

Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency Report

2021 – 2022



**Produced by:
Sally Dowie
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Family Information Service**



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INTRODUCTION

The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area. Working with providers from the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors, the local authority aims to create a strong, sustainable and diverse childcare market ensuring there are sufficient places to meet the needs of parents.

The Department for Education published a revised [Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance](#) for local authorities in June 2018 which states that:

*local authorities **are required** by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).*

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should consider what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means. They must consider the local childcare market, work force, quality and capacity of childcare, schools and expansion and sustainability of childcare provision in the local area.

The local authority must report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents.

This report is Sandwell's eighth annual Childcare Sufficiency Report for elected council members and will be made available and accessible to parents and include the information required in the statutory guidance.

Sandwell's seventh annual Childcare Sufficiency Report (CSR) was completed and published in October 2020. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan (CSAP) was developed based on the recommendations of the CSR. The plan is monitored by the Early Years Strategic Group and achievements against the actions are detailed later in the report. The plan has also been monitored by the Director of Education, Employment and Skills Management Team on a quarterly basis and this will continue.

Upon completion and approval of this report, a CSAP will be developed, implemented and monitored termly by the Early Years Strategic Group. Any outstanding actions from the previous CSAP will be included.

The Childcare Act (2006) duties around Childcare Sufficiency continue in 2021-22 to be placed within a global and local context.

The Covid-19 global pandemic and the national and local restrictions throughout 2020 and 2021 continue to have a massive impact on families lives and childcare businesses.

Pressures on the local childcare market have continued, as Covid-19 has gone through, and continues to go through, different phases. The expectation is that these pressures will continue throughout the lifetime of the pandemic.

Job retention, business grants and sustainability funding, fluctuations in demand for childcare places as schools closed and then re-opened in phases, government guidance on social distancing and PPE, keyworker, vulnerable children and shielding status, all these have had an impact on the childcare market in Sandwell.

The many uncertainties around the global pandemic have had an impact on the local economy. Demand for childcare and in particular 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours places has been

affected by government lockdowns, furlough and redundancy. More families have become eligible to claim Universal Credit, which is allocated to the 40% most disadvantaged children. This means more families are entitled to a funded childcare place for their 2 year old.

Families changing needs continue to shape the demand for childcare. Working from home has become more established in some sectors and is already influencing how families use childcare. The demand for paid for childcare and wraparound services has been particularly affected by this change. Anecdotally, there is evidence that parental confidence in using formal childcare dropped during the pandemic and this may take time to settle down. Parents may now be choosing to use informal childcare instead, such as grandparents or friends. However, the ending of all government restrictions and the furlough scheme may also mean more families return to using wraparound childcare in September.

The childcare market in Sandwell should begin to recover with the successful Covid-19 vaccination programme. The government road map for opening up society and the economy should lead to increased business confidence and growth in the childcare sector. The local childcare market may look different in the next 6 months, but hopefully the recovery will lead to positive changes. Regeneration in the borough also continues to bring more jobs and families in to the area, which will also have a positive benefit for childcare businesses.

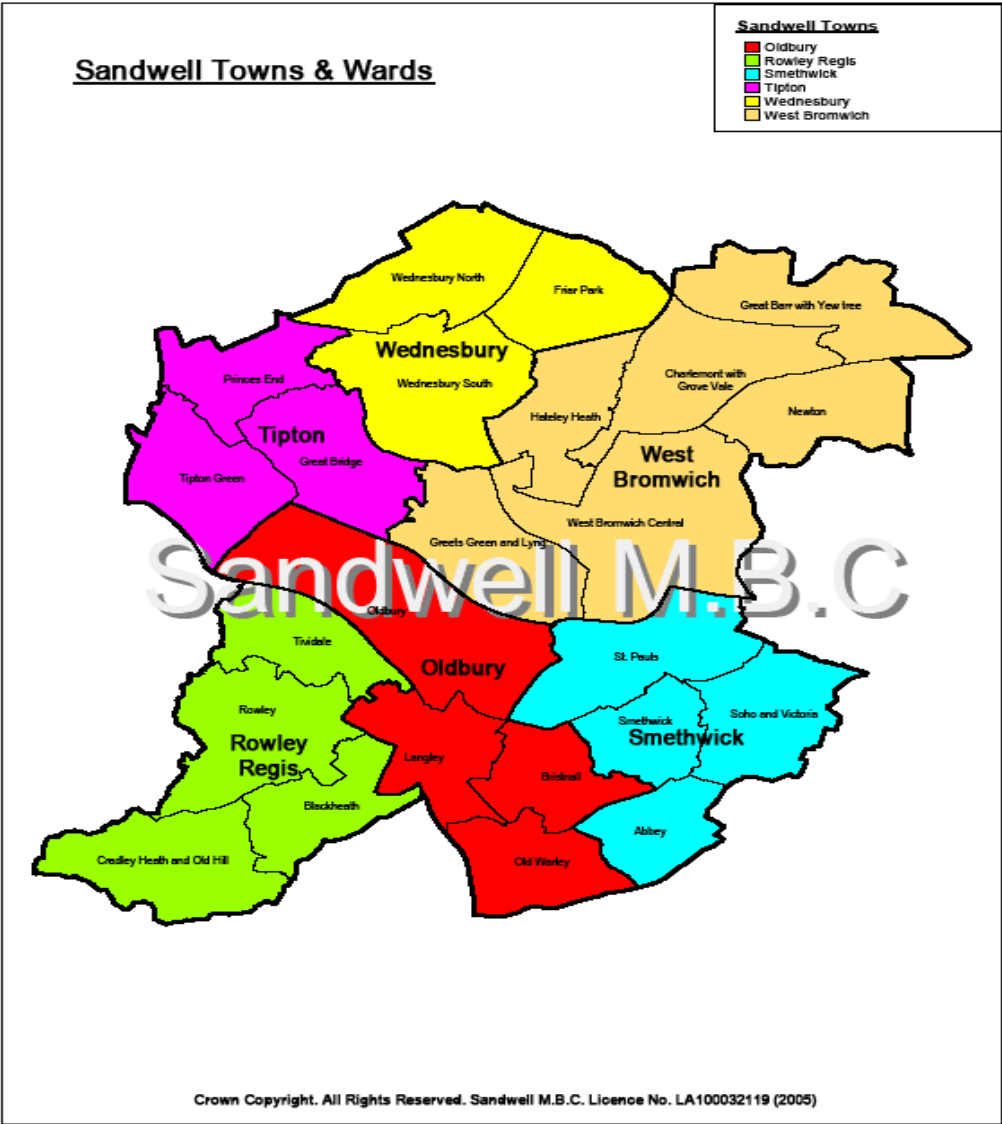
This report will examine what is already known about the childcare market in Sandwell. It will look at what childcare is currently available to families and what is likely to happen in the coming months. Although the Covid-19 vaccination roll out has improved the situation since 2020, there remains some uncertainty in society and the economy. The global pandemic is still not considered to be over. There may yet be further waves of the pandemic which impact on the childcare market for the remainder of 2021 and in to 2022.

The aim of the report is to present a summary of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell and to consider what the childcare market might look like during 2021-22. The report will consider the ongoing impact and risks to childcare sufficiency. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan will then be developed from the findings of the report.

The objectives are to produce a baseline of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell and report on how the supply of childcare places continues to be affected by the pandemic. The report will also show progress on the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours funded places and an update on previous recommendations from the 2020-21 Childcare Sufficiency Report.

The methodology for the report is to collate current data obtained from Sandwell Public Health, Sandwell Education Business Support Team, Sandwell Family Information Service (FIS) and the Quality Early Years and Childcare Team (Early Years) and to analyse this data into a report which shows supply and demand for childcare in Sandwell during 2021-22.

The 2020 mid-year estimates show that Sandwell has 329,042 residents. Under 5's now make up 8% of Sandwell's population (27,738).



6 Towns	24 Wards
Oldbury	Oldbury, Langley, Bristnall and Old Warley
Rowley Regis	Tividale, Rowley, Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill
Smethwick	St Pauls, Smethwick, Soho and Victoria, Abbey
Tipton	Princes End, Great Bridge, Tipton Green
Wednesbury	Wednesbury North, Wednesbury South, Friar Park
West Bromwich	Greet's Green and Lyng, West Bromwich Central, Newton, Hateley Heath, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Barr with Yew Tree

The 2020-21 Action Plan had 7 actions, as follows, **all** of which have been met.

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision

Early Years continues to provide:

- support visits to childcare settings
- advice and information under the Retained Function Duty - Childcare Act 2006
- pre-Ofsted registration, unannounced and Ofsted feedback visits
- Childminder Briefing Sessions
- termly Early Years Network Meetings

They also deliver mandatory courses on:

- Health and Safety, SCSP approved safeguarding child protection,
- Quality Improvement and Narrowing the Gap
- the Early Talk Boost Project

2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places

Ofsted full inspections were put on hold from March 2020 – May 2021, only new registration and safeguarding complaint visits were undertaken.

