

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (0-5's)

December 2022

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a legal duty on all local authorities to ensure that there is sufficient childcare in their area. In particular, the local authority has a duty 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).”

The local authority is required to report annually on how it is meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare.

In this report, we have assessed the sufficiency of childcare by using data about the need for childcare and the amount of childcare available, and feedback from local parents about how easy or difficult it has been for them to find suitable childcare.

Please note that in this report, analysis of childcare at a detailed level uses council wards as they were prior to May 2022. The reason for this is that when assessing childcare sufficiency, a variety of data is used to provide context for the analysis and as part of the measure of whether there is enough childcare. Some of this data that is produced by other organisations has not been updated to take account of the new ward boundaries e.g. population projections, percentage of economically active households. Therefore, the old wards have been used to measure if there is sufficient childcare in Hillingdon.

Assessment of childcare sufficiency

When assessing whether there is enough childcare in the borough, four issues are considered:

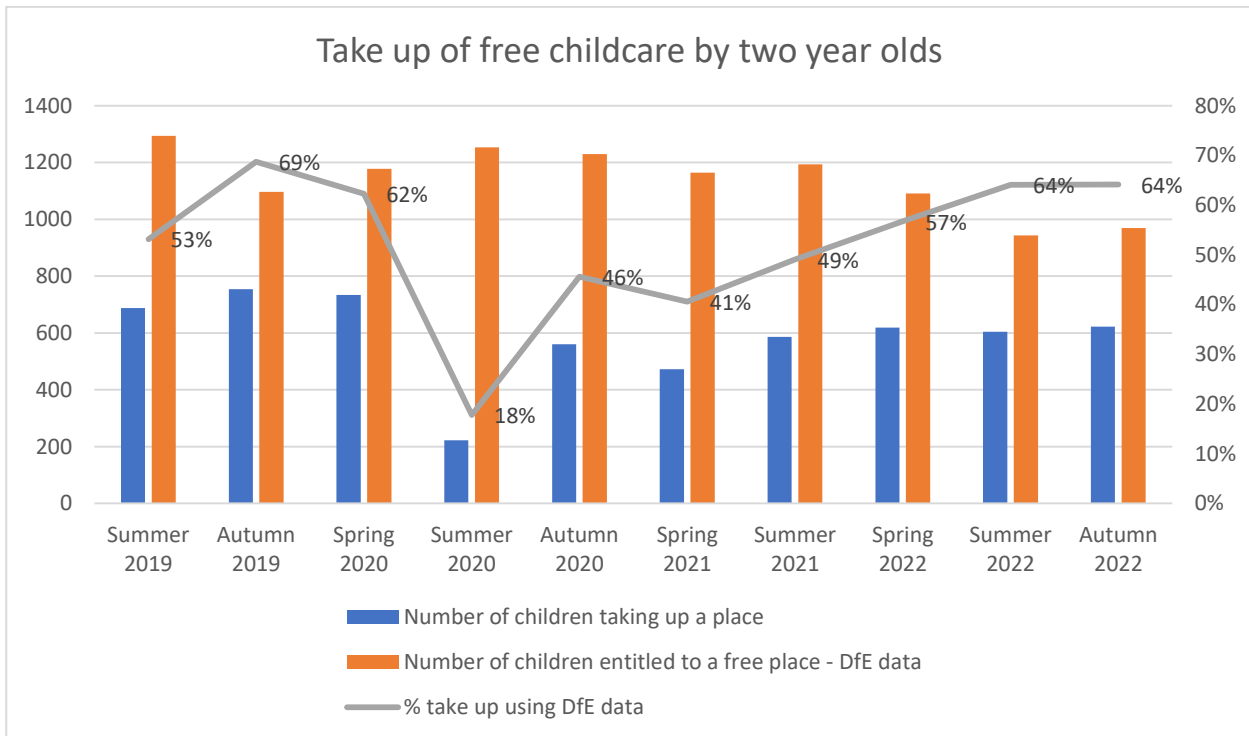
- The current level of supply of childcare
- The current level of demand for childcare
- The factors that have influenced the take up of childcare and could have an impact on both supply and demand
- Using this information to measure sufficiency

Main findings

Though the use of childcare by parents was affected significantly over the last couple of years, due to Covid-19, the number of children attending childcare has returned near to pre-Covid levels.

