

**Kent County Council
Children, Young People and Education
Directorate**

in partnership with

The Education People

**Early Years and Childcare
Strategic Plan
2020 - 2023**

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1. Introduction

Education is central to improving the life chances of children and young people. Kent County Council (KCC) and its new education services company The Education People work in partnership with early years and childcare providers across all sectors, schools, academies and post-16 providers to deliver an outstanding education offer to Kent's children and young people from the very earliest years.

KCC's Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Directorate's aim is to make Kent a county that works for all children with a vision that all children in Kent feel safe, secure and loved by:

- joining up services to support families at the right time and in the right place
- securing the best childcare, education and training opportunities
- being the best Corporate Parent we can be
- developing a culture of high aspiration and empathy for children and their families
- valuing children and young people's voices and listening to them.

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

This Strategic Plan is a review and refresh of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2016 – 2019 and continues to build on the significant success in the Early Years and Childcare Sector in Kent. It reflects KCC's forward looking priorities and targets for continuous improvement in early years and childcare provision and outcomes for children at age five and beyond. The main aims of this Strategy are to:

- strengthen a multi-agency, integrated approach to early years and childcare provision and services to deliver a sufficient childcare market
- support the quality of the early years and childcare workforce
- lead continuous improvement in early years and out of school childcare provision
- embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into early years and childcare practice.

Successful delivery of these aims will mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and disadvantage and as a consequence ensure that increasing numbers of children are 'ready for the next stage' at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and make an effective transition into school.

The scope of this Strategic Plan includes targets to continue to improve outcomes and to secure a sufficient, accessible and high-quality Free Entitlement for eligible two, three and four-year-olds as follows:

- 15 hours for eligible two-year-olds, known in Kent as 'Free for Two'
- 15 hours universal entitlement for all three and four-year-olds
- 30 Hours of Free Childcare which extends the universal entitlement of 15 hours for three and four-year olds to a total of 30 hours for the eligible working parents of those three

and four-year-olds.

Additionally, childcare (usually paid for by parental fees) for:

- children from birth to five
- school aged children (universally up to 14 and up to 18 for those with a special educational need and/or disability).

This applies to early education and childcare provision of all types (pre-schools, nurseries, nursery classes in schools and academies, Kent's one nursery school, childminders, before and after school and holiday childcare provision) and across all sectors, (maintained, private, voluntary, and independent), hereon referred to as '*provision*' or '*providers*' as appropriate. While the aims of the Strategic Plan apply equally across the full range of providers, the priorities and implementation may vary across different types of provision.

2. Context

National Policy Context

Although published in July 2013, the Government's publication *More Affordable Childcare* is still the cornerstone of national early years and childcare policy. It set out 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 and childcare providers that are judged by Ofsted as requiring improvement or inadequate
- a continuing role in ensuring a sufficiency of provision.

Building on this, The Childcare Act 2016 saw the introduction of the duty to secure 30 hours of Free Childcare available for working parents which has been discharged to Local Authorities by the Secretary of State. In the summer of 2017, the Government launched its Childcare Choices website which brought together the policies and schemes available to parents enabling them to confirm eligibility and make choices.

To ensure this policy was executed, new Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities was published for implementation in September 2018 with further Operational Guidance also being published to support local authorities to develop and introduce their own Provider Agreements.

Changes have also been made to the EYFS, a national framework which is mandatory for all early years providers in England on the Early Years Register and all providers registered with

an early years childminder agency. To accommodate these, a new Foundation Stage Profile Handbook is available, containing moderation guidance for local authorities that was previously published in the '*Early years foundation stage profile moderation: essential requirements and effective practice for local authorities*'. This guidance has also been aligned with the 2018 Teacher Assessment Guidance for Key Stages 1 and 2.

A new plan for improving social mobility through education called '*Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential*' has been presented to Parliament by the Department for Education (DfE), setting out four main ambitions:

1. Close the 'word gap' in the early years
2. Close the attainment gap in school while continuing to raise standards
3. High quality post-16 education choices for all young people
4. Everyone achieving their full potential in rewarding careers.

In October 2018, in the context of *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential* the DfE established an Early Years Professional Development Fund (PDF) for the period 2019 – 2022, worth up to £20 million nationally. This money will fund high quality professional development for practitioners in pre-reception nursery settings, in early language, literacy and numeracy. The fund will also be used to appoint a national delivery partner to work closely with authorities and provide the professional development content. Funding is being targeted at settings attended by the most disadvantaged children, with selected local authorities participating and delivering (Kent is one of the participating authorities).

In July 2019 the DfE also launched a new three-year campaign called Hungry Little Minds to '*encourage parents to join in activities that support their children's early learning and help set them up for school and beyond*'.

Reception baseline assessment framework

The DfE has introduced an assessment for pupils in reception to measure their progress in primary schools from 2010. Schools have been invited to take part in the pilot assessment this year. These assessments will be carried out in the reception classes. The guidance is clear that settings will not be able to prepare children for these assessments and indeed the 'scores' will not be available to parents or to the school. It is recommended that the good practice in schools and settings continue to ensure a smooth transition into primary school. Information from parents, settings and early on-going assessment should be used to effectively plan for the children. The EYFS Profile remains.