Ofsted resumed its full routine early years inspections on 4 May 2021 and prioritised “*settings judged less than good at their last inspection (including those who received an interim visit in the autumn term)*”

Under normal circumstances “*All provision judged as inadequate will be re-inspected within 6 months*” Source: [Inspection of early years register providers: requirements for Ofsted Updated 26th May 2021](#)

Between September 2020 and July 2021, the Quality Early Years Team undertook:

- 26 support visits to requires improvement settings
- 13 support visits to inadequate settings

Between 1st January and 21st July 2021

- 1 Day Nursery became inadequate. (The provider was newly registered and subsequently de-registered and closed).
- 4 inadequate funded providers including 1 childminder and 2 school governor run provisions inspected as part of the school.
- 2 settings received a requires improvement judgement, 1 was previously rated good, the other was previously inadequate.
- There are 5 requires improvement funded providers in total, including 1 Childminder.

Seven Ofsted inspections undertaken with funded provision during this period

- 0 outstanding
- 4 good
- 2 requires improvement
- 1 inadequate

3. To ensure there are sufficient childcare places during the Covid-19 pandemic by working closely with childcare providers, giving them support to open safely and remain viable.

Early Years monitored childcare providers throughout the pandemic and gave advice and guidance on how to open safely and remain open.

- Covid related incidents in childcare settings were reported to the Early Years team, including information on isolations, positive tests, closures and notifications to DfE and Ofsted.
- DfE data collection recorded settings open or closed, numbers of children affected by closures including children with EHCP plans and Looked After Children.
- Government Covid updates disseminated to all settings as they were published, ensuring relevant information was available to all childcare providers.
- Advice and guidance given by Early Years team to childcare settings, including risk assessments.
- Online training given to settings including Health and Safety training, supporting children and staff mental health and how to prioritise learning to help children 'catch up'.

4. To monitor demand for childcare places through FIS helpdesk and childcare providers

The FIS continues to offer a helpdesk which can be accessed by email or phone. Enquiries are dealt with on a daily basis, as they are received, and a brokerage service is offered to families who may require additional support to find childcare and other family services. An online Childcare Support Session is now also available to families, where a member of the FIS Team can talk via MS Teams to parents about their childcare and family support needs. Unmet demand continues to be monitored by FIS and Early Years so that support can be offered to families and settings.

5. To work with schools, existing and new providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to ensure holiday provision in these wards meets parent's needs, offering greater choice and flexibility.

Demand for holiday provision fell during the pandemic and schools were not able to run holiday playschemes in the same way as pre-pandemic because of government restrictions. However, during Easter and Summer holidays 2021, Sandwell Holiday Activities and Food Programme 21 (HAF 21) funded project supported families who would not normally access Ofsted registered holiday provision. Summer activities took place in Wednesbury South ward but not Tividale ward. There were summer activities in neighbouring Oldbury ward.

6. To continue to promote the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old funding, including 30 hours.

The Local Authority regularly receives DWP lists for 2 year old funding and sends out letters to qualifying families on these lists.

- 240 funded settings in Summer Term 2021
- 79 schools funded to deliver Nursery Education Fund (NEF) in their nursery classes
- 86 childminders funded
- 100 private and voluntary providers funded
- 1170 children accessing an Early Learning for Two's (ELT) place
- 52% of eligible families took up a place
- Early Years are supporting 48 schools to offer 30 hours provision from September 2021.
- Promoting 2-year-old offer (ELT) continues. Outreach events resumed in 2021.

7. To continue to promote the Family Information Service Hub and Local Offer. The FIS Hub website includes Go Play Sandwell, the Local Offer for children, young people and families with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). A Marketing and Communication Apprentice is now employed by the service to develop social media promotion and engagement.

Quality Early Years and Childcare in Sandwell

Early Years provide information, advice, support and training to the early years and childcare sector.

The Early Years Workforce Strategy identifies that Ofsted results and improved outcomes for children are linked to a highly qualified workforce and high quality provision.

Childcare settings must have a well-trained, qualified and professional workforce who understand the needs of all families including the most vulnerable children and families.

The team offer advice and support on:

- career options in the early years and childcare sector
- childcare business start-up and sustainability
- childminder business start-up and Ofsted registration
- short course training programmes
- child protection and safeguarding concerns
- Ofsted registration and inspection

A termly online training programme supports quality of teaching practices, awareness of mandatory safeguarding requirements and ongoing development and sustainability of early years and childcare provision.

The training programme is produced in partnership with the Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Team, Play Service and Sandwell MBC Health and Safety and is delivered by internal and external local support agencies and professional training providers. All training reflects the local and national changing needs of the Statutory and PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) Early Years and Childcare sector. This enables providers to fulfil their legal duties as detailed in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, Ofsted registration and inspection and local authority requirements.

Childcare providers, schools, children centres, and foster carers can purchase training packages to suit their needs. Child Protection and SEND remain key priorities and are currently provided free of charge in partnership with Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) and ISEY.

Sandwell continues to provide Level 4 progression modules focusing on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and supporting the most vulnerable 2-year olds.

Sandwell's early years recruitment web pages attract numerous people considering childcare careers.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, training courses and briefing sessions continued to be offered online. With the relaxing of government restrictions, it is hoped to start classroom based sessions again but with a more blended approach to include online learning.

Quality Improvement

The Early Years team provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to new and established early years and childcare provision including:

- Support visits to settings Ofsted graded inadequate and requires improvement.
- Good and Outstanding termly visits from the local authority area teacher with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- Support from the Funding, Workforce and Development Team.
- New provider support from initial enquiry to final registration.
- Advisory site visits and recruitment support.
- Support with registering to deliver funded places.
- 2,3 and 4 year old funding audits.
- Advice on Local Provider Agreement to deliver funding.
- Quality Support monitoring.
- Safeguarding monitoring.
- Child development monitoring through supporting settings to make accurate assessments.

Equality and Inclusion

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Early Years engage with childcare settings to promote and embed equality of opportunity into practice, as part of their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. They do this by delivering a range of training programmes, giving one to one support, advice and guidance, holding network meetings and advising on social media and information accessibility.

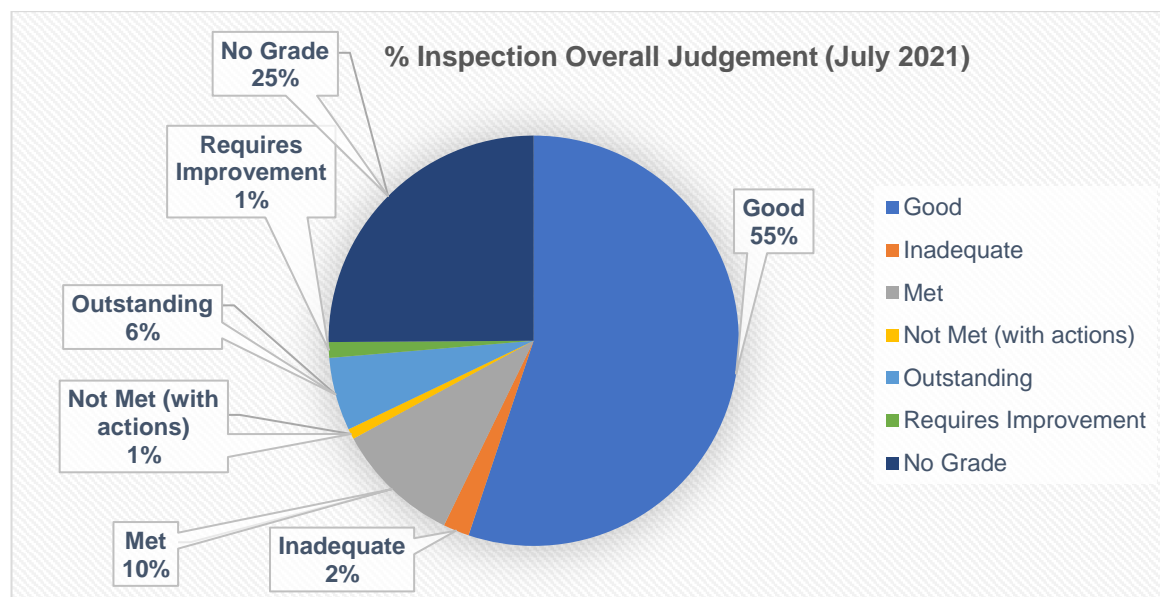
Grant Funding

The local authority provides funding to settings who need sustainability support. This is limited and based on an assessment process relating to quality and including Ofsted judgements. The funding is an application process which is administered through our Early Years Grant Panel which was established to assess grant applications received from childcare providers.

Ofsted Inspections

Ofsted resumed full graded early inspection framework (EIF) inspections in early years on 4th May 2021. Prior to that date Ofsted were only carrying out safeguarding monitoring visits and part or full remote registration visits. 25% of providers have no grade as they are awaiting their first inspection within 30 months of opening.