Use of childcare

Parental use of childcare declined significantly during the lockdowns from Covid-19. This was evident in the usage of free childcare during this period. However, take up has recovered near to pre-Covid levels.



1. Demand for and supply of childcare

Number of early years providers and places

In total, there are 370 childcare providers in our local authority.

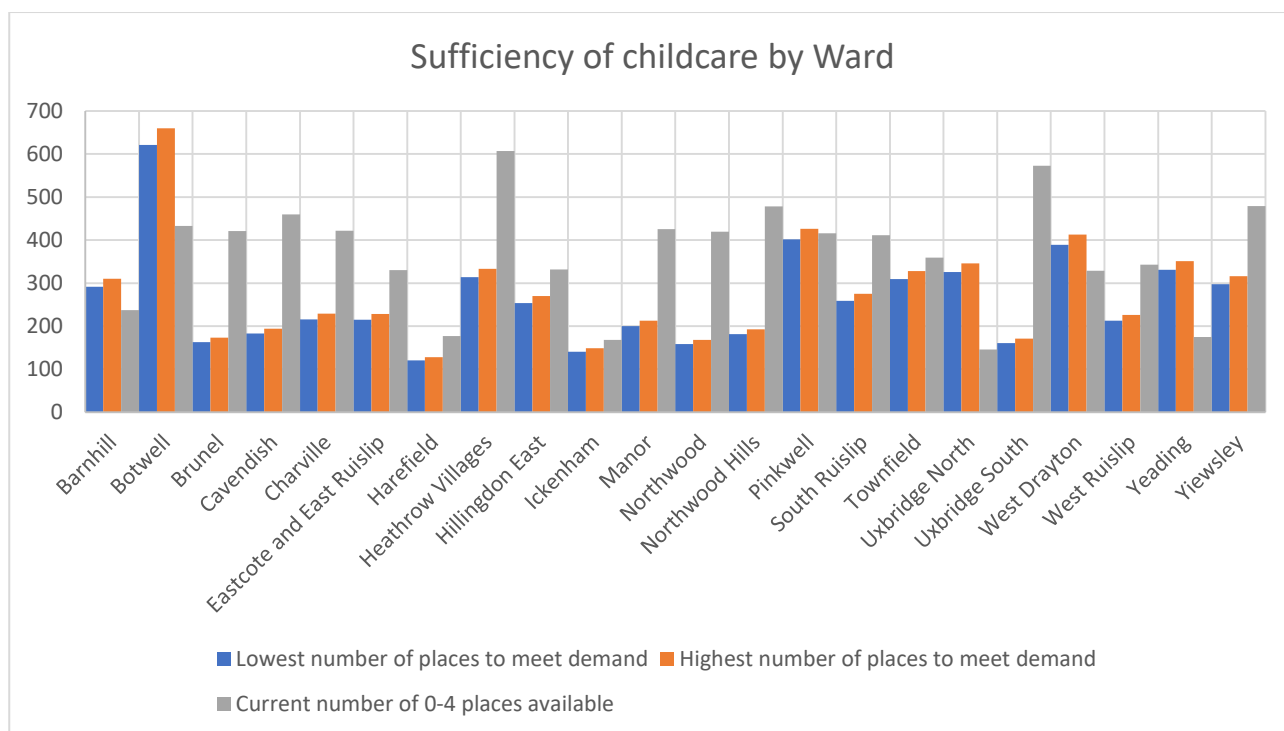
Type of provision	Number of providers
Childminders	216
State school nurseries	57
Maintained nursery schools	1
Private, voluntary and independent nurseries	96

For childminders, day nurseries, nursery classes in independent schools and pre-school playgroups, the number of registered places represents the maximum number of children who can be on the premises at any given time. In practice, many providers choose to operate below their number of registered places.

