

# Wirral Borough Council

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**Childcare Sufficiency Assessment  
Report April 2020 – March 2021**

## Introduction

Wirral Council is required by law to 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make the report available and accessible to parents'. This report has been prepared in order to meet this duty.

Having sufficient childcare means that families are able to find childcare that meets their child's learning needs and enables parents to make a real choice about work and training.

In this report, we have made an assessment of sufficiency using data about the need for childcare and the amount of childcare available, along with feedback from local parents about how easy or difficult it has been for them to find childcare that meets their needs.

We use information about sufficiency to plan our work supporting the local childcare economy.

## CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>Overall assessment and summary</b>	Page 1
<b>2.</b>	<b>Recommendations from the 2019/20 Report</b>	Page 3
<b>3.</b>	<b>Our plans for childcare</b>	Page 5
<b>4.</b>	<b>Demand for childcare</b>	Page 6
<b>5.</b>	<b>Supply of childcare</b>	Page 9
<b>6.</b>	<b>Funded early education</b>	Page 11
<b>7.</b>	<b>SEND</b>	Page 14
<b>8.</b>	<b>Prices</b>	Page 16
<b>9.</b>	<b>Quality of childcare in our area</b>	Page 17
<b>10.</b>	<b>Coronavirus and sector pressures</b>	Page 18
<b>11.</b>	<b>Parents views</b>	Page 19
<b>12.</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	Page 20
<b>13.</b>	<b>Further Information</b>	Page 21

# 1. Overall assessment and summary

## **Children below school age**

There are 17553 children under the age of 5 living in Wirral, many of whom may require some form of childcare.

Wirral has 370 early years providers, delivering a variety of places, 231 of these offer 2-year-old funded places, and 282 offer 3 and 4-year old funded places. 293 early years providers are Privately, Voluntary or Independently (PVI) run, of these PVI's 98.41% are rated Outstanding, Good or having Met Requirements by Ofsted. Most providers offer care between 8am and 6pm with a good proportion of these offering childcare during atypical hours (outside 8am and 6pm on weekdays), some childcare providers also offer childcare of a weekend.

## **School aged children**

39117 children of statutory school age (5-18) live in the Borough, and some may require before, after school and/or holiday care.

## **SEND**

3023 children aged 18 or under had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and may require childcare with SEND provision (*January 2021 SEN2 Census*). As at March 2020, 129 children were being supported by The Council's Early Years SEND team and 43 children were receiving Portage. At February 2021, 84 children were receiving Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF), and at March 2021, 62 children were accessing the Disability Access Fund (DAF).

## **Employment**

There is still over a third of the working population working in the health & social work profession or wholesale and retail trade, meaning they may require flexible childcare, outside of regular hours, and during weekends.

## **Provision**

Childminders, Pre-Schools and Schools are operating at about 80% occupancy, with Day Nurseries operating at around 70% and Extended Care at around 65%, meaning there is sufficiency for any increase in requirements this year, although we need to be mindful that some settings may be operating at a reduced capacity due to coronavirus and staff shortages, to allow for social distancing measures etc, so we need to closely monitor sufficiency for this reason. The average price for day nurseries and pre-schools is in the region of £43 to £46 per day, with childminders remaining around £36 per day, holiday care averages at £29 per day and before and after school care at £5.50 and £8.70 respectively.

## **Parental Views**

56% of parents have not experienced any issues accessing childcare throughout the pandemic, for those who did experience issues this was due to temporary setting closures (13%), being unable to visit their child's setting (7%), being unable to use informal childcare (6%), struggling with temporary closures, bubble restrictions (4%), struggling to find before/after school care (4%), having to use family in place of formal childcare (3%). 51% of parent's childcare needs have not changed due to the pandemic, and 57% of parents will still require formal childcare post-pandemic (due to their child being under 5).

## **Conclusion**

For the majority of the pandemic, we have not seen an increase in the number of settings closing due to coronavirus, however during the second half of 2021 the number of settings closing has increased, and many are citing coronavirus as being a factor in their closures. There remains a sufficient number of places in the Borough, however it is still not yet clear what parents requirements will be once we are out of the pandemic, and if demand will increase to a level that supply cannot meet, there are also differences in sufficiency in terms of the types of settings parents require, Pre-Schools are struggling to meet parents changing needs with their offer putting some of them at risk of closure, and there are concerns that there may become a lack of sufficiency for particular types of childcare, such as before, after school and holiday care. Work will continue in monitoring sufficiency across all areas of the Borough, but also in terms of the different childcare requirements of parents as we move out of the pandemic.

# Wirral Borough Council Childcare Sufficiency 2020/21


 There are 17,553 children aged 0 to 4 in Wirral

 There are 39,117 children aged 5 to 18 in Wirral

 **75%**  
of the working age population are in employment

**23%**  
of workers may require childcare during atypical hours

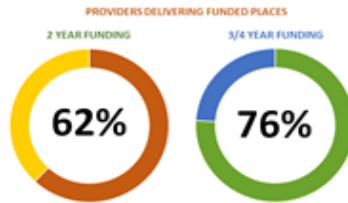


 50 children aged 0 to 4 in Wirral with an EHCP attend a Mainstream or Special School

 2973 children aged 5 to 18 in Wirral with an EHCP attend Mainstream, Special, Independent or Grammar Schools

## 2 YEAR OLD FUNDING

- 32% of 2 year olds are eligible nationally
- 37% of 2 year olds are eligible in Wirral
- 70% of eligible 2 year olds are taking up funding from Birkenhead
- 76% of eligible 2 year olds are taking up funding from South Wirral
- 71% of eligible 2 years olds are taking up funding from Wallasey
- 67% of eligible 2 years olds are taking up funding from West Wirral



## 3 & 4 YEAR OLD FUNDING

- 97% of 3 & 4 year olds are taking up a Universal funded place
- 2925 Extended Entitlement codes have been issued in Wirral
- 2328 Extended Entitlement 3 & 4 year olds are accessing a place



## AVERAGE PRICE OF CHILDCARE PER DAY

Day Nursery / Pre-School	Under 2	£46.65
	2 Years old	£45.50
	3-4 Years old	£43.78

Childminder	Under 2	£35.85
	2 Years old	£35.72
	3-4 Years old	£35.70

Extended Care	Under 2	N/A
	2 Years old	£28.00
	3-4 Years old	£29.64

## AVERAGE OPENING HOURS

Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School
Open: 8am Close: 6pm	Open: 7:45am Close: 6pm	Open: 8:45am Close: 3:45pm
Before/After School	Holiday Clubs	School
Open: 7:30am Close: 6pm	Open: 7:45am Close: 5:30pm	Open: 8:45am Close: 3:30pm



On average settings are about 76% full

## Summary

There is currently sufficiency childcare available, of a very high standard, to meet the demand and needs of parents

## **2. Recommendations from the 2019/20 Report**

Our recommendations from the last sufficiency report and how well we have succeeded in achieving them.