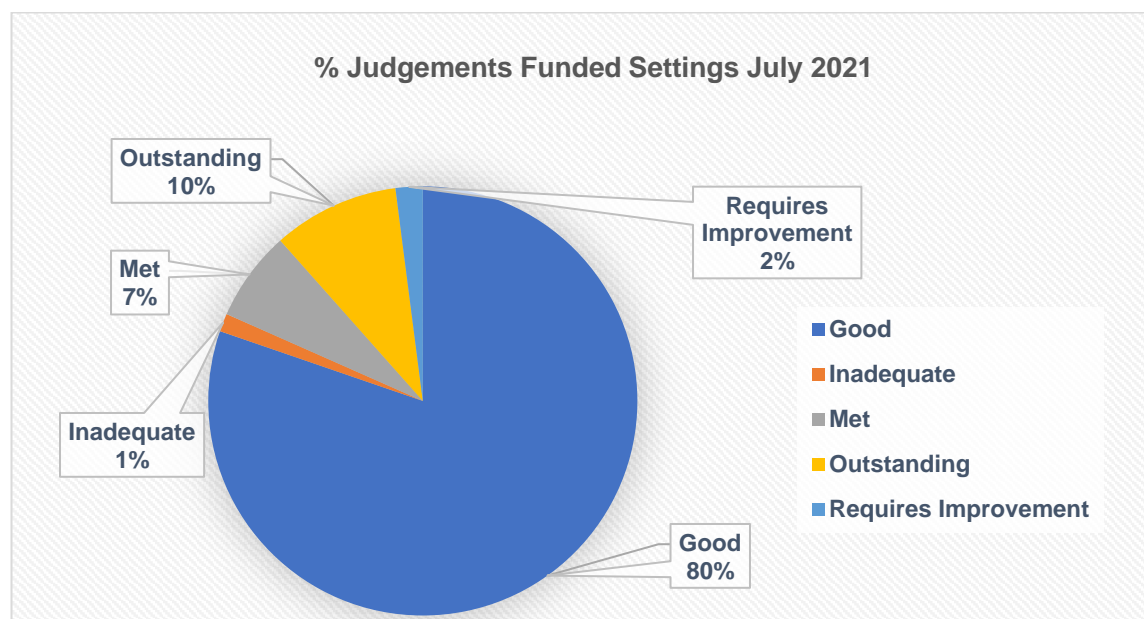
61% of all Ofsted registered providers are rated good or outstanding.



Funded Providers Inspection

7 providers offering 3 & 4 year old funding were inspected between October 2020 and July 2021.

90% of Funded Providers are rated as good or outstanding



Ofsted Early Years Inspections data is published on [gov.uk website](https://gov.uk).

Currently data is available up to 31 March 2021.

Number and % of Ofsted Early Years Inspections at 31 March 2021

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Number of providers					
	EYR providers	Total number inspected	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	56,748	41,314	7,233	32,610	1,143	328
West Midlands	4,726	3,465	573	2,746	110	36
Birmingham	871	613	78	493	34	8
Dudley	211	152	35	112	4	1
Sandwell	226	155	16	129	6	4
Walsall	148	108	10	96	1	1
Wolverhampton	142	100	4	87	8	1

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Percentage of inspected providers			
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	18	79	3	1
West Midlands	17	79	3	1
Birmingham	13	80	6	1
Dudley	23	74	3	1
Sandwell	10	83	4	3
Walsall	9	89	1	1
Wolverhampton	4	87	8	1

Pie Charts on page 10 use Ofsted data received by the Family Information Service in their daily feed between October 2020 and July 2021. 2 data sets on Pages 10 and 11 are sourced differently and therefore should be examined separately.

Childcare in Sandwell July 2021

In July 2021 Sandwell had sufficient childcare for 0-11 years

Tables 1 and 2 show the number of childcare settings and total childcare places for 0-8 years.

Table 3 shows the ratio of early years places to children; the ratio is 2 children to 1 place for 0-4 years in Sandwell.

Table 4 shows wraparound and pre-school provision in primary schools in Sandwell; there is sufficient provision for 3-11 year olds.

Table 1 Childcare Settings (0-8 years) July 2021							
Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Settings
Abbey	10	3	0	1	1	1	16
Blackheath	11	3	0	0	0	1	15
Bristnall	10	5	0	3	3	2	23
Charlemont	5	1	2	2	2	1	13
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	2	2	0	1	2	0	7
Friar Park	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
Great Barr	3	5	0	4	6	4	22
Great Bridge	3	5	1	4	5	3	21
Greets Green and Lyng	4	4	0	0	1	2	11
Hateley Heath	4	2	0	1	2	1	10
Langley	8	2	0	1	2	2	15
Newton	8	2	0	1	2	2	15
Old Warley	5	1	1	0	0	0	7
Oldbury	3	4	0	3	4	3	17
Princes End	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
Rowley	6	2	1	1	1	1	12
Smethwick	5	4	1	1	2	1	14
Soho and Victoria	4	7	2	4	4	3	24
St Pauls	1	2	2	0	1	1	7
Tipton Green	0	4	0	1	1	2	8
Tividale	4	2	0	0	0	0	6
Wednesbury North	1	3	0	1	4	2	11
Wednesbury South	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
West Bromwich Central	1	6	0	0	2	2	11
Total	107	77	11	29	45	34	303
Source: FIS Database July 2021							

Table 2 Childcare Places (0-8 years) July 2021

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Places
Abbey	162	233	0	50	100	50	595
Blackheath	122	198	0	0	20	44	384
Bristnall	132	462	0	178	250	129	1151
Charlemont	62	104	80	66	132	12	456
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	24	200	0	32	164	0	420
Friar Park	24	119	24	0	0	0	167
Great Barr	58	494	0	143	410	147	1252
Great Bridge	30	425	25	193	386	117	1176
Greets Green and Lyng	36	248	0	0	25	25	334
Hateley Heath	48	183	0	30	98	30	389
Langley	108	272	0	63	126	63	632
Newton	96	164	0	40	200	112	612
Old Warley	72	148	32	0	0	0	252
Oldbury	48	554	0	148	346	165	1261
Princes End	48	168	0	0	0	0	216
Rowley	60	298	20	112	112	112	714
Smethwick	54	248	30	30	148	44	554
Soho and Victoria	58	684	44	187	374	159	1506
St Pauls	24	141	70	0	89	30	354
Tipton Green	0	384	0	56	112	110	662
Tividale	60	216	0	0	0	0	276
Wednesbury North	0	454	0	74	514	177	1219
Wednesbury South	16	376	0	0	0	0	392
West Bromwich Central	12	774	0	0	120	145	1051
Total	1354	7547	325	1402	3726	1671	16025

Source: FIS Database July 2021

Table 3 Estimated Childcare Places for 0-4 Year Olds July 2021

Ward	Estimated CHDMD Places	Estimated DN places	Estimated PG Places	Estimated MSN Places	Estimated Places 0-4 years	Birth 0-4	Ratio of Children to 1 estimated 0-4 place in Sandwell (Sandwell benchmark 2:1)
Abbey	81	133	0	180	394	886	2
Blackheath	60	154	0	120	334	801	2
Bristnall	66	274	0	270	610	761	1
Charlemont with Grove Vale	31	52	80	240	403	829	3
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	12	100	0	210	322	957	3
Friar Park	12	87	24	240	363	923	2
Great Barr with Yew Tree	30	247	0	180	457	874	2
Great Bridge	18	269	25	330	642	960	1
Greets Green and Lyng	18	144	0	240	402	1040	3
Hateley Heath	24	131	0	210	365	1029	3
Langley	54	136	0	180	370	1011	3
Newton	48	112	0	150	310	725	2
Old Warley	36	74	32	180	322	711	2
Oldbury	24	277	0	270	571	1230	2
Princes End	24	102	0	180	306	1003	3
Rowley	30	186	20	180	416	840	2
Smethwick	33	180	30	420	663	1116	2
Soho and Victoria	30	362	44	180	616	1616	2
St Pauls	12	141	70	270	493	1306	2
Tipton Green	0	200	0	180	380	1112	3
Tivdale	30	108	0	150	288	910	3
Wednesbury North	0	227	0	240	467	897	2
Wednesbury South	8	188	0	90	286	796	3
West Bromwich Central	6	387	0	150	543	1063	2
Totals	687	4271	325	5040	10323	23396	2

CM= Childminders; DN = Day Nurseries; PG = Pre-school Playgroup; MSN= Maintained School Nursery

Table 4 School Wraparound and Pre-School Provision (3-11 yrs.) by ward July 2021													
Ward	Total Primary Schools	Total Schools registered for 30 Hours	Total Schools registered to receive 3 and 4 year old funding?	Total Schools with On Site Pre-School	Total School Site Breakfast Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site After School Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site Holiday Playschemes (run by school)	Total School Site After School Activities (run by school)	Total External Breakfast Clubs	Total External After School Clubs	Total External Holiday Playschemes	Sufficient Childcare Pick-ups for Schools	Sufficient Wraparound for Schools
Abbey	4	3	2	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Blackheath	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Bristnall	5	2	3	1	5	3	0	1	2	2	0	Yes	Yes
Charlemont with Grove Vale	4	2	3	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	Yes	Yes
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	5	2	4	2	4	0	0	3	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Friar Park	4	1	4	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Great Barr with Yew Tree	4	2	3	1	0	0	0	1	2	3	2	Yes	Yes
Great Bridge	6	3	6	0	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	Yes	Yes
Greets Green and Lyng	4	1	4	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	1	Yes	Yes
Hateley Heath	4	2	4	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Langley	3	3	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Newton	3	2	2	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Old Warley	3	1	1	3	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes

Ward	Total Primary Schools	Total Schools registered for 30 Hours	Total Schools registered to receive 3 and 4 year old funding?	Total Schools with On Site Pre-School	Total School Site Breakfast Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site After School Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site Holiday Playschemes (run by school)	Total School Site After School Activities (run by school)	Total External Breakfast Clubs	Total External After School Clubs	Total External Holiday Playschemes	Sufficient Childcare Pick-ups for Schools	Sufficient Wraparound for Schools
Oldbury	5	4	5	1	3	1	0	1	3	4	2	Yes	Yes
Princes End	4	2	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Rowley	3	1	2	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Smethwick	4	3	4	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Soho and Victoria	6	2	6	0	5	4	0	5	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
St Pauls	3	1	3	0	2	0	0	3	1	2	1	Yes	Yes
Tipton Green	4	2	3	1	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Tividale	3	3	3	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury North	6	3	4	0	6	4	0	1	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury South	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
West Bromwich Central	3	2	3	0	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Source: FIS Database July 2021													

Childcare Costs in Sandwell

Tables 5 and 6 Coram Family and Childcare Costs [Survey 2021](#), which was carried out in December 2020. It shows the average cost of childcare in Sandwell and the West Midlands.

