

Sheffield City Council: Commissioning Plan 2023-2026: Early Education & Childcare, Primary, Secondary and Post- 16 Sectors

Key Messages

Forum members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report

1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. Sheffield City Council has statutory duties under several pieces of legislation to ensure sufficient early education and childcare and school places, promote parental choice, diversity and fair access.
- 1.2. The Commissioning Plan for 2023-2026 sets out how the Local Authority will meet its sufficiency duties through forecasting demand and ensuring sufficient early education, childcare, primary, secondary and post-16 places are in place to meet that demand.

2. Context

- 2.1. Birth rates in Sheffield increased 25% between 2002 and 2012, creating a 'bulge' in population. The increase or 'bulge' in population initially put pressure on the primary sector, but these cohorts of pupils have moved through the sector, so it is now experiencing a surplus of places.
- 2.2. Over the planning period 2023-2026, our forecasts show that, in line with reducing births, there will continue to be areas of falling demand for early education and childcare and primary places, but the level of surplus places varies across the planning areas. Office for National Statistics forecasts suggest that the birth rate will continue to remain low, with gradual year-on-year increases to the end of the decade.
- 2.3. Secondary school places have been at or near full capacity since 2018/19. Over the planning period 2023-2026 our forecasts show that there will continue to be areas of growing demand for secondary school places, but demand is not evenly distributed across the city.
- 2.4. We have particular pressure for secondary school places in the southwest of the city in addition to other planning areas, e.g. Planning Area 5 which is in the

northeast of the city. However, beyond this planning period, forecasts show that there will be areas across the city with declining demand for secondary places.

- 2.5. Year 12 (Post-16) learner numbers are forecast to increase each year, reaching a 'peak' beyond this planning period in 2028/29 where we predict a Year 12 population of over 7,300 pupils.
- 2.6. Demand is rising for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities places and is forecast to continue to rise, driven primarily by pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Sufficiency covers provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities across all settings including mainstream and specialist school places.
- 2.7. Examples of unplanned variables include inward and outward migration, into and out of the UK; cross border movement (children moving to schools in other local authority areas and vice versa); changes in the housing market and housing developments; parental preference; changes in private education provision and rural sustainability all impact on forecasting future demand.

3. Progress to date

- 3.1. Work which has been progressed to meet our statutory duties and own ambitions in each of the sectors:
 - **Early Education & Childcare:** Produced annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessments; monitored the impact of Covid on the early education and childcare market; completed a Parental Childcare Survey; completed a Childcare Provider survey; stimulated demand; promoted Tax Free Childcare; encouraged providers to take a sustainable approach to business planning. Provided Quality Improvement Support to childcare providers and also provided advice/guidance to parents/carers; whilst promoting the Sheffield Directory to the early education and childcare sector.
 - **Primary:** Negotiated additional school places in areas of deficit; agreed temporary reduction in Pupil Admission Numbers at schools; consulted with schools and Trusts; introduced falling rolls fund for 2021/22.
 - Since the falling rolls strategy was introduced, we have met with 22 schools deemed to expect to see most surplus. Six schools have reduced their published admission number (PAN) to date and two plan to reduce from 2023/24 by which time 4.5 FE surplus will have been removed from the system. We have worked with three schools to add 75 temporary places in areas of deficit over the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23. The falling rolls fund was introduced in 2021/22 only three schools applied, however, none of whom met the eligibility criteria in this academic year. As the numbers on roll (NOR) reduce in primary over next few years, the Falling Rolls fund will be extended to cover the period 2022-23.

- **Secondary:** Negotiated additional school places; commissioned new schools; progressing permanent expansions at schools; consulted with schools and trusts; moved to a city-wide allocations system as we reach the secondary peak in 2023/24.
 - **Post-16:** Opened a new free school sixth form academy; introduced new sixth form places at secondary schools from 2023/24; proportionate sixth form increases linked to school expansions; increased sixth form provision for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 3.2. We are working to increase inclusive provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities within mainstream schools. Several interventions have already been put in place, including additional support for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and growth of integrated resources, where children with SEND split their time between mainstream classes and receiving support in the integrated resource.
- 3.3. We need to further develop inclusive provision in schools, develop more integrated resources, and support more children and young people to be supported and achieve in their mainstream school. A focus area in this will be improving transition between different phases of school, particularly primary to secondary.
- 3.4. We will be seeking the views of our key stakeholders and partners within the early education, childcare, primary, secondary and post-16 sectors including parents and carers, school leaders, early years providers, colleges, training providers, governors, academy trusts, dioceses, and other interested parties.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 We have created action plans for each sector to ensure we meet our statutory duties and own ambitions:
- **Early Education & Childcare:** Reduce inequalities through provision of sufficient, high quality, accessible, and inclusive early education and childcare places; promote inclusion by offering support and information to parents and professionals; raise standards by prioritising recruitment and retention of the workforce and professional development opportunities; promote early education and childcare.
 - **Primary:** Continue with the falling rolls plan to temporarily reduce pupil admission numbers where appropriate; continue to work with identified schools where pupil numbers are not expected to recover in the long term to explore suitable options; temporary / permanent expansions of schools in areas of high local demand; consider the impact of new housing developments and changing migration patterns on primary school demand; effective use of the school estate.

- **Secondary:** Increase pupil admission numbers with existing schools; progressing permanent expansions in the southwest of the city; consider the impact of planned housing on the likely demand for secondary places across the city; explore options for temporary and potential permanent expansions in planning areas to support increased localised demand; create a falling rolls plan post 2024; effective use of the school estate.
- **Post-16:** Ensure sufficiency of post-16 places; consultation with post-16 sector; consider the impact of planned housing on the likely demand for post-16 places across the city; ensure sufficient post-16 SEND places.

5. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report