

Committee:	Schools Forum
Meeting Date:	30 June 2022
Title:	Early Years Position Statement
Author:	Christina Lewis, Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare
Decision making / consultative / information:	Information
Who can vote?	N/A

Main body of the Report

The early years and childcare sector is facing significant challenges at the moment. The council have often referred to the fact that the funding rates are low and Suffolk is in the lowest banding of local authorities across the country. The council passes on to providers as much of the funding as possible but we do need to retain a small percentage in order to provide the services demanded by the DfE and to meet the council's statutory duties. The council retains less than it is allowed to do recognising the challenge for the Early Years and Childcare sector.

Some of contributing factors are to the challenges faced by the sector include:

- Increases in the national minimum wage
- Increases in national insurance contributions
- Business rates (for some)
- Increased costs including:
- Food, consumables, equipment, maintenance and fuel
- Difficulties around recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff.
- Lack of staff impacts on the ability to undertake training, liaise with families and professionals and offer the highest quality provision.
- Support for children with additional needs
- the impact of Covid/lockdowns on the youngest children and whilst not necessarily an additional need, enhanced support is needed with Personal, Social and Emotional Development as well as Communication & Language.

Whenever there is any available resource, we pass this on to providers in the form of 1 off payments to assist them with quality, inclusion and training needs depending on the source of the funding. Whilst this is gratefully received it does not address the fundamental issues being faced by the sector of the low rates the county receives.