Ofsted

In September 2019, Ofsted introduced the new Education Inspection Framework, applicable across all types of education provision. This has the potential to have a temporary adverse impact on the level of settings judged to be good or outstanding whilst the new framework embeds itself and providers adjust accordingly.

Local Context

This Early Years and Childcare Strategic Plan aligns itself to several key documents including KCC's Strategic Delivery Plan 2019 - 2022 where KCC sets out its strategy for achieving better outcomes for the people of Kent. Integral to which is Outcome 1: *Children and young people in Kent get the best start in life*.

KCC is ambitious about improving children's life chances, so we are determined to ensure that schools, early years and childcare settings and children's services have the highest quality staff, sufficient resources and capacity in order to transform all children and young people's learning and life outcomes. CYPE's Vision is to make Kent a county that works for all children. We aim to ensure that all children in Kent feel safe, secure, loved, fulfilled, happy and optimistic so that they can develop, thrive and achieve their maximum potential. One of our strategic priorities is to ensure that all children get the best start by attending good or outstanding childcare and early education provision and are able to go to a good or outstanding school or setting where they will make good progress.

In April 2017 KCC integrated all its children's services into a single 'Children, Young People and Education' (CYPE) Directorate. It is from the CYPE Directorate that in September 2018, KCC commissioned and launched its new education services company 'The Education People', to increase the resilience and longer-term sustainability of education services.

The Education People contains the following services:

- School Improvement
- Outdoor Education
- Schools Financial Services
- Early Years and Childcare
- Equality and Inclusion
- Governor Services
- Specialist Employment
- Professional Development
- Education Safeguarding

While this Strategic Plan has a clear and specific scope, it aligns with a number of other Kent key strategies and initiatives, particularly strategies for Vulnerable Children and Young People, School Improvement, Early Help and Preventative Services, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET). A wide range of local stakeholders and partners are engaged in the successful delivery of early education and childcare provision and play a part in implementing this Strategic Plan.

3. Our Ambition

Our ambition for early years and childcare in Kent is for an exciting, vibrant, diverse, sufficient, sustained and environmentally friendly early education and childcare sector that is of outstanding quality, achieves excellent outcomes for all children and young people and that is available, affordable and inclusive for all families. In fulfilling this ambition, we will build on past successes and achieve the following:

- The voice and needs of children, young people and their families is sought and acted upon with their holistic needs being consistently identified early and effectively met
- Every child and young person is nurtured, supported and challenged to develop well and achieve their full potential in welcoming, inspiring and safe environments and encouraged to become autonomous and independent life-long learners
- An established culture of respectful collaboration between all providers, Kent County Council, The Education People, relevant professionals and families, working together in partnership
- a workforce that is richly knowledgeable, experienced, highly skilled, reflective, self-evaluative and driven to continuously improve.

4. Our Strategic Aims

The Strategic Aims for this Strategic Plan are of equal importance and mutually dependent, in which context we will:

- strengthen a multi-agency, integrated approach to early years and childcare provision and services from birth, throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and across out of school childcare provision
- aim to ensure a sufficient and sustained early years and (in line with legislative requirements, as far as it is practicable) out of school childcare market
- support recruitment and retention in, and the quality of, the early years and childcare workforce
- lead continuous improvement in early years and out of school childcare provision, providing challenge and support as required
- embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into early years and childcare practice through the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, concurrently seeking to promote Kent County Council and The Education People as national leaders for ESD

in order to:

- mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and disadvantage through the provision of fully accessible and inclusive high-quality early education and childcare to reduce differences for all vulnerable children

and as a consequence:

- ensure that increasing numbers of children are 'ready for the next stage' at the end of the EYFS and make an effective transition into school.

5. Kent's Early Years and Childcare Provision

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 more than two decades include:

- exceeding Government targets for developing new childcare places across the 0 – 16 age range
- delivering and sustaining the universal free entitlement for three and four-year-old children
- over-achievement of the supply of free places for eligible two-year-old children
- ensured at least the required number of 30 Hours of Free Childcare places for the three and four-year-old children of eligible parents.

Early Years Childcare

Early Years Childcare provision for children aged 0-4 for at least four hours a day is provided by sessional and full day-care pre-schools and nurseries and by childminders. Embedded within this childcare provision will almost always be the Free Early Education Entitlements. Levels of provision fluctuate regularly but are currently (December 2019) as registered with and informed by Ofsted:

- *Private and voluntary group providers, independent, maintained and academy schools:* 751 providers offering a total of 40,845 childcare and early education places
- *Childminders* (providers who can care for children of all ages within their own home): 1099 offering a total of 2700 places within which 569 are registered to offer free places for two-year-olds and 549 for three and four-year-olds
- *Standalone Out of School Care:* In total there are 116 standalone providers, offering a range of breakfast clubs and after school clubs and holiday playschemes.

