being required to carry out audits to make sure that this is the case. Other requirements include:

- each group provision must be led by a practitioner with a minimum Level 3 full and relevant early years qualification
- each group setting must have a designated practitioner for safeguarding
- each group setting must have designated persons for SEN and for behaviour management
- each childminder must complete the pre-registration course prior to registering with Ofsted
- each group setting must have an appropriate number of staff and each childminder to have an up to date Paediatric First Aid Certificate (local authority approved).

The number of all Ofsted registered practitioners in Kent provisions exceeds 9,000 (excluding early years staff working within the maintained schools). Based on KCC's Annual Provider Survey 2012, the percentages of the total workforce having achieved or exceeded Ofsted qualification requirements was:

- 31% of leaders hold qualifications above the Ofsted requirement of Level 3;
- 55% of paid staff hold a qualification at Level 3 or above
- 21% of paid staff have achieved or are working towards a Level 2 qualification.

Additionally, the percentage of the (paid) workforce having achieved or working towards higher education qualifications was:

- Leaders -17% achieved or are working towards Level 6
- Leaders - 6% achieved or are working towards Level 5
- Other staff – 4% achieved or are working towards Level 6
- Other staff – 1.23% achieved or are working towards Level 5.

*More Affordable Childcare* highlights the impact of a graduate led, well qualified workforce on the quality of early years experiences for babies and young children. This is supported by evidence from Ofsted's Annual Report 2012. with the implementation of the new Early Years Teacher status role from September 2013 and the Early Years Educator role in September 2014.

#### **We will**

- **Improve the skills of the workforce in settings in areas of high deprivation, where quality tends to be less good**
- **Increase the number of settings with a graduate**
- **Focus on the workforce development needs for settings providing for two year olds, including increasing the number of graduates in these settings**
- **Support the skills development of the workforce in relation to the early identification of and response to need, particularly for children in the early years with special educational needs and disabilities**
- **Provide advanced training for SENCO practitioners in settings that work with children with complex special educational needs.**

## **6. Support for Childminders**

There are currently over 1,500 childminders, who are a key part of the supply of early education and childcare provision in Kent, including Free Early Education places for two year olds. KCC currently has a service level agreement with the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) to develop a sustainable childcare market through quality childminders.

**Cutting across all strategic aims and priorities, we will continue to give priority to supporting childminders, working with them to:**

- strengthen existing networks
- ensure sufficiency and sustainability
- support continuous improvement

## **9. Recognising Success**

We will know that we have been successful in achieving our Strategic Aims when, by 2017:

- The number of all children achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the EYFS has increased from 64 to 80 percent
- The gap between all children and those ever having been in receipt of Free School Meals has narrowed from 18.7 to 14.5 percent
- The percentage of early years setting judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' has increased from 87 to 90 percent
- We have delivered high quality free places for two year olds in line with agreed Government targets
- The number of two year olds eligible for a Free Early Education place and accessing this has increased from 79 to 95 percent
- The percentage of eligible two year olds taking up a free place and being placed in a good or outstanding setting has increased from 83 to 95 percent
- 90 percentage of providers are working as part of a Collaboration
- The percentage of private, voluntary and independent early years settings with a graduate in situ has increased from 58 to 70.

Performance Targets for each year for the period 2014 – 2017 are attached as Appendix Three.

## **10. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation**

A three year Implementation Plan will be developed to take forward the finally agreed Strategy for early education, early years and out of school childcare group providers and childminders. This will set out clear actions, timescales, resources and monitoring arrangements.

## APPENDIX ONE

### National Context

The national context for the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 – 2017 is the Government's document *More Affordable Childcare*. Published in July 2013, *More Affordable Childcare* sets out the Government's plans to:

- help families to meet the costs of childcare
- increase the amount of affordable provision
- give parents the right information so they can make informed choices about childcare.

Key messages within *More Affordable Childcare* are:

#### Helping families to meet the costs of childcare

##### *(a) New funding*

Phasing in from autumn 2015, a new scheme will be introduced to offer tax-free childcare to working families. From April 2016, £200 million of additional support with childcare costs will be provided, within Universal Credit.

##### *(b) Funded early education*

The commitment remains to funding 15 hours a week of early education for all three and four year olds, extending to around 20 per cent of two year olds from September 2013 and around 40 per cent of two year olds from September 2014.

#### Increasing the amount of affordable provision

##### *(a) Improving regulation and removing barriers*

The Government intends to improve regulation by bringing forward legislation to introduce a new childcare registration system, following consultation. This would replace the current system with a single, consistent set of welfare and safeguarding requirements for all childcare providers.

##### *(b) Making better use of schools*

The Government would like to see Primary school sites open for more hours each day and for more weeks each year and intends to work with schools and childcare providers to look at ways in which it can be made easier for out-of-hours provision to be made available on school sites. Schools will continue to have autonomy to make decisions about the hours that they are open.

#### Improving quality

The Government intends to further improve the quality of early years provision by:

- reforming qualifications and introducing early years teachers and early years educators
- strengthening the inspection regime by Ofsted
- introducing childminder agencies to increase the number of childminders and improve the training and support they can access.



## **Helping parents make informed choices**

The Government wants parents to tell them how best to improve the information available about childcare providers in their area and intend to ask an independent organisation to work with parents to find out what they think of the current information sources and make recommendations in the spring 2014 about which channels are most useful to parents and how services might be improved.