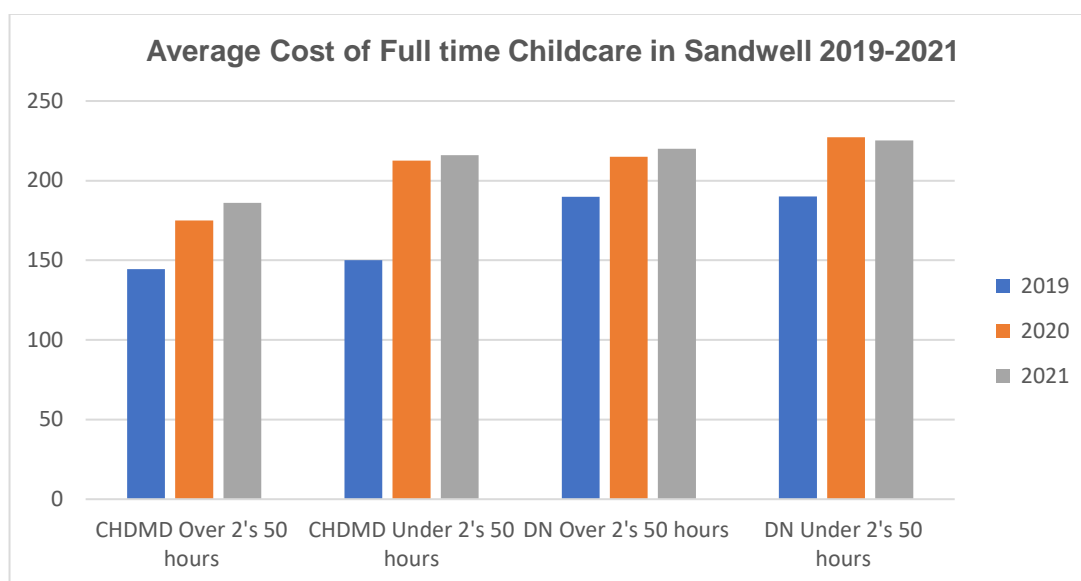
Table 5 Average Childcare Costs in Sandwell 2021		
Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time = 50hrs
Childminders = under 2's	£108	£216
Childminders = over 2's	£93.30	£186
Day nurseries= under 2's	£112.50	£225.30
Day nurseries= over 2's	£110	£220
Out of school care		£88.65
Childminder after school		£64.80
Holiday Playscheme		£123.65

Source: [Coram Family & Childcare Survey 2021](#)

Table 6 Average Childcare Costs in the West Midlands 2021		
Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time
Childminders = under 2's	£103.70	£192.87
Childminders = over 2's	£100.83	£195.68
Day nurseries= under 2's	£136.14	£268.90
Day nurseries= over 2's	£133.41	£262.78
Out of school care		£67.80
Childminder after school		£68.16
Holiday Playscheme		£152.54

Source: [Coram Family & Childcare Costs Survey, 2021](#)

In England, childcare for under 3's has risen above inflation in the past year. However, in Sandwell, the average cost of a full-time place in a day nursery or with a childminder for a baby or toddler before universal entitlement at 3 years has not increased significantly.



Sandwell Family Information Service Childcare Provider Survey 2021

In July 2021, childcare providers completed an online survey about their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Figure 1** shows types of childcare providers responding to the survey.

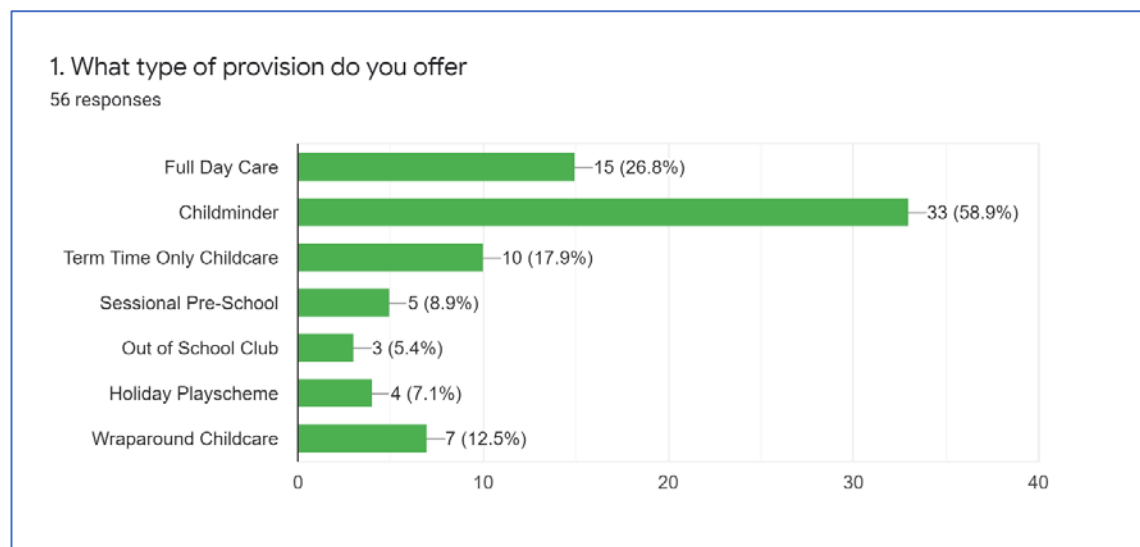


Figure 1 Type of Childcare Responding to survey

Survey Findings

Overall almost 90% of childcare providers said they were likely to continue in 2022.

84% felt positive about the next 12 months.

68% thought they might change the services they offer in the next 12 months.

90% had a good experience with online training.

The past 12 months has been extremely challenging for childcare providers; however, settings have been supported both financially and with their health and well-being.

Demand for free childcare for 2,3 and 4 year olds remains steady and providers have not changed the number of places offered; however, 3 day nurseries now open term time only, changing the hours available to working parents.

The hourly rate and the number of hours offered has not changed significantly either.

There has, however, been less demand for paid for childcare and in particular before and after school childcare. The impact of working from home and furlough scheme has affected childcare providers.

It remains to be seen if this trend will continue or be reversed as the furlough scheme ends and more people return to working as they did pre-pandemic.

Survey Analysis

Childcare providers were asked about the impact of working from home and furlough on their opening hours.

Figure 2 shows parents working from home or being furloughed did have an impact.

Providers reported having fewer children throughout the pandemic, an increase in parents requesting or cancelling childcare at short notice but no increase in requests for before and after school childcare.

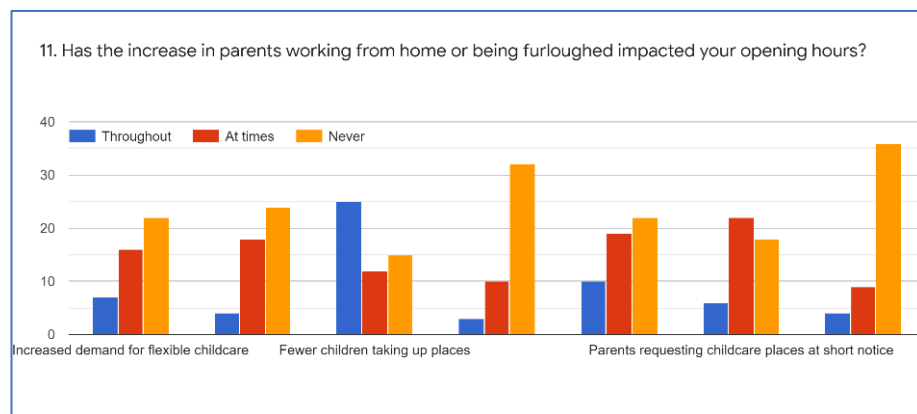


Figure 2 Impact on Day Care Settings of Parents working from home or being furloughed

Figure 3 shows that day care and pre-school providers experienced reduced profit margins, increased running costs, furloughed staff, a reduction in opening hours and some problems with families paying for childcare.