Free Early Education

Three and Four-Year-Olds

Free Entitlements for three and four-year-olds include:

- A **Universal** Early Education **Entitlement** is available for all children aged three or four years. It constitutes a part-time place (15 hours a week) accessible over a minimum of 38 weeks a year (although can be 'stretched' to be available in the school holidays where providers can offer this) and is free to the parent at the point of delivery
- An **Extended Entitlement** of 30 Hours in total available to the eligible working parents of three and four-year-olds.

Two Year-Olds

A part time (15 hour) place, also available to be stretched, for disadvantaged two-year-olds (The **Two-Year- Old Entitlement**). For a child to be eligible, parents must be in receipt of one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act

- Child Tax Credit and/or Working Tax Credit and have an annual income under £16,190
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit.

Children are also entitled to a place if they:

- are a Child in Care
- have a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan
- are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance
- have left care under a special guardianship, child arrangements or adoption order.

Free places for two, three and four-year-olds can only be provided by Ofsted registered provision, all of which deliver the full EYFS curriculum.

Out of School Childcare

Childcare provision for school aged children (universally up to 14 and up to 18 for those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and/or who are in the care of the local authority) is provided through breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday provision across all sectors. 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 has therefore in the past been a more difficult market to quantify. Schools and academies who choose to provide out of school childcare may also not be required to register as they are able to offer this under the school's own registration.

6. Key Achievements

Since the launch of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2016 - 2019 there have been some significant successes and achievements which include:

EYFS Good Level of Development

Since the introduction of the EYFS Profile in 2013, for most years in Kent an increasing percentage of children have achieved a Good Level of Development, as follows:

- 2013 63.4
- 2014 68.5
- 2015 72.9
- 2016 74.5
- 2017 74.3
- 2018 75.3
- 2019 74.1

Notwithstanding the small decrease in 2019, over the seven-year period between 2013 and 2019, over 10% more children in Kent have achieved a Good Level of Development.

Quality of Provision

In 2019, 97.3% of all Kent's early years and childcare provision (i.e. private, voluntary and independent group provision, childminders and stand-alone out of school childcare providers) were judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding, which are excellent overall percentages. We have also introduced Annual Conversations for all good and outstanding group providers, supporting them to reflect on their own practice with a view to ascertaining if they are meeting the Ofsted grade descriptors for at least good and making recommendations for improvement accordingly. Additionally, interventions have been provided leading to swift improvement for group providers and childminders rated as Requiring Improvement or Inadequate. (More recently a parallel offer has been introduced for childminders)

More detailed information about Ofsted outcomes for group settings and childminders across the past three years is provided below.

Early Years Group Provision (Domestic Premises)

	2017		2018		2019	
	<u>Domestic Premises</u>	<u>Non-Domestic Premises</u>	<u>Domestic Premises</u>	<u>Non-Domestic Premises</u>	<u>Domestic Premises</u>	<u>Non-Domestic Premises</u>
Outstanding	0%	24%	0%	25%	0%	23%
Good	100%	74%	100%	72%	100%	74%
Requires Improvement	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%
Inadequate	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%

Ofsted registered Childminders

	2017	2018	2019
Outstanding	17%	20%	20%
Good	76%	75%	75%
Requires Improvement	6%	5%	4%
Inadequate	1%	1%	1%

Early Years and Childcare Provider Association

In July 2016 the Early Years and Childcare Provider Association was established, bringing together representatives of all different types of early years and childcare providers from across the county for the following purposes:

- to promote a strategic and effective partnership between providers and KCC in working towards the very best early years and childcare provision in Kent
- to work in collaboration with KCC in determining the strategic direction for the ongoing development and improvement of early years and childcare provision and services
- to provide an interface between KCC and providers in order to promote a coherent approach to ensure a sufficient, sustained, high-quality and inclusive early years and childcare market
- to link with a wide range of internal and external agencies, partners and national bodies and be a representative voice for Kent providers
- to support the continuing development of partnership working between KCC and providers, including formal collaborations, networks and alliances.

The Association meets together quarterly, is increasingly well established, recognised, valued and making its mark.

Threads of Success

KCC and The Education People are committed to supporting excellence across the whole range of early years, school and out of school childcare provision. To do this to best effect, in 2015 the Early Years and Childcare Service formally launched Threads of Success, a framework of services and products dedicated to ensuring excellence and meeting the early education and childcare related needs of children, young people and families. The 'Threads' are essential in securing excellence, and include:

- our pledge for the highest quality services
- a comprehensive offer, differentiated for early years, school and out of school providers
- a leading-edge range of quality assured delivery options, to include training, bespoke packages, workshops, seminars, publications, products, on-line learning and webinars clearly underpinned by the EYFS Framework and other relevant legislation.

The Threads of Success offer is under continual review with new services and products being added regularly to ensure it remains at the forefront of early years and childcare research and practice.