### **Recommendation One**

We will monitor changes to the supply and demand for childcare, including the decrease in the birthrate along with closure of settings, we will work with childcare providers to identify any potential challenges that could impact sustainability of their business. We will continue to monitor sufficiency within the borough to ensure there is suitable provision for any children who may be affected by setting closures.

### **Response**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have been monitoring changes to supply/demand very closely, we have been working with providers on a regular basis to identify challenges to sustainability and put strategies/support mechanisms in place to mitigate these as far as possible.

### **Recommendation Two**

We will work closely with providers, ensuring that the information we hold on them is up to date and easily accessible, with the implementation of a new system which will enable us to easily advertise childcare services to parents, and to make it easier for parents to search for providers that meet their needs.

### **Response**

We have progressed with implementation of our new system for advertising childcare services and have worked closely with providers to ensure their information is correct and up to date ready for the launch of the system, unfortunately due to issues identified during user acceptance testing this project has been delayed and will not be launched in 2020/21 as hoped, but work is ongoing to get the system live as soon as possible.

### **Recommendation Three**

We will continue to identify eligible families not taking up funded childcare to see if there are any barriers that we can remove to enable them to take up a place with a childcare provider.

### **Response**

Due to coronavirus we received less DfE lists than we usually would, an April list was not provided, however for those distributed to us, we identified eligible families and made contact with them, usually contact would be made via door knocking but due to restrictions contact was made via phone calls and putting notes through doors. A new application system was launched in July enabling families to apply and receive a 'Real-time' response to their application, rather than having to wait for their application to be assessed manually as had previously been the case. This has resulted in much quicker responses to parents and has reduced the administrative burden on staff.

#### **Recommendation Four**

We will more regularly survey parents and analyze the data collated from them to get a picture of the childcare market from their point of view, and to ascertain whether the information we are making available to parents about childcare is accessible or whether any improvements need to be made.

#### **Response**

At the beginning of the year, survey requests were being sent out monthly, however this had to be put on hold due to the pandemic. Parental surveys commenced in 2021 and aimed to capture the impact Covid has had on parents/carers childcare needs, and how their requirements have and will change in the future, this will help us to work out the market need going forward and to help providers review their delivery models to be more flexible to the changing needs of parents/carers.

#### **Recommendation Five**

We will improve our marketing to make more parents aware of funding streams such as 2- and 3/4-year-old funding, Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Disability Access Fund (DAF) & Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF).

#### **Response**

Unfortunately due to the coronavirus pandemic, this had to be put on hold, therefore this recommendation will be included as an action in our next Sufficiency Assessment Report.

### **3. Our plans for childcare**

#### **Recommendation One**

We will continue with implementation of our new system to advertise childcare provider services and to enable us to keep up to date/real time provider information. We hope to launch the system in 2023.

#### **Recommendation Two**

To produce a 'Childcare Sufficiency' Calculator which will help us to determine where there are areas of concern around sufficiency.

#### **Recommendation Three**

We will improve our marketing to make more parents aware of funding streams such as 2- and 3/4-year-old funding, Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Disability Access Fund (DAF) & Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF).

#### **Recommendation Four**

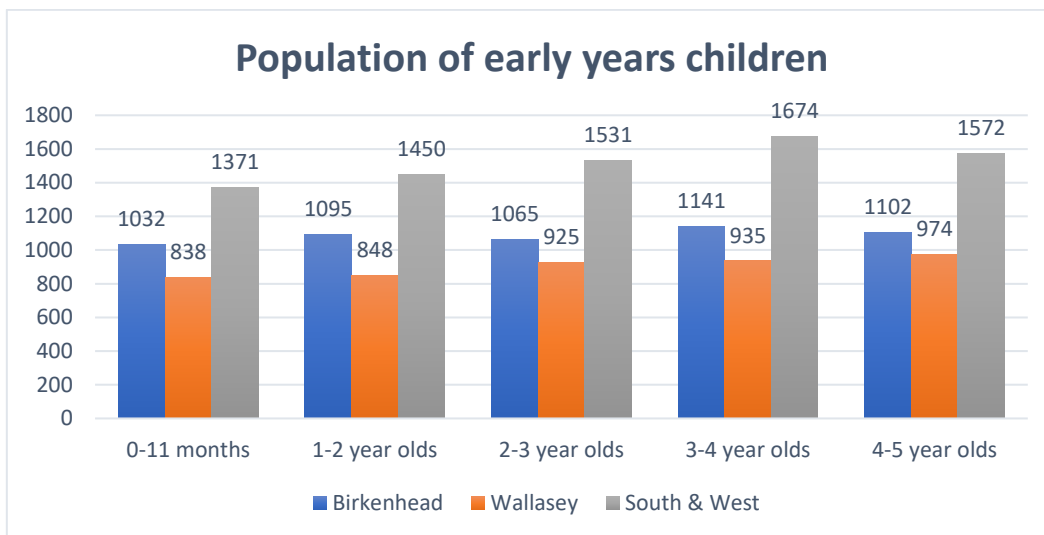
Recruitment & retention is a big concern in the sector currently, and has increasingly becoming an issue for some years, worsened by the coronavirus pandemic. We will conduct research to find out what the issues and barriers are to providers on the Wirral, and work with providers and stakeholders, to put an action plan in place to try and deal with some of the issues found, aiming to bring new people into the sector, giving them clear advice and progression paths to follow to enter into a career in early years, to increase recognition of the important work they do in providing early years education, and getting children ready for school, we will also develop tools for providers, to support them with staff wellbeing, and to enable them to progress and develop, so that more staff remain in the sector.