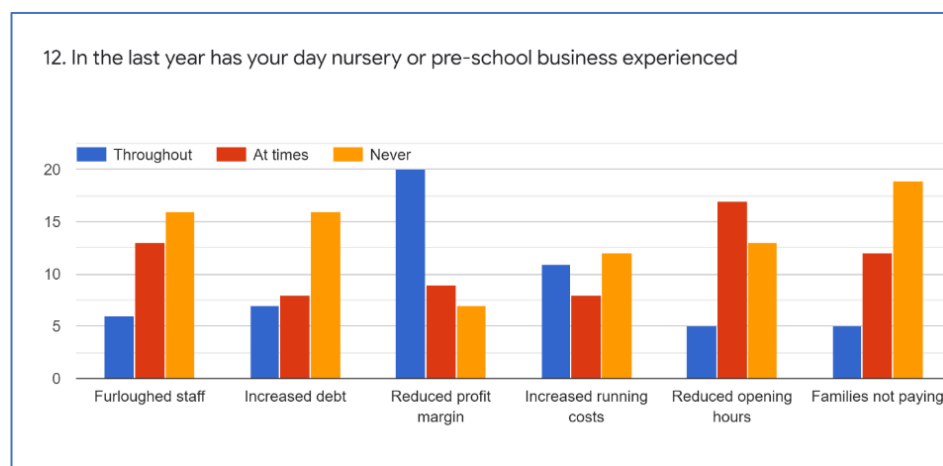


Figure 3 Business impact of Covid-19 on Day Care and Pre-School Settings

30% of providers reported an increase in staff sickness and nearly 40% reported difficulty recruiting staff. However less than 20% thought staff retention was an issue.

Figure 4 shows that day care and pre-school settings were supported throughout by Sandwell Early Years. Providers also reported having other support systems in place for their staff.

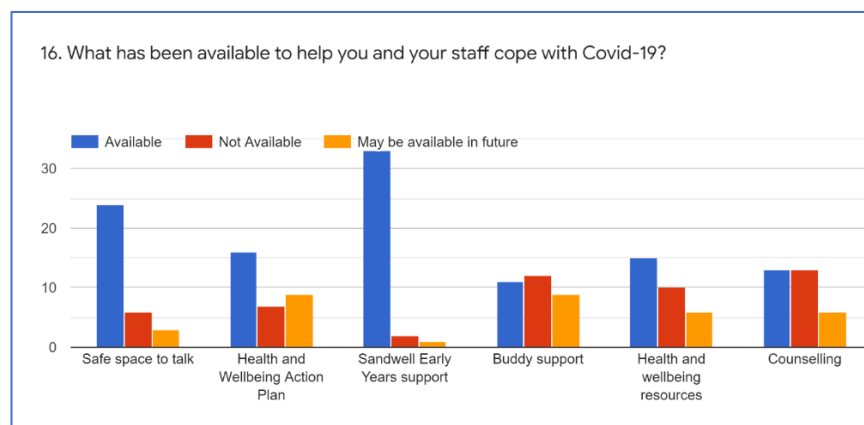


Figure 4 Health and Well-being support available to staff in Day Care and Pre-School Settings

Childminders were asked similar questions to find out what their experience had been over the past year. Working in their own homes did not, however, mean their experiences varied from day care and pre-school settings.

Figure 5 shows that childminders also reported having fewer children, increased running costs, anxiety about their business and some problems with families paying for childcare.

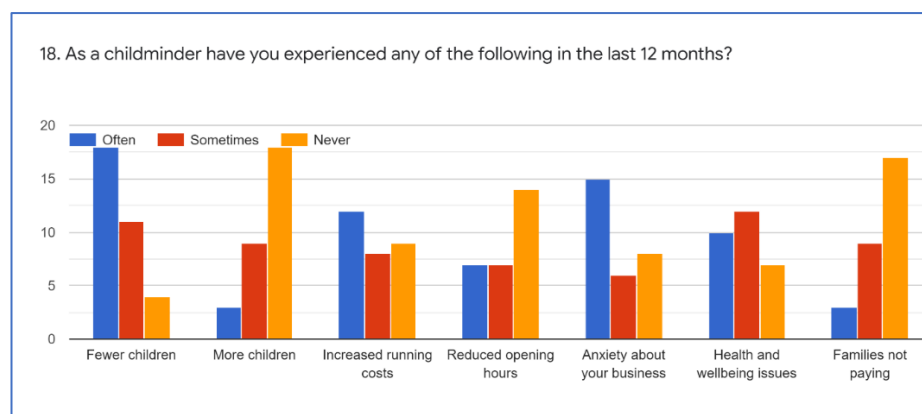


Figure 5 Childminders experiences during Covid-19

Figure 6 shows that childminders were also supported throughout by Sandwell Early Years but had limited access to other support systems for their health and well-being.

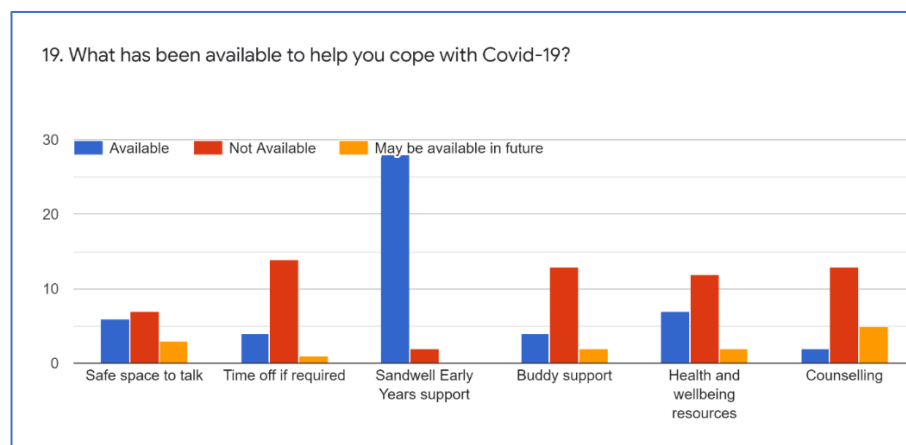


Figure 6 Support available to childminders

Support given by Quality Early Years and Childcare Team (Early Years)

The Quality Early Years and Child Care Team has a statutory duty to provide advice, guidance and support to child care providers in the borough.

Early Years and the Family Information Service continued to provide support for childcare providers and families during the lockdown.

A significant challenge for the Team has been supporting all providers with the publication of a new Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory framework, which all Schools and Providers must follow from September 2021. Virtual training sessions and drop in advice sessions have been offered, and this will continue into the Autumn Term 2021 to ensure that the Early Years Workforce understands the changes that need to be implemented. At the same time the Department for Education has introduced a national Baseline Assessment for all reception children from September 2021.

Between January and July 2021, the following support was given:

Support visits to Sandwell providers, including new providers, settings rated inadequate and requires improvement (RI), Ofsted preparation, quality improvement and new funded settings	313 visits and individual virtual contacts including; 26 to RI settings 13 to Inadequate
Duty calls take under the retained function to give advice, guidance and support	466 duty calls
Network meetings for all Sandwell providers	3 delivered to 75 nursery owners/ managers, OOSC leaders and childminders
Training	
20 x Health and Safety mandatory courses	238 delegates
15 x SCSP approved Safeguarding courses	209 delegates
85 x NEW EYFS, Quality Improvement and narrowing the gap courses	1334 delegates
3 Mental Health and Wellbeing courses	34 delegates
15 SEND courses were provided by ISEY	194 delegates.
46 workshops/ courses/ network meetings were delivered within cluster areas	420 attendees
Childminders	
3 Childminder briefing sessions	16
1 Introductory Childminding Practice (ICP) Course	6

- Supported visits included support for new providers, pre-Ofsted registration, unannounced visits and Ofsted feedback visits.
- Visits to outstanding and good settings upon request.
- Support related to meeting general welfare requirements, early years language pathway projects implementation, quality teaching and interactions, learning and development requirements and implementation of the NEW EYFS.
- Focussed support for requires improvement and inadequate Ofsted rated providers.

- Parent partnership support working and COVID risk assessments/ control measures, government restrictions and guidance.
- 3 Early Years Newsletters emailed to all providers.
- Significant duty calls from childcare providers seeking support, advice and information under the Retained Function Duty - Childcare Act 2006 and relating to COVID issues/ restrictions, risk assessments, disapplication and notifications.
- 1 grant panel was held during this period, 7 providers were awarded funding to support accessible holiday club provision throughout the year for working parents/ carers. Sandwell Early Years Development Worker is supporting 8 Ofsted registered providers to access Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) fund to support parents/ carers in receipt of free school meals during 2021 Easter and Summer School Holidays.
- COVID support funds were agreed and provided to settings who remained operational from March 2020 – June 2020.
- Workshops/ courses/ network meetings were delivered within cluster areas including communication, language, literacy and Early Talk Boost projects.
- Attendees included foster carers, Children Centre volunteers and family support workers, parents/ carers, library staff, Early Years practitioners from schools and PVI provision.
- Early Years worked in partnership with Sandwell Revenues and Benefits Team to communicate changes in provider details and ensure that eligible providers were aware of how to access discretionary business grants, also business rates subsidies.
- Government guidance updates were sent out continuously to all providers by the Early Years team ensuring information on Covid-19 regulations was readily available. Childcare settings were given advice, guidance and support throughout the pandemic.
- The DfE survey was set up to identify numbers of providers that were open along with attendance figures for funded and vulnerable children. Alongside the DfE attendance survey the Early Years QTS also completed telephone and email contact. There was only approximately 55% response rate to the survey.
- Early Years kept a record of providers who remained open from the end of March 2020 – September 2020. The COVID notifications and closures spreadsheet was developed and used from September 2020, the information supported Sandwell Public Health.