Award Winning Products

Enhancing Family Involvement in Children's Learning (EFICL)

Integral to Threads of Success is its EFICL Framework and Toolkit. The purpose, quality and value of this was recognised in the winning of two awards:

- The Nursery World Staff Resource Award 2016
- The Early Years Excellence Award 2017

EFICL was also shortlisted for the Children and Young People's Awards in 2016. We have been working closely with Canterbury Christchurch University (CCCU) in conducting action research for our Learning Links programme and exploring incorporation of EFICL within their graduate and postgraduate programmes.

Recruitment Toolkit and Recruitment Hub

Also integral to Threads of Success is the Recruitment Hub and Toolkit, supporting recruitment and retention in the Early Years and Childcare Sector. The purpose, quality and value of these was recognised in winning Nursery World's new Resources and Equipment Awards (Bronze) in 2019.

30 Hours of Free Childcare

The Government introduced 30 Hours of Free Childcare with effect from September 2017. This doubled the universal Early Years Entitlement of a part time place to 30 hours in total for the three and four-year-old children of eligible working parents, requiring local authorities to ensure the delivery of places as required without 'doing any harm' to the supply and quality of places for free places for two-year-olds. This provided a significant challenge of assessing anticipated demand and measuring this against supply to be sure of a sufficient, sustainable market. Through its communication with and the engagement of its providers, KCC achieved this with a surplus of places and many provider 'good news' stories to tell.

Collaborations

Early Years Collaborations have been a significant development with 441 group settings in 54 formal collaborations plus a small but increasing number of childminders. Each collaboration has been provided with its own EYFS Good Level of Development (GLD) and Achievement Gap data each year in order to assess impact and forward plan.

Early Years Pupil Premium

The percentage of children taking up the Universal Entitlement who are also taking up the Early Years Pupil Premium has increased to 9% as a result of the programme of advice, support and training. Providers have been encouraged to share good practice which is disseminated across the sector through collaborations, KELSI, Briefing and Networking sessions and the Bulletin.

Kent Progress Tracker

Building on the earlier introduction of Kent's Progress Trackers for settings and children's centres, the development of the Kent Progress Tracker Intervention Tool has enabled providers to effectively monitor the impact of additional support, additional funding and/or specific interventions in order to evidence improved outcomes for children.

EYFS Support for Children's Centres

A programme of advice, support, training and challenge to children's centres has been delivered to support a good EYFS ethos and to ensure that all early years 'stay and play' type activity is in line with EYFS principles and best practice. Although Ofsted is not currently inspecting children's centres, our own assessment of the situation is that all children's centres in Kent, if to be inspected, would achieve at least a 'good'.

7. Customer Satisfaction Survey

In November 2018 an Early Years and Childcare Provider Satisfaction Survey was carried out. The survey was circulated to 900 providers of group early years and/or out of school childcare provision of whom 250 responded, the majority of which were pre-schools (59%) or day nurseries (27.9%), whilst 8.6% offered out of school provision and 4.5% were school run providers. Please note that the survey did not include childminders, as services for childminders over the past three years have been offered by Prospects Services. An analysis of the survey is attached at Appendix One, the headlines of which are included below.

Leadership and Coordination

- 60% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that there is a clear and well-articulated leadership and coordination of the early years and childcare agenda in Kent. 35% said they were unable to comment.

Sufficiency and Sustainability Support

- 82% of respondents found the sufficiency and sustainability support they received to be 'very or extremely useful.'

Support for new providers and those with an Ofsted judgement less than 'good'

- All new providers and those judged by Ofsted to be Requires Improvement or Inadequate found their support useful with 29.4% reporting that they found the visit 'extremely useful', 50% that they found it 'very useful' and 20.6% 'somewhat useful'.

The Annual Conversation

- 78% of respondents had received an Annual Conversation in the previous twelve months, of whom 95% had found this 'somewhat, very or extremely useful'.

Support for disadvantaged children and those with SEND

- Regarding accessing funding, the highest levels of confidence were for accessing the Early

Years Pupil Premium, with 66.8% of respondents either 'very confident' or 'extremely confident' in accessing this funding compared to around half of respondents for the Disability Access Fund (DAF) and the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

- Around two thirds of providers who had a pre-LIFT meeting found it either 'very or extremely useful'.

Communication and Engagement

- The survey shows that the Early Years and Childcare Bulletin and the templates and forms on KELSI are the highest rated Early Years and Childcare Service communication channels whilst the Free Childcare Facebook page is the lowest rated. However, all channels have over 50% of respondents rating them as 'very good' or 'good'. 11% of provider respondents felt 'extremely well' informed about new legislation and current policies, 45% feel 'very well' informed and 38.8% feel 'somewhat well' informed'.

Threads of Success

- Threads of Success was accorded high levels of usefulness by providers. Both visits and training/conferences recorded over 80% of respondents rating them as either 'extremely useful' or 'very useful', whilst over 70% of respondents reported this for products. Almost three quarters of respondents found it 'extremely easy' (16.9%) or 'very easy' (56.6%) to order services from Threads of Success. Overwhelmingly, expense is the main reason providers did not purchase any services from Threads of Success.