Children may attend childcare full time or part time. This table records places for children who are attending full time, or for as many hours as the setting is open. In some cases, two

or more children attending part time may use one full time equivalent place. For example, one child may attend in the morning and one child may attend in the afternoon.

In the London Borough of Hillingdon, there are sufficient childcare places for children aged under five years old in most wards in the borough. There is insufficient childcare in the following wards: Barnhill, Botwell, Uxbridge North, West Drayton and Yeading. The breakdown of the number of places compared to estimated demand is shown in the following chart:



For each Ward, the current supply of childcare places is identified. The population of children aged under five years old is also obtained. This population is compared to the proportion of families who are economically active and the change in the unemployment rate. These factors are used to identify the minimum and maximum number of children who are likely to require childcare in each Ward. These figures are compared to the number of places available to see if there is enough childcare.

This table shows that there are 16 Wards where there are more childcare places available than the number of children who are likely to use them. For one Ward, the number of childcare places is within the range of the minimum and maximum number of children requiring childcare. For five Wards, there are not enough childcare places available to meet demand. However, in many cases there is sufficiency or over-sufficiency in neighbouring wards.

2. Funded early education

Introduction to funded early education

Some children are entitled to free childcare, funded by the government. These entitlements are for 38 weeks per year.

- All children aged 3 and 4 are entitled to 15 hours per week until they start reception class in school
- Children aged 3 and 4 where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to 30 hours per week until they start reception class in school
- Children aged 2 whose families receive certain benefits (including in-work benefits with an income of less than £16,190), or who have a disability, or who are looked after by the local authority, are entitled to 15 hours per week. Two year old children with parents who have no recourse to public funds would also be eligible if they live in England, do not earn above the income thresholds and have no more than £16,000 in savings. Eligibility criteria for free childcare for two year olds is on this website - [Help paying for childcare: Free education and childcare for 2-year-olds - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Nationally, about 40% of 2 year olds are entitled to this offer, but the proportion varies by area.

Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement. They may choose to split them between providers. With the agreement of their provider, parents may also spread them across the year – for example, rather than taking 15 hours for 38 weeks a year they could take just under 12 hours for 48 weeks a year.

Part of the childcare sufficiency duty is to ensure there are enough places for two-, three- or four-year-old children who are eligible for free childcare.

Providers offering funded early education places

Providers are paid by government via local authorities for delivering funded early education. They are not required to offer them to parents, but of course parents may choose to use a different provider if they do not. Some providers offer a restricted number of funded places.

The table below shows the proportion of providers who offer free childcare

<i>Type of provision</i>	<i>No. of providers for 2 year olds</i>	<i>% of providers offering free childcare for 2 year olds</i>	<i>No. of providers offering up to 15 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds</i>	<i>% of providers who offer up to 15 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds</i>	<i>No. of providers for 3 and 4 year olds extended hours</i>	<i>% of providers who offer up to 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds</i>
Childminders	102	47%	135	69%	130	66%
State school nurseries	1	2%	57	98%	43	74%
Maintained nursery schools	1	100%	1	100%	1	100%
Private, voluntary and independent nurseries	87	91%	90	98%	90	98%

Take up of funded early education

The proportion of eligible children taking up their funded place (for at least some of the available hours) in our local authority is:

<i>Age</i>	<i>% of eligible children</i>
Age 2	64%
Age 3 and 4	87%

The data in this table for two-year-olds is based on take up from Autumn 2022, three- and four-year-olds is Spring 2022.