Support given to Childminders

Ofsted registered childminders are supported with visits from Early Years. In the period from January to August 2021:

- 4 childminders had a support visit 6 months post registration
- 1 childminder had a support visit 12 months post registration
- 3 childminder had a support visit 18 months post registration
- 5 childminders had a support visit pre-Ofsted inspection

Childminder support has continued throughout the pandemic by phone, email, text and use of platforms such as Skype, ZOOM and Microsoft Teams. Government guidance and local information has been sent regularly to childminders by email and also via social media.

Online training has also proven particularly popular for childminders as it gives them greater flexibility to attend training sessions after they close. Accessing online courses means that there is no rush to get to a venue once the last child leaves for the day. It is anticipated that online delivery will continue as a training option in the future.

The type of support given during lockdown included business advice and how to access government grants. Childminders were also supported with information on Covid-19 government guidance and local health advice on vaccination and track and trace.

Childminders were given advice on how to support keyworker families and how to look after their own emotional well-being. Whilst business advice continues to form part of the requests for support, the emphasis in the past year has been on emotional support, particularly reconnecting with others. To facilitate this, online 'Cuppa, chat and a virtual hug' sessions were arranged.

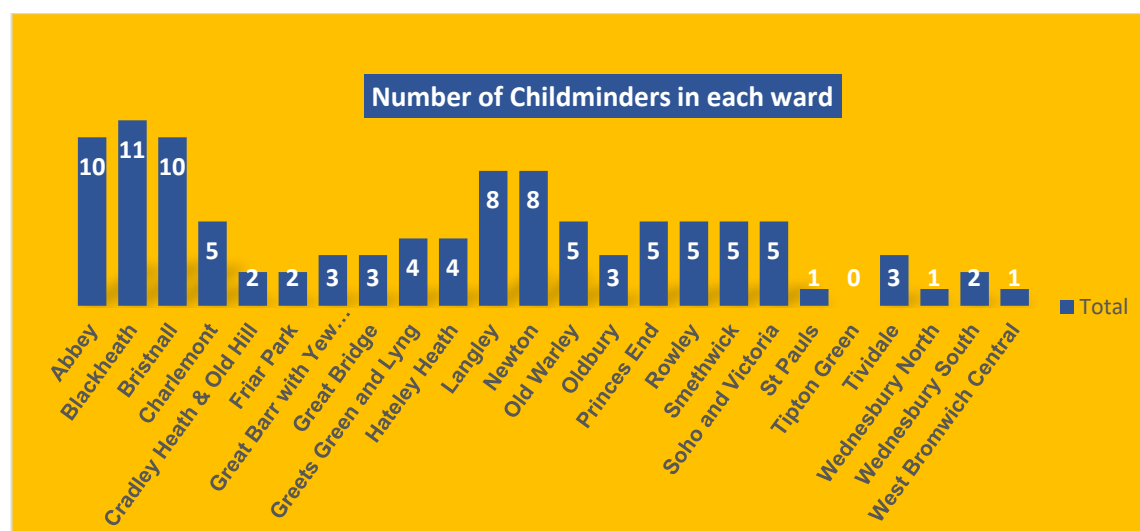
Good practice during lockdown and as the country slowly re-emerges, continues to be shared by childminders in Sandwell. Examples of good practice are included in the termly Quality Early Years and Childcare news update which is sent out to all childcare providers in the borough.

Childminders continue to be the most flexible part of the childcare workforce. Families making the gradual return to the work force have been supported by childminders, who have adapted their working patterns to reflect changing needs.

Prospective and new childminders are also supported as they worked towards full registration.

9 prospective childminders are being supported towards registration.

3 new childminders were registered in Wednesbury South, Smethwick and Blackheath wards between January and July 2021.

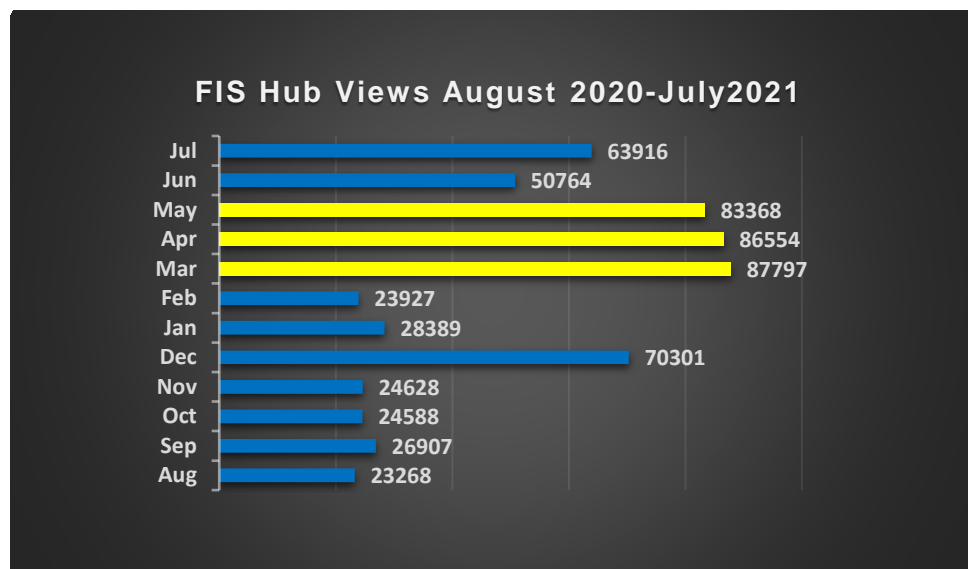


No childminders in Tipton Green ward. 1 childminder in St Pauls, Wednesbury North and West Bromwich Central wards. Marketing and recruitment required in these wards.

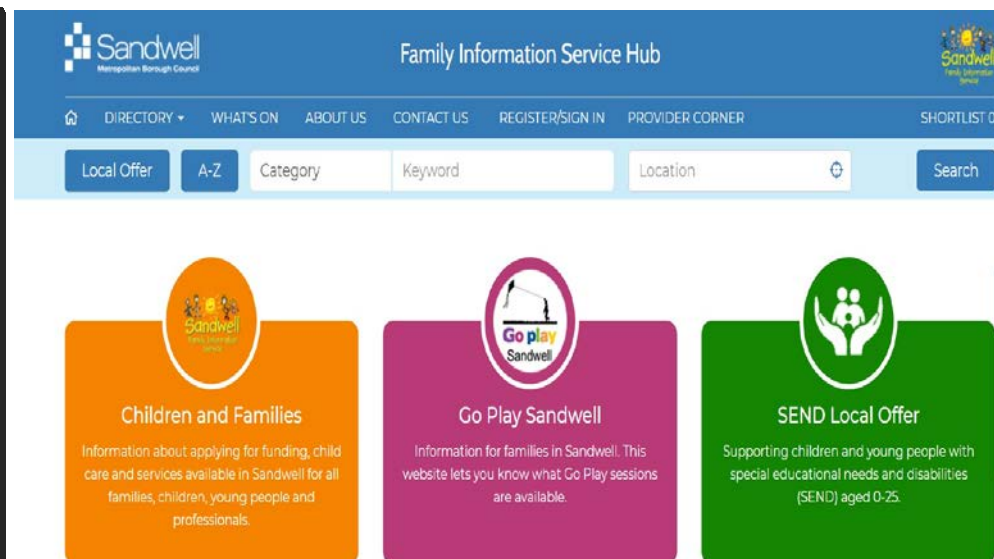
Support given by Family Information Service (FIS)

The Family Information Service continued to support parents during the pandemic providing information, advice and guidance and a brokerage service. The childcare brokers dealt with 20 cases between January and July 2021. Over 60% of helpdesk enquiries related to 2,3 and 4 year old funding. In 2020 the service began an online Childcare Support session giving parents an opportunity to book a one to one chat with a member of the FIS team. 10 chat sessions were delivered between January and July 2021.

The [FIS Hub website](#) underwent some changes in 2021, with new features such as Google Translate. Web pages were added to support families and childcare providers during the pandemic, including Covid-19 Advice for Parents, Back to School and Provider Corner for childcare providers. The FIS also supported Sandwell Holiday Activities and Food Programme, promoting HAF21 on the FIS Hub. Pages were also added to support Sandwell Keeps Talking, a speech and language toolkit for professionals and parents. A Marketing and Communications Apprentice is now employed to boost social media and website hits for the service. From March-July 2021 [FIS Hub](#) users increased by 25% and Facebook Page reach increased by 57%.



Increase in people using FIS Hub website in 2021



[FIS Hub](#) Home Page

Early Years Funding for 2,3 and 4 Year Olds

In 2021 there were 9190 funded childcare and early years places being offered by 254 early years and childcare providers (including 48 schools offering 30 hours). This compares with 2020 figures of 9275 funded places offered by 267 providers.