Collaborations

- 70% of provider respondents were in a collaboration. Almost half had felt 'extremely well' or 'very well' supported by KCC to collaborate with other providers. 45.4% felt 'somewhat well supported'. 84% of respondents felt that being in a collaboration drives improved outcomes for children.

Summary and Conclusion

- Whilst much of this is extremely positive, the next steps are to gain feedback to understand the concerns of providers who didn't either agree or strongly agree with the above in order that service improvements can be made if appropriate and necessary.
- A further survey will be carried out in 2020 in order to track and monitor improvements made.

8. Where We Are Now

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The EYFS consists of 17 Early Learning Goals across seven areas of learning as follows:

Prime Learning Areas

1. Communication and Language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Specific Learning Areas

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

There are three possible assessment scores for each of the Early Learning Goals which are:

- 1 for Emerging
- 2 for Expected
- 3 for Exceeding

The main overall indicator is for children to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD). To attain this, children need to achieve Expected or Exceeding in all Prime Learning, Literacy and Mathematics Early Learning Goals.

Good Level of Development in Kent (GLD)

The percentage of children achieving a GLD in Kent has been positive in relation to the national over a six-year period and the 2019 figure of 74.1% reflects a 10.7% improvement since 2013. The table below provides information about Kent in relation to the (where available) national and statistical neighbour profile over the last three-year period.

Measure		2017	2018	2019
Good Level of Development	Kent	74.2%	75.1%	74.0%
	National	70.7%	71.5%	71.8%
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	3 rd	2 nd	4 th
Gender Achievement Gap	Kent	12.5%	13.1%	12.8%
	National	13.7%	13.4%	12.9%
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	1 st	3 rd	7 th
FSM Eligible Achievement Gap	Kent	21%	17%	20%
	National	17%	17%	17%
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	8 th	1 st	2 nd
Disadvantaged Achievement Gap*	Kent	20.2%	17.4%	20.7%
	National	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	N/A	N/A	N/A

SEN Achievement Gap	Kent	59 %	60.3%	56.1%
	National	52.5%	52.7%	52.2%
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	11 th	11 th	9 th
EAL Achievement Gap	Kent	5%	6%	5%
	National	8%	7%	7%
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ethnicity Achievement Gap	Kent	-4.1%	-3.1%	-2.4%
	National	1.5%	0.5%	1.7%
	Kent Statistical Neighbours ranking (out of 11)	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Data for Disadvantaged pupils taken from MI Vulnerable Groups analysis
All other data taken from DfE Statistical First Releases November 2017, 2018, 2019
N/A = Not available

Supply

Kent has a continuing strong supply of places as evidenced in its Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019 (Appendix Two), although in some districts there may be a localised presenting deficit of places. Notwithstanding this, in the summer term of the academic year 2018 – 2019, 94% of three and four-year-olds were able to access their Universal Free Entitlement in the same district as their home, with 92% of those eligible for the Extended Entitlement being able to access this on the same basis.

Percentage of Providers judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding

The Early Years and Childcare Sector in Kent is of very high quality. In November 2019, the percentage of providers judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding is as follows:

- Early years group providers 97.4%
- Out of school providers 98.2%
- Childminders 98.4%

County and district trends of reasons for settings being judged to be Requires Improvement or Inadequate are regularly cross referenced with settings that have or have not engaged with the range of support on offer, to inform a universal and targeted action plan going forward.

Take up of Free Entitlements

The Two-Year-Old Entitlement

- Approximately 40% of two-year-olds are eligible for the Two-Year-Old Entitlement on the basis described in Section Five of this Strategy. Take-up has a variable pattern across the academic year, with the highest point in each year being typically in Term Two (November/December). The greatest level of take-up in Kent was 74% in December 2016, followed by slight reductions in this to 73% in December 2017 and 72% in December 2018. A trajectory of the take-up of the Two-Year-Old Entitlement from 2016 – 2019 shown in Appendix Three.

The Universal Entitlement

- Take-up of the Universal Entitlement by three and four-year-olds was 93% at the end of the Summer Term 2019.

The Extended Entitlement

- As with the Two-Year-Old Entitlement, the take-up of the Extended Entitlement (30 Hours of Free Childcare) by those with a validated code also has a variable pattern across the academic year, with the highest point in each year being typically in Term Six (June/July). The greatest level of take-up in Kent was 89% in July 2019. A trajectory of the take-up of the Extended Entitlement from 2017 – 2019 is available at Appendix Four.