Comparing take up of funded early education over time

<i>Age</i>	<i>Spring 2022</i>	<i>Spring 2021</i>	<i>Spring 2020</i>	<i>Spring 2019</i>	<i>Spring 2018</i>
Age 2 – targeted	52%	35%	62%	59%	61%
Age 3 and 4	87%	83%	89%	89%	89%

Comparing take up of funded early education in Hillingdon to other local authorities (Spring 2022)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Hillingdon</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>England</i>
Age 2 – targeted	52%	62%	72%
Age 3 and 4	87%	82%	92%

3 and 4-year-old funded entitlement applications

Parents who think they are entitled to a 30 hour extended hours place apply for this online through the Government's Childcare Support website. The same website is used to apply for tax free childcare and parents can apply for either or both. If a parent is eligible, the system creates a code which they can use with their chosen childcare provider. If they are ineligible, they will still be entitled to the universal 15 hours of childcare.

Step	Number of families	% of families applying
Eligible for a place	2,491	54%
Accessing a place	1,345	

The data in this table is based on take up of free childcare in the Autumn term 2021

3. Quality of childcare in our area

The quality of childcare provision can be assessed by looking both at Ofsted inspection judgements and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results.

Ofsted inspection grades

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who give them an overall grade for the quality of their provision. Childminders, day nurseries and pre-school playgroups are on the Early Years Register, and schools and standalone maintained nursery schools are on the Schools' register. The grades for both registers are equivalent. Schools with nurseries have an overall inspection grade for the whole school and some also have a separate early years grade.

Both schools and early years providers have four possible Ofsted grades: 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement', and 'inadequate'. Some providers are still awaiting their first full inspection. These providers are excluded from our calculation.

Nursery classes in independent schools do not generally have an Ofsted grade.

With the introduction of a new Ofsted framework, this has led to an increase in early years settings in Hillingdon who are receiving a grade of 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' as settings adjust to the changing requirements of Ofsted regulation.

Ofsted judgements of childcare provision

Judgements are made as follows:

Grade 1 is "Outstanding"	This aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is "Good"	This aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is "Requires Improvement"	This aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate	This aspect of the provision is not good enough

The following percentage of early years providers were recognised as being good or better during an Ofsted inspection:

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All provision	11%	83%	3%	2%
Childminders	8%	86%	5%	1%
Day care	16%	78%	0%	6%

Source: (**Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 August 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**)

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) data

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well.

Good achievement across the EYFS is measured. The results for the last 4 years that data is available are as follows:

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Percentage of 5 year olds achieving a good level of attainment	69.6%	72.6%	73.6%	74.7%	63.9%

The decrease in the percentage of five-year-olds achieving a good level of attainment in Hillingdon is likely to be partly due to the effects of Covid-19 on children’s learning and development and the introduction of a new statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, that took effect from 1 September 2021.

4. Conclusion

The childcare market in the London Borough of Hillingdon has historically been stable, with as many day-care providers opening as closing. The exceptions have been the declining number of childminders and playgroups, though this is in line with national trends.

However, there are several factors that are challenging for childcare settings:

- *Sustainability* – a recent survey that was done of day nurseries in Hillingdon showed that childcare fees for day nurseries have increased significantly. This may reflect the cost pressures that they face e.g. pension costs, national insurance, utilities.
- *Recruitment* – there is significant staff turnover in the childcare sector, with settings reporting difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.
- *Falling birth rate* – population projections from the Greater London Authority suggest that in all wards in Hillingdon except for two, there will be a decrease in the number of children aged under five years old in the next five years.

- *Quality* – all group childcare settings in Hillingdon have tended to have an Ofsted inspection grade of ‘Good or Outstanding’. In the last six months, six settings have received an Ofsted inspection grade of ‘Inadequate’. This has a negative impact on the quality of childcare available to parents but also threatens setting’s sustainability as free entitlement funding should be withdrawn in line with the DfE Code of Practice

For the year ahead, it will be important for childcare settings to review their business in the light of the challenges they face, including the need to be more flexible in what they offer to parents, adapting to parental need. For the local authority, it will be important to keep an up-to-date overview of childcare provision, in particular identifying areas where there may be insufficient provision to meet parental need.