## 4. Demand for childcare

### Population of early years children

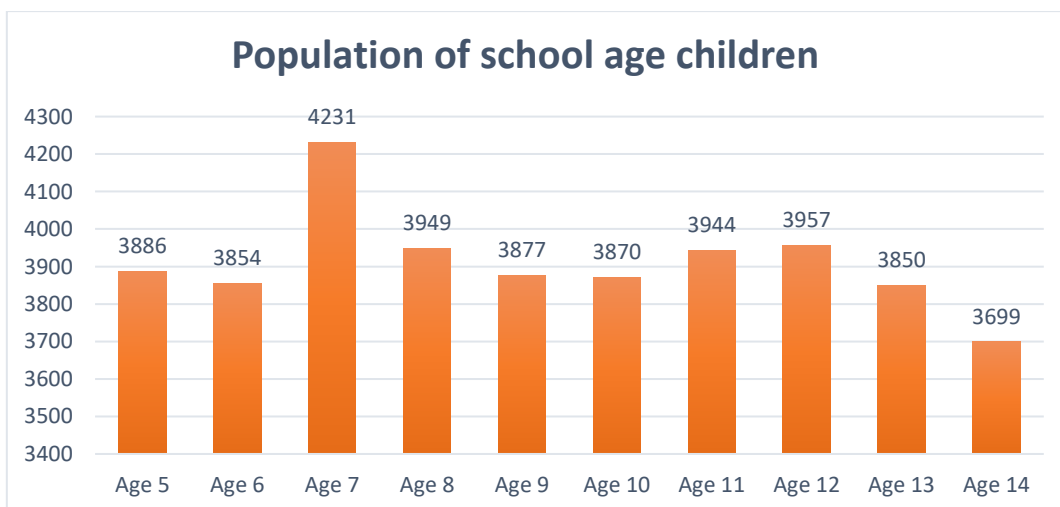
There are 17553 children under 5 in Wirral, a decrease of just under 5% since the last assessment. The population of under 5's has continued to decline, on average by 5% in Birkenhead, and 9% in Wallasey, other than in the 4-5 range where there is no change, in South & West by 6%, other than in the 2-3 and 3-4 age ranges where the population has increased by almost 2%.



Data from Nomis mid-2019 population data

### Population of school age children

The population of school aged children has increased since the last assessment, by 2% to 39117. Increases are seen in ages 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14 year olds. For the other ages numbers have decreased. A proportion of school aged children will require childcare before and after school, and/or during the school holidays. The increase in the number of school aged children in the population means there may be an increased demand for this type of childcare.



Data from Nomis mid-2019 population data

## Number of children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) are entitled to support with childcare up to the age of 18 (age 14 for children who do not have a special need or disability). The number of children up to the age of 18 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in our local authority is: 3023 *January 2021 SEN2 Census*

### Birth to school age

There are 50 children under the age of five with an EHCP in Wirral, attending either a Mainstream establishment or a Special School;

Number attending Mainstream School	19
Number attending Special School	31
Number attending Specialist Provision in Mainstream School	0

*Data is taken from the January 2021 SEN2 Census*

### Age 5 to 18

There are 2973 children between the ages of five and eighteen with an EHCP in Wirral, attending either a Mainstream establishment, Special School or specialist provision;

Number attending Mainstream School	552
Number attending Special School	2206
Number attending Specialist Provision in Mainstream School	118
Number attending Independent Schools, Specialist Independent Schools & Residential Independent Schools	89
Number attending Grammar School	8

*Data is taken from the January 2021 SEN2 Census*

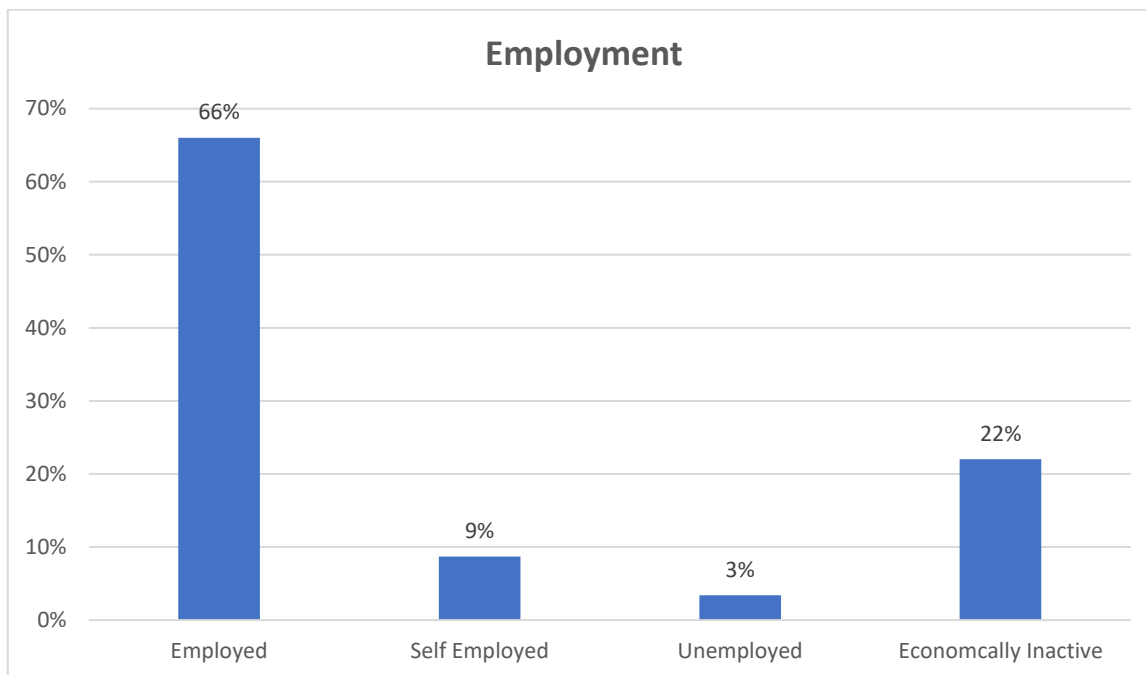
There has been a significant increase in the number of children with an EHCP in Wirral since the last report, this may in part be due to the pandemic as the impacts of lockdowns and social isolation are having a big effect on children and officers are seeing many more SEND referrals coming through since the start of the pandemic. The increase may also be due to children being identified as needing an EHCP much sooner than in the past, it was highlighted in the last report that the figure of 1731 may have been an underestimate of the numbers requiring an EHCP, due to the time it can take from problems being identified to an EHCP being issued.