	Schools	PVI's	Childminders	Total
2 year olds places	73	1068	29	1170
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Universal)	5040	1356	33	6429
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Extended)	407	35	22	464
3 and 4 year olds (30hrs)	N/A	1080	47	1127
Total	5520	3539	131	9190

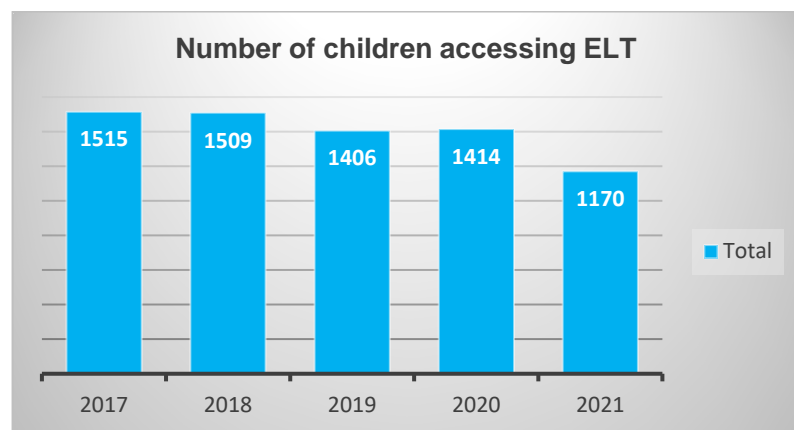
Free funding for 2 year olds

The Department for Education (DfE) in conjunction with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) provides a list of eligible families with 2 year olds every 6-8 weeks for the academic year 2020/21.

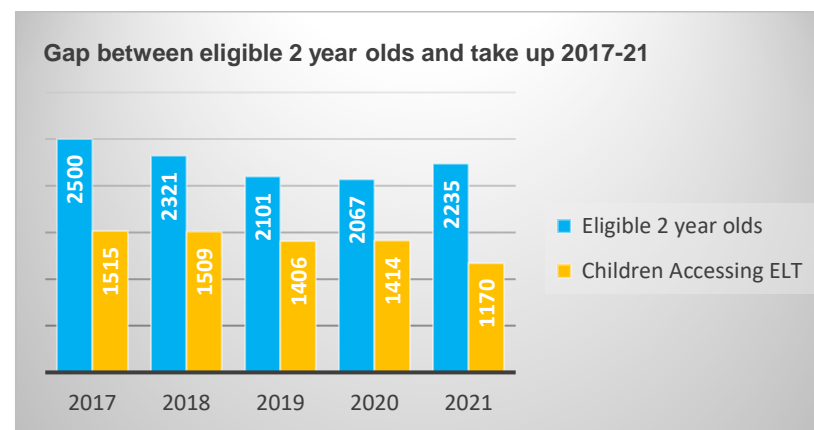
- 52% of eligible children were accessing 2 year old funding in Spring Term 2021.
- 60% of eligible children were accessing 2 year old funding in Summer Term 2021.
- Take up in the past 5 years has averaged 63%.
- 167 Providers currently offer 2 year old funded places.
- Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Friar Park, Tividale and Wednesbury South wards had little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards.

Overall there were sufficient places for children accessing 2 year old funding





2 year old funding take up in Sandwell 2016-2021



Gap between eligible 2 year olds and take up 2017-2021

		England			Sandwell				% +/- change from 2018-2020
		2019	2020		% +/- change from 2019-2021	2019	2020	2021	
Extended entitlement	Number of four year olds benefiting	92,040	97,305	93,666	+2	414	477	451	+9
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	328,127	345,704	328,662	< 1	1,544	1,675	1,613	<1
	Number of three year olds benefiting	236,087	248,399	234,996	- <1	1,130	1,198	1,162	+3
Funded entitlement	Number of four year olds benefiting	651,479	650,193	637,146	-2	4,655	4,798	4,592	-1
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	1,277,137	1,271,544	1,211,991	-5	9,186	9,269	8,624	-6
	Number of three year olds benefiting	625,658	621,351	574,845	-8	4,531	4,471	4,032	-11
	Number of two year olds benefiting	148,751	143,439	124,543	-16	1,471	1,422	1,171	-20

Table showing 'Children registered by age and provider type (2019 - 2021)' from 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age' in England and Sandwell between 2018 and 2021. Source [DfE Data](#) (Gov.UK)

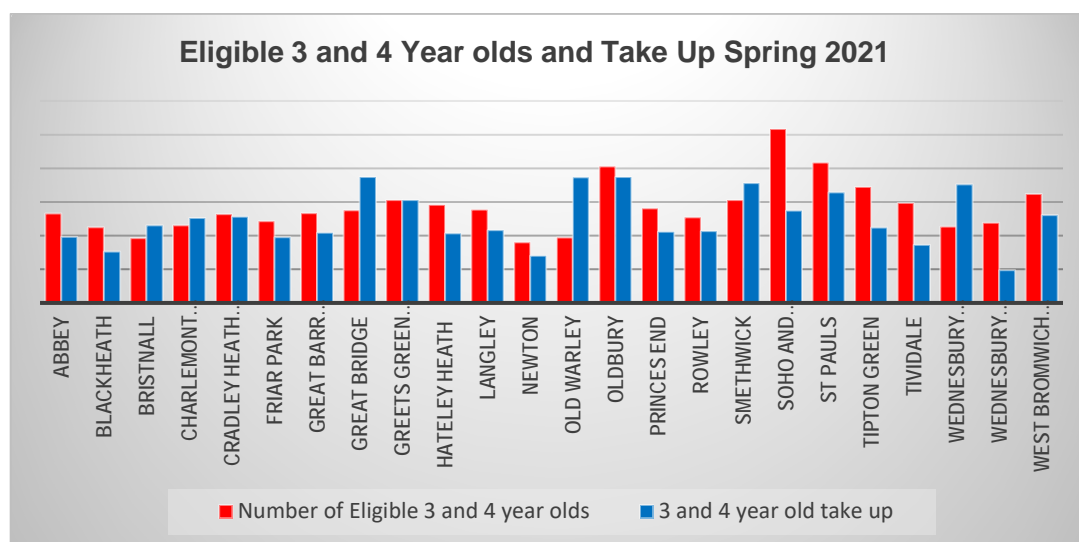
3 and 4 Year Olds Universal Entitlement (15 hours free funding)

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of free funding from the term following their third birthday until they start in reception class in the September following their 4th birthday. Therefore, some children will access up to 5 terms of early education.

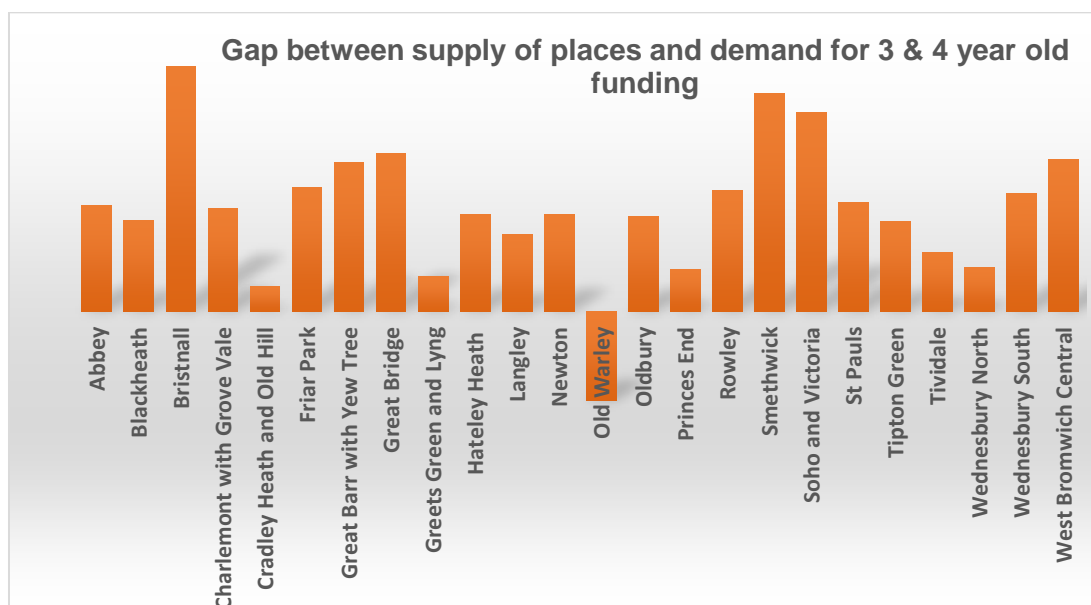
In the Spring term 2021 there were:

- 6821 children eligible for the Universal Entitlement (based on available birth data)
- 5968 children accessing the funding (87%)
- Some eligible children may access a nursery place in neighbouring boroughs.

Overall there were sufficient places for 3 and 4 year olds for Universal Entitlement



There was lower take up of places in Soho and Victoria (53%), Tividale (58%) and Wednesbury South (41%) wards. Marketing and promotion may be required in these wards.



There was little or no surplus capacity in Old Warley ward. However, there were places in neighbouring wards.