## **Implications for local authorities**

### **Acting as champions for disadvantaged children and their families**

Local authorities play an important support and challenge role with schools as the champions of children and parents, especially the most disadvantaged. They focus their resources on supporting and intervening in those schools which require most improvement. The Government wants to ensure local authorities take a similar role in the early years. As champions of children and parents, local authorities will be required to identify harder to reach families, make sure they understand the early education and childcare support available to them, and support them to choose an early education provider for their child. It will be particularly important that local authorities play this role in supporting the implementation of early learning for two year olds.

### **Quality improvement**

Local authorities will continue to play an important part in ensuring there is high quality provision in their areas. However, at a time when resources are under pressure, the Government believes local authorities should not undertake their own quality assessments of providers (which is Ofsted's role) but should focus on challenging and securing support for early years providers who 'require improvement'. The Government will therefore reform the law to no longer require local authorities to make additional quality-based requirements on good or outstanding private, voluntary and independent sector providers.

Where a provider receives a 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' rating from Ofsted, this will continue to trigger intervention by the local authority, based on the issues raised by inspection. Local authorities will therefore specify that these 'requires improvement' providers take-up appropriate support as a condition of funding. Local authorities will also need to make sure that these providers can access training and support, and where such support is not available, to provide it directly.

We know that the quality of provision is particularly important for disadvantaged children. New guidance on early education therefore sets out the expectation that local authorities should only fund early learning places for two year olds in settings judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. The Government is considering whether, from September 2015, to require that local authorities only fund early learning places for two year olds in settings judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. The Government will provide an annual update of existing benchmarking data on the proportion of providers rated 'good' or 'outstanding' in each local authority area. For the first time, from this year, it will include data on the proportion of children accessing their funded place in a provider rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' in each area.

## **Sufficiency**

The local authority role in relation to the sufficiency of early years and childcare provision is unchanged to make sure that there is a diverse, sufficient and sustained market of early education and childcare provision that meets the needs of parents and carers.

## **Statutory guidance**

In the context of more affordable childcare, the DfE issued revised statutory guidance for local authorities which took effect from September 2013. It includes new elements relating to early years provision for two year olds from lower income families and providing information, advice and training to childcare providers. It sets out a changed role for local authorities to enable them to focus, in particular, on identifying and supporting disadvantaged children to take up their early education place.

Evidence shows that high quality early education at age two brings benefits to children's development. The statutory guidance also reflects the Government's intention that, as far as possible, early education for two-year-olds from lower income households is delivered by providers who have achieved an overall rating of 'outstanding' or 'good' in their most recent Ofsted inspection report. The Government is considering whether to require that, in future, such early education could only be delivered by 'good' and 'outstanding' providers.

The DfE has introduced measures to repeal the requirement on local authorities to statutorily assess the sufficiency of childcare in their area and also intends to introduce measures at the earliest opportunity to replace the duty on local authorities to provide information, advice and training to childcare providers.

## APPENDIX TWO

### Local Context

Kent's Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 – 2017 links to the wider context of a range of local priorities and plans that affect families, children and young people, as follows:

- *Bold Steps for Kent*, Kent County Council's (KCC'S) medium term plan
- *Facing the Challenge*, KCC's plan for transformation in the light of current challenges and pressures
- *Bold Steps for Education*
- *Every Day Matters*, KCC's Children and Young People's Strategic Plan 2012 -2015
- *KCC's Child Poverty Strategy 2013 – 2016*
- *KCC's Education, Learning and Skills (ELS) School Improvement Strategy*. This includes the provision of advice, support and challenge for the EYFS in schools (nursery and reception) and also for Year 1, to give continuity and progression for learners via effective transition
- *The ELS Commissioning Plan*, setting out how KCC will ensure there are sufficient places of high quality for all learners, in line with statutory requirements, including early education and childcare
- *KCC's SEND Strategy*
- *Kent's multi agency Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy*
- *The Children's Centre Strategy 2013 – 2016*, the strategic and operational interface between this and the early years and childcare strategy being crucial
- *Health initiatives, including the Healthy Child Programme, the Health Visitor Implementation Plan 2011-2015 and Family Nurse Partnerships.*

## APPENDIX THREE

### Performance Targets

Between 2014 and 2017, progress will have been made against key targets as indicated in the table below.

| Target  | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (new framework).<br>Percentage of children reaching a 'good level of development' (GLD)  | 63.5 | 68   | 72   | 76   | 80   |
| Percentage of settings judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding   | 87   | 87.5 | 88   | 89   | 90   |
| Percentage of two year olds eligible for the Free Entitlement taking up their place   | 79   | 83   | 87   | 91   | 95   |
| Percentage of two year olds eligible for the Free Entitlement placed in good or outstanding settings, or those on a clear pathway towards this                          | 83   | 86   | 89   | 92   | 95   |
| Narrowing the gap (new EYFS framework).<br>Percentage difference in GLD between all children and those in receipt of free school meals.                                 | 18.7 | 17.5 | 16.5 | 15.5 | 14.5 |
| Percentage of early years providers working as part of a collaboration  | N/A  | 60   | 70   | 80   | 90   |
| Percentage of private, voluntary and independent early years providers with an early years graduate<br><i>(N.B Targets dependent on level of funding for bursaries)</i> | 58   | 62   | 65   | 68   | 70   |