

Project variation: DfE LA childcare sufficiency support.

A briefing for local authorities

November 2023.

1 Introduction.

Hemp'sall's have been working on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) since March 2023, providing a package of delivery support to local authorities in fulfilling sufficiency duties, ensuring there is enough available childcare places across local areas. So all young children are enabled to access high-quality early years provision and to meet the demand for childcare for school-aged children.

The scope of the childcare sufficiency support contract has been extended to include supporting local authorities to deliver the expanded entitlements from April 2024.

This variation commences November 2023 and will conclude on 31 March 2024.

2 Project aims.

The project's aim is to provide a package of delivery support to local authorities in fulfilling sufficiency duties, ensuring there is enough available childcare places across local areas to enable all young children to access high quality early years provision and to meet the demand for children for parents of school aged children. This now includes support to LAs to deliver the extended early years entitlements from April 2024.

3 Project scope.

The scope covers LA sufficiency duties for high-quality childcare supply for early years and childcare places 0-14 years old, or 0-17 for disabled children, including activities to support:

- change, sufficiency and sustainability
- childcare market management
- funding and the economic climate
- responding to the continuing effects of the pandemic

- and sufficiency duty reporting (annually)
- delivery of the expanded early learning entitlements from April 2024.

4 Project activities.

The project activities include:

- a) *Reactive* work with LAs through referral from DfE where there is clear evidence and identified challenges or current risks in the LA meeting its sufficiency duties or LAs identified as needing support in their planning to deliver the expanded early years entitlements.
- b) Providing events, materials, advice, support and challenge to LAs to facilitate the maintenance, planning for, or improvement of local childcare sufficiency, including the expanded early years entitlements. This will include thematic work focussed on key delivery activities for LAs, for example, assessing supply and demand, IT systems and processes, provider business support.
- c) The enabling, facilitation, and coordination of one-to-one (and/or small group) *peer support*.
- d) Helpdesk support for questions, clarifications and queries.
- e) Regional face to face group meetings.
- f) Online webinars and action learning seminars.

5 DfE role.

The department will continue to retain the following functions:

- Maintain named contact relationships with all LAs, holding regular keep-in-touch meetings, and being available for questions, clarifications and queries.
- Identify risk and challenge via contact activities and refer support needs to Hemsall's as necessary.
- Continue to deliver key policy and delivery information and updates.

6 How to get involved in the programme.

- 1) Speak with your named DfE contact if you have sufficiency challenges and needs during your regular one-to-one catch ups (or regional meetings). DfE may make a referral on your behalf or ask you to make a self-referral for any support needs.
- 2) Continue to complete DfE readiness self-assessment surveys which the Department uses to identify issues related to delivery nationally.
- 3) Contact the Hemsall's helpdesk if you have any queries (sufficiency@hemsalls.com).

- 4) Become a peer supporter of other LAs – share good practice and/or support delivery of action learning sets and webinars.

7 Project processes.

For reactive support

- 1) Referrals will be checked against the agreed criteria, and prioritised according to need and demand, and potential difference to be made by the support. A decision will be made about approving the referral. DfE will then make the final decision on whether to agree to the support work.
- 2) Hemsall's will undertake an initial assessment with the LA, with a detailed diagnosis and RAG rating of the issues, to determine the nature and level of support required. This will include an overview of recommended actions and timescales. DfE will agree the final action plan.
- 3) The LA will be allocated a suitable Hemsall's adviser to further develop the action plan and support the LA through the action plan.
- 4) The adviser will connect the LA with peer support if appropriate.
- 5) The adviser will assist the LA in applying for funding to support specific measures identified through the support phase, for LAs being supported up to the end of October 2023, where financial barriers exist. The application will be signed off by a Hemsall's senior expert adviser and provided to DfE for approval.
- 6) At the end of the action plan and support, an evaluation meeting will be held with the LA, DfE and Hemsall's adviser to review the impact of the support, and any next steps.
- 7) The LA will be required to complete a service satisfaction survey and return it to Hemsall's.
- 8) A final report will be submitted by Hemsall's to the LA and DfE. This may include agreed case study content for the benefit of other LAs in the programme.

Providing events, materials, advice, support and challenge

Hemsall's are scheduling two rounds of face-to-face regional meetings – November/December 2023 and February 2024, and will be developing a number of online events to support planning and delivery. Information will be shared with all early years teams via our established contact list. If you want to update the contacts we hold for your LA, please email the helpdesk sufficiency@hemsalls.com.

The helpdesk is available for all queries and will be monitored daily. We will aim to respond to any queries within two working days.