9. Our Priorities

The priorities to fulfil our Strategic Aims are to:

- 1. strengthen a multi-agency, integrated approach to early years and childcare provision and services from birth, throughout the EYFS and across out of school childcare provision**
 - a) Promote and support highly effective joined-up working across relevant agencies and partners
 - b) Promote and support collaborative working between all providers
 - c) Ensure the continued provision of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information for providers on relevant early years and out of school childcare matters (including those relating to children with SEND).
- 2. aim to ensure a sufficient and sustained early years and (in line with legislative requirements, as far as is practicable) out of school childcare market**
 - a) Deliver sufficient early years childcare places
 - b) Deliver (as far as is practicable) sufficient out of school childcare places
 - c) Deliver Free Entitlement places for eligible two-year-olds, 15 hours for all three and four-year-olds and 30 Hours of Free Childcare for the three and four-year old children of eligible parents
 - d) Ensure the availability of information for families (including about SEND provision and services) about all relevant early years and out of school childcare matters
- 3. Support Recruitment and Retention in, and the quality of the early years and childcare workforce**
 - a) Raise the profile of a career in early years and childcare as a positive choice
 - b) Provide a comprehensive recruitment, selection and retention offer to support the sector in mentoring and developing the workforce
- 4. Lead continuous improvement in early years and out of school childcare provision, providing challenge and support as required**
 - a) Support newly registered, Requires Improvement and Inadequate providers to be judged at least 'Good' by Ofsted at their first/next inspection
 - b) Offer support to Good and Outstanding providers to enable them to respectively improve/maintain their position when next inspected
 - c) Offer a comprehensive, flexible offer via Threads of Success, The Education People's framework for promoting and supporting excellence in early years and childcare provision

5. **Embed ESD into early years and childcare practice through the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, also seeking to promote Kent County Council and The Education People as national leaders for ESD**
 - a) Continue to deliver the rolling programme, introducing the Three Pillars of Education for Sustainable Development (Social and Cultural, Environmental and Economic) for early years providers

6. **Mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and disadvantage through the provision of fully accessible and inclusive high-quality early education and childcare to reduce differences for all vulnerable children**
 - a) Provide advice, support, training and challenge to ensure that all providers are fully inclusive
 - b) Strengthen the focus on early identification of need and timely and appropriate interventions
 - c) Increase access to and the most effective use of resources to meet identified needs
 - d) Increase the focus on accelerating the progress of children vulnerable to not achieving their full potential, including the use of Progress Trackers
 - e) Fully deliver on the Department for Education's Early Years Professional Development Fund

7. **Ensure that increasing numbers of children are 'ready for the next stage' at the end of the EYFS and make an effective transition into school**
 - a) Drive further enhancing family involvement in children's learning
 - b) Work with children's centres to ensure maximum and effective support for children's holistic development through early learning activities and services provided
 - c) Promote and support the take-up of all Free Entitlements
 - d) Promote and support the development of effective working relationships and mutual respect between early years and childcare providers and schools
 - e) Support well-informed, seamless and effective transitions for all children in all circumstances, but particularly on starting school

10. Next Steps

In order to fulfil our Ambition and achieve our Strategic Aims and Priorities, we will **introduce, embed and extend** a range of actions as follows, with operational implementation being included in Early Years and Childcare Service Plans annually:

1. Strengthening a multi-agency, integrated approach

- a) Effective joined up working across relevant agencies and partners

We will:

- **introduce, embed and extend** as appropriate and necessary, working collaboratively with relevant partners, including health visitors and Specialist Teaching and Learning Services, to deliver identified initiatives and projects as required

b) Collaborative working between providers

We will:

- **extend** the promotion of working in formal collaborations in Kent
- **extend** formal collaborations of childminders, linking these with existing group collaborations
- **extend** a social media presence for out of school providers to promote and support their collaborative working.

c) Information for providers

We will:

- **extend** the provision of Early Years and Childcare Briefing and Networking Sessions and Bulletins
- **embed** the use of social media to allow for two-way communication between KCC, The Education People, and providers

2. A sufficient and sustained early years and out of school childcare market

In relation to the following priorities

a) Early years childcare places

b) Out of school childcare places

c) Free Entitlement places

We will:

- **extend** the scope of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for the supply of and anticipated demand for Free Entitlements and early years and out of school childcare places
- **embed** sufficiency audits to collect supply data to support planning, identify vacancies, explore the possibility of expansion, barriers and solutions
- **extend** advice, support and training for providers in relation to governance and business and financial planning, in order to promote and facilitate a sufficient and sustained market
- **extend** the provision of information, guidance and support to schools to enable them to develop and offer Free Entitlement and/or wraparound and/or holiday childcare places
- **embed** group providers and eligible childminders (ECMs) being fully compliant with the Statutory Guidance for Delivering Free Early Education and the Kent Provider Agreement

d) Information for families

We will:

- **embed** a communications strategy for families in relation to their enhanced involvement in their children's learning
- **extend** via the Children and Families Information Service, the provision of information about early years and childcare provision and services including Free Entitlements and the Local Offer.