### Early Years SEND

There has been an increase in the demand for nursery places for children with SEND and more requests for Early Years SEND Officer support. Settings/schools are working through the Graduated Approach and a few children that initially appeared to have SEND - after a structured input from the setting/school have caught up with their peers. There has been a significant increase in the number of requests that are being received for Inclusive Practice Funding (IPF) and the budget is overspent. It is a difficult time in early years as for some children it is hard to distinguish a COVID related delay from a SEND long-term delay. Many of the children have not had the usual early years experiences with family, friends, playgroups etc so they are not used to using communication or social skills.

## Employment

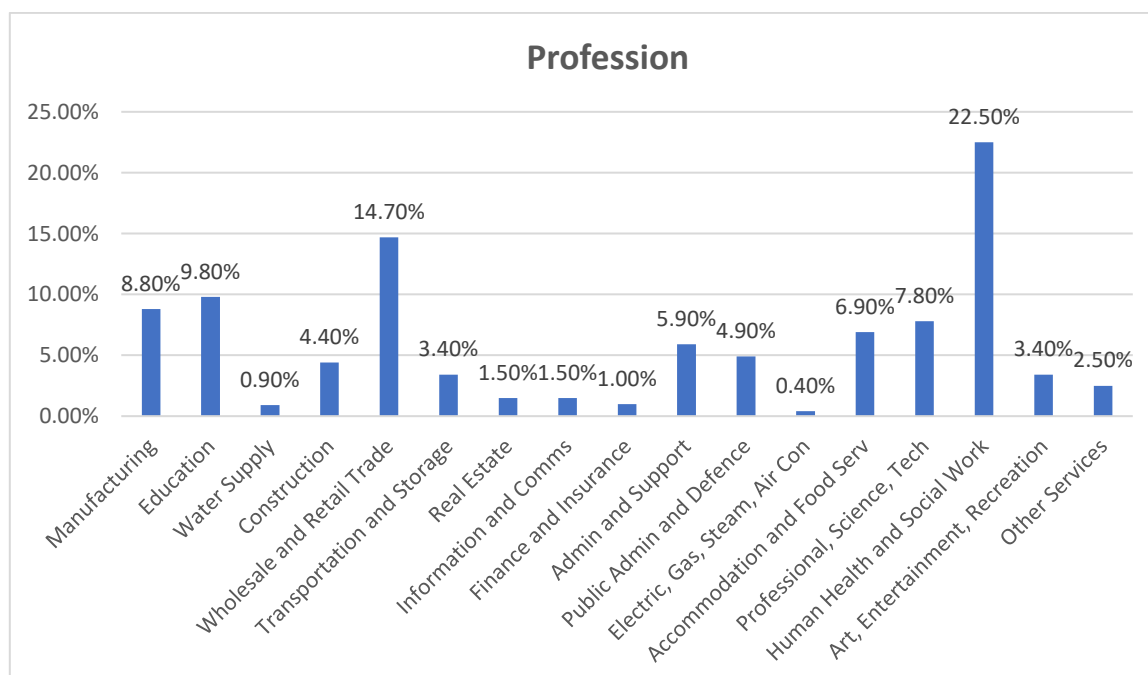
Over 74% of the working age population are in employment or self-employed and may require childcare.



Data taken from Nomis employment and unemployment Jul-19 to Jun-20

## Profession

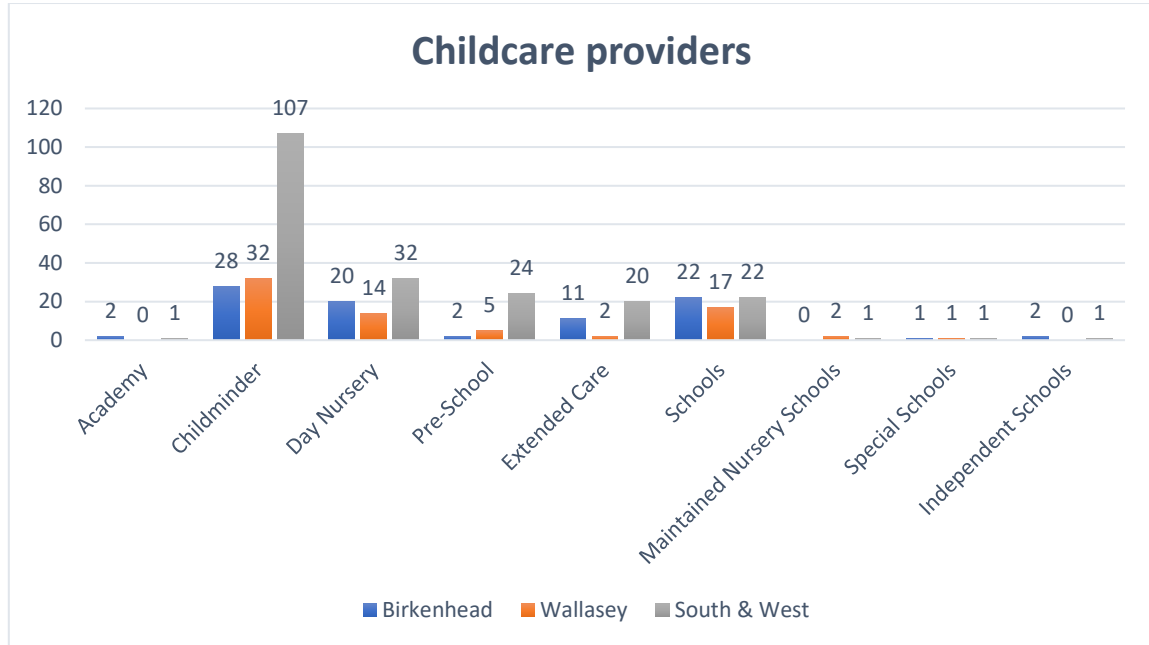
The biggest percentages of the working population still work in the Health & Social Care sector (22.5%), or Wholesale & Retail sector (14.70%), as was the case in the last Sufficiency Report, these families may require childcare outside of typical hours.