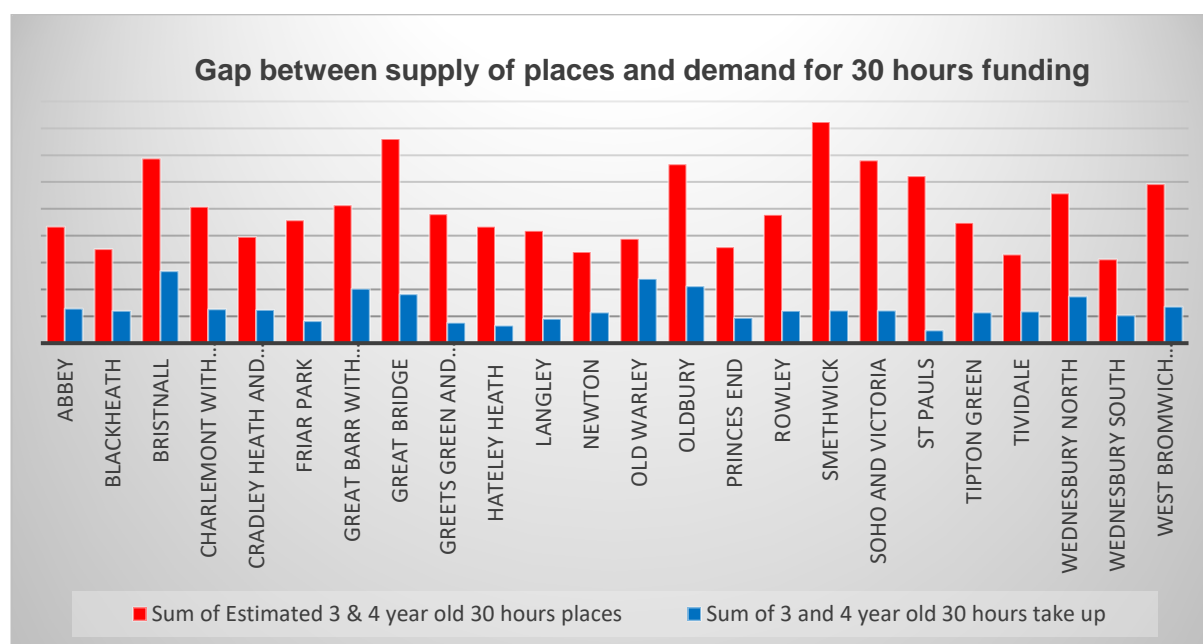
3 and 4 year olds Extended Offer (30 hours free funding)

The 30 hours free funding came into effect in September 2017 and is aimed at working families. Families who are eligible for free 30 hours are issued with a code from HMRC.

In the Spring term 2021 there were:

- 1591 children accessing 30 hours
- 166 PVI and Maintained Providers offering 30 hours
- 46 schools offering 30 hours places

Overall there were sufficient places for 30 hours



Highest take up of 30 hours places was in Bristnall, Great Barr with Yew Tree and Old Warley wards. Lowest take up was in St Pauls, Greet's Green and Lyng and Hateley Heath wards. Marketing and promotion may be required in these wards.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision

89% of childcare providers indicate that they would care for children with SEND.

All wards have providers that would care for children with SEND

The Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Service works with providers to support children to integrate into childcare and early settings. They also administer the Inclusion Support Grant and the High Needs Block Funding which enables children with SEND to have one to one support in a setting depending on the child's level of need.

There are also 17 short break services for children with a diagnosis / Education Health Care Plan who can access these services.

The Local Offer is available on the Family Information Service Hub, giving families and professionals all Local Offer information on one website.

Findings and Recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2021-22

Findings

- There is sufficient childcare in Sandwell based on current data.
- The number of 2,3 and 4 year old funded places available remains the same.
- Childcare providers reported fewer children taking up non-funded childcare places.
- Demand for wraparound and out of school childcare not as strong as pre-pandemic.
- Childcare providers reported greater anxiety about business sustainability.
- 0-8 year old childcare settings and places remains broadly unchanged from 2020.
- There are 15% fewer holiday playscheme places available to families.
- All wards have providers who would care for children with SEND.
- Childcare costs increased slightly but remain lower than the West Midlands average.
- Cradley Heath and Old Hill and Princes End wards do not have childcare providers offering evenings, weekends and emergency childcare. However, there are providers in neighbouring wards that do offer evenings, weekends and emergency childcare.
- 90% of childcare providers intend to stay open in the next 12 months.
- The full impact of the pandemic has not yet emerged.

Recommendations

To ensure the Local Authority meets the Statutory Duty to secure sufficient childcare, *so far as is reasonably practicable*, a detailed and comprehensive action plan will be developed to address the following **8 recommendations**. There are no further budgetary implications for these actions, but they give a clear focus for the work of the existing Early Years and Child Care team and the Family Information Service.

Delivering childcare in the borough

Sandwell Early Years supports childcare providers by providing information, advice and guidance and monitoring childcare in the borough.

Recommendation 1 - To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.

Ofsted Judgements

Sandwell Early Years supports settings judged by Ofsted as inadequate and requires improvement. There is a risk that, with the resumption of Ofsted Inspections and changes to the EYFS Framework in September 2021, more providers will become inadequate or requires improvement.

Recommendation 2 - To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.

Demand for childcare

Demand for childcare is dynamic and fluid. Many factors will continue to influence what kind of childcare families want to use, during and post pandemic. Parent consultation, Jobcentre Plus links and social media engagement will help to gather local data on the short and medium term impact of the pandemic on the jobs market, employment and demand for childcare.

Recommendation 3 – To undertake a parent survey, increase social media engagement and strengthen links with Jobcentre Plus to understand local demand for childcare.

Eligibility and entitlements take-up.

Families may fall in and out of entitlements as the employment market changes. Parents need to know their entitlements and childcare providers need to be supported to provide places for free entitlement. Childcare providers should also consider “stretched offer” flexibility to meet the needs of working parents throughout the year.

Recommendation 4 – To continue to monitor take-up of 2 ,3 and 4 year old funding and 30 hours codes. To increase promotion of free entitlement ELT and 30 hours and create a more nuanced, targeted approach to marketing.

Wraparound childcare

Home working and furlough temporarily affected demand for before and after school clubs and holiday playschemes. Government guidance during lockdowns also affected how wraparound was delivered. Childcare bubbles, restricted access to venues and staffing meant fewer wraparound places available for families. Childcare providers may have to change how they deliver flexible childcare to meet the needs of working families.

Recommendation 5 – To undertake parent consultation to understand demand for wraparound childcare and how flexible it needs to be. To monitor wraparound childcare to ensure sufficient places are available for families.

Capacity and sustainability

The pandemic has put extreme pressure on supply of childcare. Staff recruitment and retention is a risk to the childcare market locally. Ensuring childcare providers continue to meet parents needs must be monitored in the short and medium term. Promoting childminding as a business may be required in wards with little or no childminders.

Recommendation 6 – To continue to work with childcare providers to ensure business viability and monitor for any “red flags” where providers are at greater risk of closure. To monitor capacity and childcare places to ensure sufficiency through the borough. To promote childminding as a business opportunity.

SEND Childcare

SEND children have been shielding or attending settings in small bubbles during the pandemic. Demand for SEND places may, therefore, change as the effects of the pandemic ease. Capacity for SEND places needs to be understood, as does demand from parents.

Recommendation 7 – To increase parental engagement to determine how SEND provision should be delivered post-pandemic. To consult with childcare providers to assess any potential short and medium term gaps for SEND provision, particularly wraparound childcare.

Information and brokerage

Parents may need extra support, where gaps in provision prevent them accessing suitable childcare. Access to up to date online information will help parents make informed choices.

Recommendation 8 – To continue to promote the Family Information Service to parents and professionals. To raise awareness of brokerage and online chat facility and engage with families through social media channels.

Summary of 8 Recommendations

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.
2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.
3. To carry out parent consultation to understand changes in demand for childcare.
4. To continue to promote the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old funding, including 30 hours.
5. To monitor holiday playscheme and wraparound provision throughout the borough.
6. To continue to monitor childcare capacity and sustainability, ensuring there is sufficient childcare throughout the borough.
7. To consult with parents of SEND children to assess any potential gaps in SEND provision including wraparound provision.
8. To continue to promote the Family Information Service including promotion of FIS Hub website, brokerage and online chat services. Increase social media engagement with parents and professionals.

Conclusion

The full impact of Covid-19 global pandemic on the local childcare market will become apparent in the next 12 months. There are risks to the supply of childcare and there are also actions that can be taken to mitigate these risks.

Staffing in childcare settings may be one of the biggest risks in the next 12 months. Staff may not return from furlough or may leave the childcare sector all together. Childcare providers may struggle with recruitment of appropriately qualified staff and increased stress and sickness levels.

Employment changes, including ending of furlough, redundancy and working from home, continue to create variations in demand for childcare, particularly paid for and wraparound childcare.

Childcare providers may need to become more flexible, particularly with stretched offer places so that working families can take their free 15 hours entitlement during school holidays.

The number of holiday playscheme places available to families fell during the pandemic. Holiday playscheme providers will need support to get back to pre-pandemic levels.

Childcare supply and demand must continue to be monitored, to ensure there is sufficient quality childcare in the borough.