3. Workforce Recruitment, Retention and Quality

a) A career in early years and childcare

We will:

- **extend** promoting the profile of working in the Early Years and Childcare Sector

b) Recruitment and Retention

We will:

- **embed** the awareness and use of the Early Years and Childcare Recruitment Hub
- **extend** the information and support we give to the Early Years and Childcare Sector about recruiting and nurturing apprentices

4. Continuous Improvement

a) Newly registered, Requires Improvement and Inadequate providers

We will:

- **extend** our differentiated programme of advice, support, training and challenge
 - **extend** universal and targeted support in relation to all aspects of equality and diversity where needed
 - **introduce** support for childminders with 'met' and 'not met' judgements until their next inspection
 - **embed** the training and development plans of new settings and those less than 'good' reflecting workforce development
- b) Good and Outstanding providers

We will:

- **extend** a centrally funded Annual Conversation to all registered early years and childcare group providers
- **introduce** a programme of support for good and outstanding childminders
- **embed** Annual Conversations in all Ofsted registered holiday play schemes to minimise the risk of a below good judgement.

c) Threads of Success

We will:

- **extend** continual horizon scanning to ensure that the Threads of Success offer of advice, support, training, resources and products is up to date, relevant and innovative in line with legislation, policy, research and local requirements
- **extend** the promotion of Threads of Success
- **introduce, embed and extend** the delivery of the Threads of Success offer as appropriate and necessary to support and facilitate excellence
- **extend**, integral to Threads of Success, advice, support and training on all aspects of safeguarding or concerns of a child protection nature, including advice on staff conduct issues
- **introduce** training and support visits in relation to the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, especially around 'Intent, Implementation and Impact'

5. Education for Sustainable Development

a) The Three Pillars of Education for Sustainable Development

We will:

- **embed** relevant national and international research to ensure the ESD programme addresses the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals
- **embed and extend** the provision of advice, support and guidance to ensure that ESD is accessible across the full range of early years provision
- **embed and extend** a rolling programme of workshops to introduce the Three Pillars of Education for Sustainable Development

6. Tackling inequality and disadvantage

a) Support for equality and inclusion

We will:

- **extend** the universal and general offer supporting vulnerable groups in all areas of children's learning and development
- **introduce** an annual inclusion audit to support providers to reflect on and action all aspects of inclusion, incorporating targeting support for providers where lower percentages of children have gone on to achieve a GLD at the end of the EYFS
- **extend** all early years and childcare providers being aware of their duties under the Equality Act and SEND Code of Practice
- **embed** the quality and capacity of providers' ability to meet the needs of local families and their children with SEND
- **extend** support for the professional development of early years setting Special Educational Needs Coordinators through training and the sharing of effective practice
- **extend** the monitoring and measurement of programmes of support in narrowing gaps in achievement

b) Early Identification

We will:

- **extend** the principles of inclusion being explicit in all support and training opportunities, so providers are increasingly upskilled to match age and developmental stage and that learning gaps are quickly identified
- further **embed** support to providers and children's centres to proactively and accurately identify vulnerable individuals and groups of children, plan interventions and monitor the impact to show improved outcomes

c) Access to and use of resources

We will:

- **extend** support regarding the access and use of additional funding and other resources so that providers know how to target these to improve outcomes and narrow the achievement gaps
- **extend** support to providers to show how specific funding streams or intervention programmes improve outcomes for children

d) Progress acceleration and tracking

We will:

- **extend** the use of the Kent suite of and/or other progress trackers to support the identification of vulnerable groups and to track individual and group progress
- **extend** the use of data to monitor the impact of specific interventions

e) Early Years Professional Development Fund

We will:

- **introduce**, in line with Department for Education requirements, the identification and recruitment of four Continuous Professional Development Partnerships and 16 Continuous Professional Development 'Champions'
- **introduce** and implement a delivery plan to ensure the cascade of Continuous Professional Development activity

7. 'Ready for the next stage'

a) Family involvement in children's learning

We will:

- **extend** the scope and reach of our framework for Enhancing Family Involvement in Children's Learning (EFICL)
- **introduce** the established EFICL Learning Links parents and carers workshop programme as an accredited module with Canterbury Christchurch University (or another suitable organisation)
- **introduce** information on the DfE's *Hungry Little Minds* three-year campaign to encourage parents to engage in activities to support their child(ren)'s early learning

b) Children's Centres

We will:

- further **embed** advice, support, training and challenge to ensure that the early learning ethos of and 'stay and play' type activities are based on EYFS principles and best practice
- further **embed** the provision of advice, support, training and challenge for children's centres in relation to effective observation, assessment, planning and tracking
- further **embed** the use of the Kent Children's Centre Tracker to monitor individual children's progress and the impact of the services offered

c) Free Entitlements Take-up

We will:

- **extend** marketing activity to ensure maximum take-up of Free Entitlements by two, three and four-year-olds as appropriate and necessary
- **extend** joint working with children's centres to support effective outreach to ensure that families are aware of their entitlements and make informed choices about take-up
- **extend** the monitoring and evaluation of identified reasons for lack of take-up and act accordingly

d) Effective working between early years and childcare providers and schools

We will:

embed a revised and refreshed 'Transition Matters' in line with national updates, including practical guidance to particularly support transition from pre-school into school.