Data from nomis employee jobs (2019)

## 5. Supply of childcare

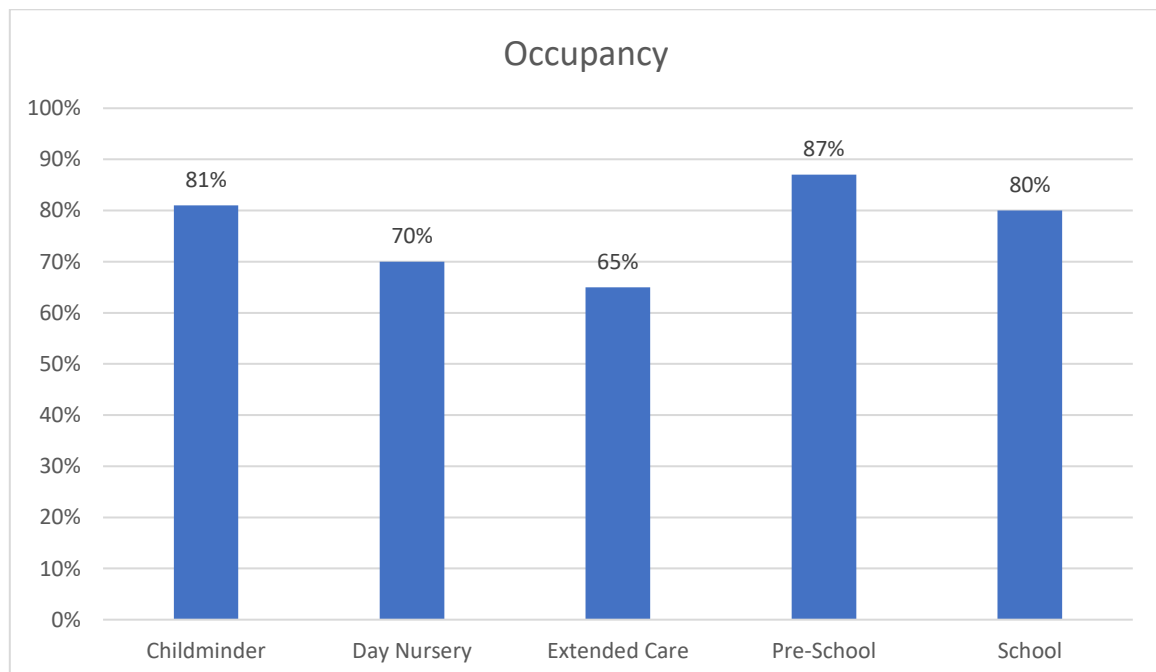
In total there are 370 childcare providers in our local authority. We have seen a decrease in the number of providers since our last assessment of 14 Providers (3.64%). 28 Providers have closed with 14 new providers opening during the period. The biggest fluctuations have been seen in the childminder and extended care sectors.



The number of registered providers was correct at November 2020

### Occupancy

The average occupancy rates for the different types of providers are:



Data taken from sufficiency questionnaire sent to providers in Summer /Autumn 2021

## Vacancies

In some cases, providers may have a vacancy which is only for a specific age group, or for a particular part-time arrangement. (*We ask providers to report vacancies to us but not all choose to do this*). In general, vacancy rates are higher in the autumn when children transition to school.

It has been difficult to capture whether providers have had a particular age group they require vacancies for this year due to coronavirus, in part due to surveying of providers being postponed for a time, and partly due to the volatility of market demand throughout the year due to the various lockdowns, temporary closures etc. From the data gathered through surveying providers there doesn't appear to be any trend in particular age groups, and many providers have stated that it has varied at different times throughout the year.

## Availability of childcare

Average opening hours of the following providers, Monday to Friday

Provider Type	Open	Close	Total hours
Childminder	8am	6pm	10 Hours
Day Nursery	7:45am	6pm	10 Hours & 15 mins
Pre-School	8:45am	3:45pm	7 Hours
Extended Care (Before/After School)	7:30am 3pm	9am 6pm	4 hours & 30 mins
Extended Care (Holiday Club)	7:45am	5:30pm	9 hours & 45 mins
School	8:45am	3:30pm	6 hours & 45 mins

Average opening hours have been calculated using data held locally, this data is collected from several sources, including sufficiency forms, questionnaires, and provider websites.

Providers who are open for 3 hours or more 5 days per week, 5 hours or more 3 sessions per week between 9am and 3pm, or outside of the school day receive a flexibility supplement as part of their funding rate.

## 6. 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<sup>1</sup>
- Children aged 2 whose families receive certain benefits (including low-income families in receipt of in-work benefits), or those who meet additional non-economic criteria, are entitled to 15 hours per week. Nationally it is estimated around 32% of 2 years olds are entitled to this offer, with about 68% taking up the offer, but the proportion varies by area.

<sup>1</sup> Available to families where each parent (or one parent in a single adult household) is earning the equivalent of working sixteen hours per week on the minimum wage.

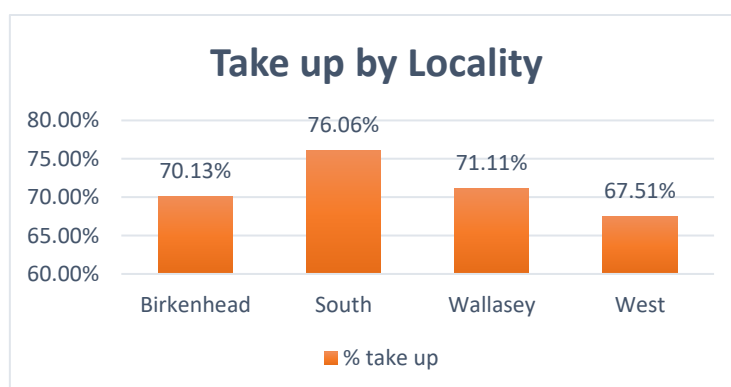
Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement. They may also choose to split them between providers. With the agreement of their provider, parents may also spread them across the year – for example, rather than taking 15 hours for 38 weeks a year they could take just under 12 hours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

### Proportion of 2-year-olds entitled to funded early education

In Wirral, around 37% of 2-year-olds are entitled to funded early education.

