

Two year old provision in Tower Hamlets

Overview & Scrutiny

9th February 2021

Pauline Hoare

Head of the Integrated Early Years' Service



Early learning for two year olds (EL2) and the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)



See CSA Snapshot 2021

- The CSA indicates the pandemic is having a significant negative impact on childcare take up locally.
- This fall in take up is particularly evident for eligible two year olds where take up has fallen from 64% to 42% of the total.



Eligibility for EL2

- Early learning for two year olds is a free early education entitlement funded by the government;
- It is aimed at families on the lowest income nationally;
- Such families are usually not working;
- Eligibility is decided by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) on the basis of national criteria;
- The eligibility for this entitlement is based on the income of **everyone in the household who works**;
- Where a parent has no recourse to public funds, they may qualify;
- Hourly rates are set nationally. Locally we pay the highest possible hourly rate.



White working class families and EL2 eligibility



- At appropriate time points, the DFE shares a list of families whose children were eligible at birth for EL2. No information on the ethnicity of these families is provided;
- The final list is updated by the DWP with the addition of current UC eligibility. No ethnicity information is added by the DWP;
- The IEYS asks parents to supply ethnicity information. Most parents decline to provide this information;
- The eligibility criterion is low income (i.e. if you and family members are working, you are unlikely to be eligible).



Issues during Covid and mitigation

- Existing challenges are worsening during Covid:
 - Impact of living in disadvantage;
 - Mental health and emotional wellbeing;
 - Low levels of early language acquisition;
 - Healthy weight and physical activity.
- Mitigation through early years provision:
 - Via early education and childcare provision;
 - Via children's centres.

The challenges apply to all under fives locally but are particularly serious for EL2 eligible children.



Barriers to attending an EL2 place

- During Covid:
 - Overcrowded accommodation;
 - Crowded accommodation shared with elders;
 - Parental nervousness due to Covid;
 - School closures can prevent the youngest children attending childcare, as parents may choose that the whole family stays home;
 - Childcare infection control reduces available places locally;
 - Local availability of places may as a result not meet local demand as settings close and open places and sites in response to Covid infections.
- Post Covid:
 - National funding issues will reduce the availability of childcare;
 - Settings may choose to accommodate three and four year olds, rather than two year olds, as the hourly rate is higher;
 - End of furlough tips families into unemployment and removes need for childcare;
 - Hourly rate is uneconomic for EL2 providers.



The picture from childcare providers



- Kim Arrowsmith, Matchbox Day Nursery
- Toni Evans, Lincoln Hall Preschool
- Gill Oliver, Winterton House