11. Recognising Success

We will know that we have been successful in achieving our Strategic Aims when, by 2023:

- the percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS has increased to **78%**
- the Lowest 20% Achievement Gap has narrowed to **17%**
- the Free School Meals Eligible Achievement Gap has narrowed to **17%**
- the Gender Achievement Gap has narrowed to **10%**
- the SEN Achievement Gap has narrowed to **53%**
- the English as an Additional Language Achievement Gap has narrowed to **3%**
- the Ethnicity Achievement Gap has narrowed to **2%**
- the percentage of group settings on the Ofsted Early Years Register judged (by Ofsted) to be good or outstanding has continued to be **98%**
- the percentage of childminders judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding has continued to be **98%**
- the percentage of out of school settings judged by Ofsted to be 'Met' has continued to be at least **90%**
- the percentage of groups settings on the Early Years Register judged by Ofsted to be outstanding has increased to **30%**
- the percentage of childminders judged by Ofsted to be outstanding has increased to **24%**
- the percentage of new group settings on the Early Years Register and engaging with support being at least good at first inspection has continued to be **90%**
- the percentage of new childminders being at least good at first inspection has continued to be to **92.5%**
- the percentage of new out of school settings being 'met' at first inspection has continued to **100%**
- percentage of two-year-olds eligible for Free Early Education taking up their place has increased to **76%** (at the end of the autumn term)
- the percentage of three and four-year-olds taking up their Free Early Education Entitlement has increased to **95%** **unless research into why this is currently at 93% shows that this is not viable**
- the percentage of three and four-year-olds with validated 30 Hours of Free Early Education codes taking up their place has increased to **93%**
- the percentage of ECMs working as part of a collaboration has increased to **25%**
- the percentage of eligible three and four-year-olds taking up the Early Years Pupil Premium has increased to **14%**.

Performance Indicators

	Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	<u>Annual (September)</u>					
1	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS	74.1	75	76	77	78
2	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS: Lowest 20% Achievement Gap	20.7	20	19	18	17
3	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS: Free School Meals Eligible Achievement Gap	20.7	20	19	18	17
4	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS: Gender Achievement Gap	12.9	12	11.5	11	10
5	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS: SEN Achievement Gap	57	56	55	54	53
6	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS: English as an Additional Language Achievement Gap	4.7	4.5	4	3.5	3
7	Percentage of children achieving a GLD at the end of the EYFS: Ethnicity Achievement Gap	3.1	3	2.5	2.5	2
8	Percentage of children taking up the Universal Entitlement who are also taking up the Early Years Pupil Premium	10	11	12	13	14
9	Percentage of ECMs working as part of a collaboration	7	10	15	20	25
	<u>Monthly</u>					
10	Percentage of groups settings on the Early Years Register judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding	98	98	98	98	98
11	Percentage of out of school settings judged by Ofsted to be met • Please see below	100	90	90	90	90
12	Percentage of childminders judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding	98	98	98	98	98

13	Percentage of groups settings on the Early Years Register judged by Ofsted to be outstanding	26	27	28	29	30
14	Percentage of childminders judged by Ofsted to be outstanding	22	22.5	23	23.5	24
	<u>Termly (six times a year)</u>					
15	Percentage of new early years group settings engaging with support being at least good at first inspection	90	90	90	90	90
16	Percentage of new out of school settings engaging with support being met at first inspection	100	100	100	100	100
17	Percentage of new childminders engaging with support being at least good at first inspection	90	91	91.5	92	92.5
	<u>Termly (three times a year)</u>					
18	Percentage of two-year-olds eligible for Free Early Education taking up their place at the end of the Autumn Term ** Please see below	72	73	74	75	76
19	Percentage of three-year-olds taking up their Free Early Education Entitlement at the end of the Summer Term	93	93.5	94	94.5	95
20	Percentage of three and four-year olds with validated 30 Hours of Free Early Education codes taking up their place at the end of the Summer Term ¹	89	90	91	92	93

*11. For stand-alone out-of-school provisions, with effect from September 2019 the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework replaces the judgements of 'Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate' with 'Met' or 'Not met'. We have approximately 70 of these provisions in Kent. Should even one of these provisions be judged as 'Not met', the July 2019 position of 100% good and outstanding would not be achieved. As this is likely to occur at some stage, the target going forward has been set at 90%

¹ Percentage of **three and four-year olds** with validated **30 Hours of Free Early Education** codes **taking up their place**

* *18. Percentage of **two year olds** eligible for Free Early Education **taking up their place**

	Summer	Autumn	Spring
2019	60	72	65
2020	61	73	66
2021	62	74	67
2022	63	75	68
2023	64	76	69

	Summer	Autumn	Spring
2019	89	72	66
2020	90	73	67
2021	91	74	68
2022	92	75	69
2022	93	76	70

Appendices

1. Provider Satisfaction Survey 2018/19
2. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019
3. Two-Year- Old Entitlement Take Up 2016 - 2019
4. Extended Entitlement Take Up 2017 - 2019
5. Equality Impact Assessment



EYC Strat Plan 2020-23 Appendix 1.pdf



EYC Strat Plan 2020-23 Appendix 2.pdf



EYC Strat Plan 2020-23 Appendix 3.pdf



EYC Strat Plan 2020-23 Appendix 4.pdf



EYC Strat Plan 2020-23 Appendix 5.pdf