### Take up of funded 2-year-old education

The proportion of eligible children taking up their 2-year-old funded place (for at least some of the available hours) in our local authority is: 70.69%<sup>2</sup>



Data from Spring 2021

<sup>2</sup> The 2-year-old funding figure is calculated as a percentage using the following sum: (Number of children Accessing Funding / Eligible Known Population) x100

### Take up funded 3 and 4-year-old education

The proportion of eligible children taking up their universal 3 and 4-year-old funded place (for at least some of the available hours) in Wirral is: 97%<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The percentage of 3- and 4-year old's taking up funded early education is calculated, removing the number of 4 years old in a reception class.

Three Year Olds – Universal Entitlement		
	Population	No of funded children
Wirral	3750	3381
Birkenhead	1141	984
South	729	571
Wallasey	935	846
West	945	849

Data from Spring 2021

Four Year Olds - Universal Entitlement			
	Population	No of funded children	No in a Reception class
Wirral	3648	1127	2771
Birkenhead	1102	359	791
South	671	224	545
Wallasey	974	314	719
West	901	315	690

Data from Spring 2021

### 3 and 4-year-old funded extended 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 early education and childcare.

Three Year Olds - Extended Entitlement		
	Population	No of funded children
Wirral	<i>Data not available</i>	1660
Birkenhead	<i>Data not available</i>	411
South	<i>Data not available</i>	343
Wallasey	<i>Data not available</i>	402
West	<i>Data not available</i>	504

Data from Spring 2021

Four Year Olds – Extended Entitlement		
	Population	No of funded children
Wirral	<i>Data not available</i>	668
Birkenhead	<i>Data not available</i>	149
South	<i>Data not available</i>	140
Wallasey	<i>Data not available</i>	171
West	<i>Data not available</i>	208

Data from Spring 2021

## Providers offering funded early education places

Providers are paid directly by the Local Authority for delivering funded early education places. They are not required to offer them, but parents may choose to use a different provider if they do not. Some providers offer a restricted number of funded places.

## Childcare providers delivering 2-year funded places

There are 231 providers (62%) currently delivering 2-year funded places in Wirral:

	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School	Maintained Nursery School	School
Birkenhead	19	20	1	0	9
Wallasey	15	12	5	2	6
West	49	19	13	1	2
South	33	13	8	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>

*Taken from data held locally at November 2020*

## Childcare providers delivering 3 and 4-year-old funded places

There are 282 providers (76%) in our local authority currently delivering 3 and 4-year-old places:

	Child-minder	Day Nursery	Pre-School	Maintained Nursery School	Independent School	Maintained School		Extended Care	Academy	Special School
Birkenhead	19	20	2	0	2	20		1	2	0
Wallasey	16	13	5	2	0	14		0	0	1
West	49	19	14	0	1	8		2	0	1
South	36	12	10	1	0	11		0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>53</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

*Taken from data held locally at November 2020*



## 7. SEND

### Childcare providers with SEND provision

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2014, introduced under this Act, aim to give children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) greater support, choice and opportunities.

The SEND Code of Practice details the responsibilities that councils, early years settings and schools in England have to support children with SEND. All early years childcare providers, such as nurseries and pre-schools, which offer free places to two, three or four year old's must meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice, and must be inclusive of children with SEND and have provision available to support them.

In order to prepare families and children for their EYFE Wirral offers Portage, this is a home-visiting educational service for early years children and their families. Referrals can be made into the Portage service, by contacting the Early Years SEND team, there is specific eligibility criteria in order to qualify for this service.

As at March 2021, 61 children were receiving Portage.

Wirral Council offers graduated support to early years providers to ensure inclusion for all children. Providers are supported with quality first teaching to ensure inclusive teaching is at the heart of provision. Providers can then request targeted support to ensure they are meeting a particular child's needs. Our Early Years SEND team provide advice and guidance to settings to enable them to support children with additional needs. A request for involvement from the Early Years SEND Team can be made by settings after following the graduated approach, and if the setting SENCO requires further specialist support and advice for a child in their setting.

As at March 20 our SEND team were supporting 129 children with SEND.

### Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Children in receipt of DLA and 3 & 4-year-old funding, are eligible to receive a DAF payment for their setting, to enable the setting to make reasonable adjustments so that a child can access an early year's place. There are currently in Wirral receiving DLA.<sup>4</sup>

*4 Some three-year old's may be in their last term of receiving two-year-old funding, and some four-year old's may have started in a reception class, or specialist provision so they would not qualify for DAF.*

The number of providers awarded DAF for children in our local authority since April 2020 to March 2021 is 62. As children in special schools cannot receive DAF, the LA use excess funding to support children with SEND.

Type of provider	Number of children receiving DAF
Day Nurseries / Pre-Schools	46
Schools	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

## **Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF)**

IPF is available to ensure the inclusion of children with additional needs in early education/childcare. The Inclusive Practice Fund is intended to support providers with additional staff time, so they can provide inclusive early years childcare. To be eligible for IPF a child must be in receipt of 3 or 4-year-old funding, children in receipt of 2-year-old funding attached to DLA are considered. Applications for IPF are assessed at panel meetings scheduled at set times throughout the year.

As at February 2021 the number of children receiving IPF in Wirral was.

<b>Type of provider</b>	<b>Number of children receiving IPF at each type of provider</b>
Day Nurseries	57
Extended Care	0
Pre-School's	6
School's	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>

## 8. Prices

For early years childcare outside the funded entitlements, we report on average prices, reported to us by settings. There may be variations to prices based on the number of hours a family uses, with reductions for longer hours, or discounts for sibling groups. There may be additional payments for additional services, e.g. lunch or activities which are not included in these prices.

### Average childcare fees at a Day Nursery or Preschool

Provision	Per hour	Per session (Half Day)	Per day
Under 2	£7.99	£28.15	£46.65
2 Years	£6.97	£27.23	£45.50
3-4 Years	£6.70	£27.22	£43.78
School Age (Pre and Post School Care)			
		Breakfast Club - £4.80 per session / £24.00 per week After School Club – Data not held	

### Average childcare fees with a Childminder

Provision	Per hour	Per session (Half Day)	Per day
Under 2	£4.78	£21.86	£35.84
2 Years	£4.75	£21.86	£35.72
3-4 Years	£4.78	£19.69	£35.70
5-7 Years	£4.75	£19.50	£35.05
8-12 Years	£4.77	£19.50	£35.05
School Age (Pre and Post School Care)			
		Breakfast Club - £9.50 per session / £45.00 per week After School Club – Data not held	

### Average childcare fees for Extended care

Provision	Breakfast Club	After School Club	Holiday Club	
			Per session (Half Day)	Per day
Under 2	-	-	-	-
2 Years	-	-	£18.50	£28.00
3-4 Years	£4.00	£8.67	£15.64	£29.64
5-7 Years	£4.58	£9.00	£15.64	£29.25
8-12 Years	£4.65	£8.50	£15.00	£29.18

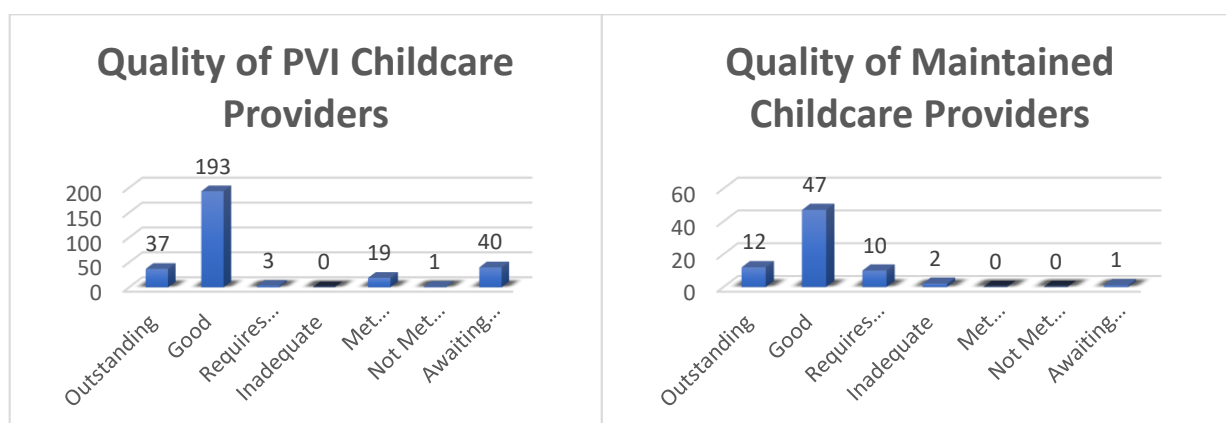
## 9. Quality of childcare in our area

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who give them an overall grade for the quality of their provision. Childminders and private and voluntary providers who care for children under 5 are on the Early Years Register, those caring for children aged 5 to 8 must be on the childcare register, and those caring for children aged 8 and over, or who choose to register voluntarily (such as nanny's), are on the voluntary register. 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 most also have a separate early year's grade. Recently the framework for extended care providers has changed, and they now receive a grading of either met or not met.

98.41% of Wirral's PVI providers are judged to be Outstanding, Good or Met, along 83.10% of Maintained providers. Some providers are awaiting their first inspection<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Providers awaiting their first inspection and those who are maintained have been removed from our calculation

When providers do not have any children on site at the time of their inspection, they are given an Ofsted grade of 'met' or 'not met'. This shows whether they are meeting the requirements for Ofsted registration, and usually happens when new providers are being set up.



Data taken from November 2020 Ofsted ratings

### Qualifications

As per the Department for Education's Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, in group settings, the manager must hold at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold at least a full and relevant level 2 qualification. Childminders must have completed training which helps them to understand and implement the EYFS before they can register with Ofsted or a childminder agency.

Settings with staff with a Level 6 Degree or above receive a quality supplement as part of their funding rate.

## 10. Coronavirus and sector pressures

The Early Years sector has faced many pressures during the last 2 years, from several lockdowns, where settings had to close unless they had key worker or vulnerable children needing care. Reduced occupancy due to the need to place children in bubbles, staff having to shield, new health and safety measures to be followed. Along with additional costs, such as the additional cost of PPE, the need to allow extra time for cleaning during the day, sometimes meaning settings had to reduce their opening hours to build this time in.

As well as the extra pressures faced by all providers, some types of provision have been hit particularly hard, such as before and after school, holiday club and Pre-school settings. Many people have moved to working from home, seeing a reduction in the need for before or after school care, as they are able to work more flexibly around the school day. Parents/carers are not sending their children into holiday club as they are either working flexibly or finding alternative arrangements. Pre-Schools have been affected due to their unique set up of generally offering half day places. Parents were encouraged not to send their children to more than one setting, to reduce the chances of virus transmission. Parents chose settings that could offer their children a full day, meaning Pre-Schools lost out as they couldn't offer what parents needed, and this is still having an impact as parents' requirements are changing.

During the first year of the pandemic, the rate of permanent closures remained much the same to previous years. However, at this time a lot of support was still in place, such as the furlough scheme, various grant schemes and business rate reductions. During the first half of 2021, the number of providers permanently closing has increased, and the impact is now starting to be seen. Some providers are citing coronavirus as a major contributing factor in their decisions to close, for others it has not directly impacted them, but has brought forward their decision to close sooner, for example childminders planning to retire.

It is yet to be seen how much of an impact coronavirus will have on the sufficiency of Wirral. For many years we have had more than enough places to meet demand, however as we are still very much in the midst of the pandemic, the full impact is yet to be seen. Parent's childcare needs may change as employer's see the benefits to working flexibly and continue this. Parents may now prefer to use just one setting to reduce contact with other adults and children to reduce the likelihood of transmission of viruses. This may then affect the demand.

Recruitment and retention are also factors currently affecting our providers, as is the case with many other sectors. There is a real issue with recruitment of good, qualified staff as the number of people choosing early years as a career has reduced, this has been an issue for some time, greatly exacerbated by the pandemic. The quality of staff has also been affected as continued professional development has dipped over the past two years.

Practitioners are feeling undervalued, underpaid, experiencing extreme pressure and more demand in their roles, and many are choosing to leave the sector. Many early years staff have moved into other sectors that offer the same if not better pay, for less pressure, resulting in difficulties in retaining staff as well as recruiting new staff. This is an issue many local authorities are currently experiencing and is certainly not a local issue.

A Workforce Development Group has been set up with attendance from the local authority, and local providers, to try and tackle these issues with recruitment and retention. Work is ongoing to work with schools, colleges, universities and Job Centre Plus to try and encourage new talent into the sector, and to put strategies in place to retain staff.

We continue to monitor the situation with the number of providers permanently closing, currently there are no causes for concern in terms of sufficiency and new providers continue to register with Ofsted keeping sufficiency in the local authority good.

# Parent Views

The **Early Years Team** conducted a survey of parents who use childcare, to identify the types of childcare used, average hours used, awareness of funding entitlements, all of which is information annually obtained for the purposes of reporting childcare sufficiency. The survey this year was extended to ascertain the impact coronavirus has had on parents childcare needs, and to identify how needs may change post pandemic.



## The Facts

<b>70</b> Responses Analysed	<b>13</b> Live in the Birkenhead Locality	<b>29</b> Live in the South & West Locality	<b>28</b> Live in the Wallasey Locality	<b>10</b> Respondents had a child with SEND
<b>44</b> People were un- employed	<b>14</b> People were un- employed	<b>7</b> People were studying or training	<b>4</b> People were on maternity leave	<b>1</b> Person was on furlough

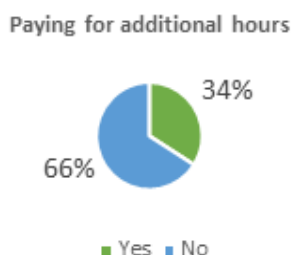
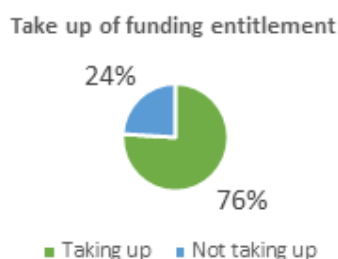
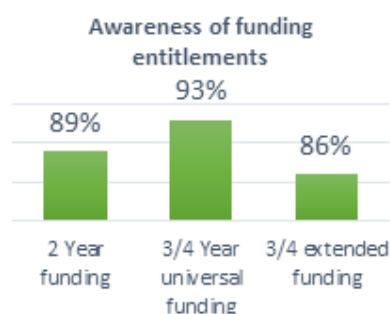
## Type of childcare used

<b>67</b> used a Day Nursery	<b>5</b> used a Child- minder	<b>5</b> used before or after school clubs	<b>2</b> used holiday club	<b>27</b> used some informal childcare
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## Average hours used



## Funding Entitlements



## Reasons for using childcare

Reason for using childcare	No.
So that I can work	46
So that I can look for work	4
So that I can study/train	13
For my child's educational development	47
Because my child enjoys it	42
So that my child can make friends	39
Other ( <i>Disability</i> )	1

## Coronavirus

**56%** of respondents have not experienced any issues accessing childcare during the Coronavirus pandemic. Of those who have had issues **13%** said this was due to their setting being closed during lockdown. **7%** found it difficult being unable to visit their child's setting. **6%** were unable to use family for informal childcare. **4%** struggled with temporary closures/bubble restrictions. **4%** struggled to find before and after school care. **3%** had to use family due to formal childcare being unavailable.

**51%** of respondents childcare needs have not changed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Of those whose needs have changed **6%** now use family instead of formal childcare. **4%** now use more childcare than they did pre-pandemic. **3%** are now unable to use family for informal childcare.

**57%** of respondents will still require formal childcare post-pandemic due to their children being under 5. **49%** say they will still use childcare in the same way they would pre-pandemic. **16%** said their needs would change post-pandemic as they are now able to work flexibly around the school day. **4%** will no longer require before or after school care. **1%** can work of an evening once their children are in bed. **6%** are unable to work from home so will still require childcare in the same way as they did pre-pandemic.

## 12. Methodology

- **Population data:** has been taken from the Nomis website, and is based on the most recent data available at the time of producing this report
- **Children with EHCP's:** based on data held by our local authority
- **Employment/Profession:** data has been taken from the Nomis website, and is based on the most recent data available at the time of producing this report
- **Supply of childcare providers:** based on data held by our local authority and provided to us by Ofsted, who regulate early years provision in schools and childcare provision.
- **Occupancy:** Based on data collected from providers via survey in Summer/Autumn 2021
- **Vacancies:** Data is usually collected from providers via survey, however has not been included in this year's report due to the ever changing situation with coronavirus, and lockdowns/bubbles having an impact throughout the year making it difficult to capture
- **Opening hours:** based on data held by our local authority, which is collected throughout the year from providers
- **Early years funding entitlements:** national data on eligibility and take up is based on data published by DFE at. Local data on eligibility and take up is based on the Early Years and School Censuses at.
- **SEND:** based on data held by our local authority
- **Disability Access Fund:** based on data held by our local authority
- **Inclusive Practice Fund:** based on data held by our local authority
- **Prices of childcare:** based on data held by our local authority, which is collected throughout the year from providers
- **Quality of childcare:** data on childcare quality is provided by Ofsted
- **Qualifications:** based on data held by our local authority
- **Parent views:** based on responses to questionnaires sent to parents to complete, via Survey Monkey and via our Children's Centre's.

## 13. Further Information

### Contact Details

Family Information Service – [FIS@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:FIS@wirral.gov.uk)

0151 666 3980

### Applying for 2-year funding

To apply for 2-year funding please visit:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/free-childcare-two-year-olds>

### Applying for 3 and 4-year-old funding

To apply for 3 and 4-year-old funding please visit:

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

### SEND in Early Years (SEND Support, Portage, DAF, IPF)

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send-early-years>

### Early Years Pupil Premium

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/early-years-pupil-premium>

### References

#### Childcare Act 2006:

[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/pdfs/ukpga\\_20060021\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/pdfs/ukpga_20060021_en.pdf)

#### Nomis

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

#### Children and Families Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

#### SEND Code of Practice 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

#### Ofsted

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>

#### Childcare Support Website

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

#### Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>