

Wirral Borough Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report April 2017 - 2018

Contents Page

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
 - 2.1 Context
 - 2.2 Childcare
 - 2.3 (a) Universal
(b) SEND
 - 2.4 Methodology
3. Findings from 2016 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
4. Demographics
5. Childcare Demand
6. Childcare Supply
7. Conclusions
8. Action Plan
9. Contacts
10. References
11. Appendices

1. Executive Summary

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities in England to report annually a review of childcare to elected members and make the report available to the public. The report reviews the demographics of the area, the demand for childcare and supply of childcare. All this information is analysed to decide if there is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of families now and in the future.

Demographics

The demographics for Wirral show a slight decline in the birth rate particularly for the South and West locality. Most families work in health & social or professional occupations across Wirral which highlights the need for childcare to be fairly flexible to meet parent's needs.

Childcare demand

The take up of Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) has increased particularly for eligible two year olds since 2016. This is set to further increase with the extended EYFE for three and four olds with working parents. The introduction of tax free childcare could also see an increase in demand for childcare.

Childcare supply

There has been a small increase in the number of providers; with quality of providers increasing dramatically since 2016. The cost has not risen in line with cost of living and is affordable to the majority of parents. Information shared by provider's shows there is ample vacancies to meet any increased need this year.

Conclusion

In Wirral there are sufficient childcare places available, and accessible, across the Borough in order to accommodate the needs of children of all ages. Whilst this is relevant currently sufficiency will need to be monitored over the year with the introduction of the extended EYFE offer to working parents.

Recommendations

1. Monitor the take up of the extended Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) offer to working parents and carers.
2. Implement the online tool to monitor childcare sufficiency on a more regular basis than yearly.
3. Continue to work with providers to support them to deliver a flexible offer of the extended EYFE to parents and carers.
4. To consult with parents on their childcare needs to inform the childcare sufficiency assessment for 2019.

2. Introduction

2.1 Context

Wirral Council made a promise to deliver on 20 key service pledges that residents informed were a priority. This report supports a number of pledges within the plan.

- Children are ready for school
 - By ensuring there is sufficient childcare places to meet parental demand
- Reduce child and family poverty
 - By ensuring there is sufficient Early Years Entitlement Funded childcare places
- Greater job opportunities in Wirral
 - Highlight any or potential gaps in the future for childcare places
- Thriving small businesses
 - To ensure all childcare providers are aware of any parental demand, market changes and average costs, opening times etc.

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities in England 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**:

Take into account what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means in their area and:

- the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
- the state of the labour market;
- the quality and capacity of childcare providers and child-minders registered with a child-minder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise;
- encourage schools in their area to offer out-of-hours childcare from 8.00am and 6.00pm;
- encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market.

(DFE, 2014 p18)

2.2 What is childcare?

Childcare in the Childcare Act 2006 section 18 refers to as any form of care for a child including education and any other supervised activity but does not include education provided to a registered pupil during school hours, health or hospital care, foster or residential care or care for a child placed in a custodial institution. Childcare also excludes care provided by a parent, step parent, or relative of the child.

In the Childcare Act 2006, 'early years provision' means childcare for a child aged from birth until the 31st August following the child's 5th Birthday and 'later years provision' means childcare for a child from the 1st September following the child's 5th birthday until the age of 18 years.

2.3 (a) Children with Special Educational Needs and /or Disabilities (SEND)

The Equality Act (2010) defines a disabled person as 'someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

All childcare providers are required to have a SEND policy to show they are inclusive of all children.

The Local offer

Wirral provides information for children and young people (0-25 years) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The local offer provides information on what services children, young people and their families can expect from a range of agencies, including education, health and social care as well as information about other local, support services.

The local offer aims to:

- Give information about education and training, health and care services
- Give information about leisure activities and support groups
- Hold all information in one place
- Is clear, comprehensive and accessible
- Make service provision more responsive to local needs
- Is developed and reviewed with service providers and service users.

For further details please visit <http://localofferwirral.org/>

Wirral SEND IAS – Information Advice Support (Previously Parent Partnership)

The SEND IAS Service is delivered by WIRED, a charitable organisation which is independent of the local authority and which gives neutral independent advice and support to parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The service is flexible and aims to work in a flexible manner, parents can self refer. They may be able to help you if:

- You think your child needs extra help at school.
- Your child is at risk of exclusion due to his/her behaviour
- She/he has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or EHCP
- You would like your child's needs formally assessed
- You are attending a school meeting
- You need help with understanding or completing paperwork

You can get further information from:

Wirral SEND IAS

Phone: 0151 522 7990

Email: contact@wired.me.uk

Website: wired.me.uk

<http://localofferwirral.org/before-school/early-years-to-primary-education/>

Early Years Intervention team

The Early Years SEND team has two sectors to support children with Special Educational Needs; Portage

Portage is available to children not accessing an Early Years Provider. Families receive a 10 week block of support. Parents are shown how to break skills down into small steps, to support their child's development. Referrals can be made by parents, Health professionals and anyone else who has discussed the service with the parent and gained consent to refer.

Settings can request the involvement of the SEND officers with parents signed consent. The SEND officers will make an observation, gather information from staff and parents and then produce a report with suggestions of intervention. They will aim to attend review meetings and they will support the setting with the paperwork that is needed for an EHCP request for assessment.

The sensory support service

Children with a sensory need (hearing and or vision) are supported by the Sensory Service. This is a needs led service and the level of input for the child, family and setting varies according to service criteria. Referrals for this service are usually medical from early screening. Settings can ask for advice on colour contrasts, equipment placement, quiet areas for listening skills to be developed etc. The service supports children in F1 and F2, the staff in the schools and the parents as needed.

All requests for involvement for any of the services can be found on the Wirral Local Offer website.

http://localofferwirral.org/listingcategory/early-years-services/?tevolution_sortby=alphabetical

The Autism and Social Communication Team (ASC team)

The ASC team work with children and young people who typically have differences/difficulties across the following 4 broad areas: Social relationships/interaction, Social communication, Flexibility in thinking, Sensory differences. This means that these children experience their social world differently to their peers. Not all will require specialist support or input.

The team support children from 3 to 19 and possibly younger with social communication needs. Children with marked social communication difficulties who fit within the Team's remit, alongside their families and/or carers.

The team support providers understanding of autism to try and make sense of challenges and difficulties as they happen; supporting settings with observation, consultation, reviewing what is working. Also providing training for settings on a targeted basis.

2.3 (b) What is Early Years Funding Entitlement?

Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) is 15 hours of free childcare for all three and four year olds and some 2 year olds.

Two year funding

Approximately 40% of Wirral's two year olds are eligible to receive 15 hours EYFE. The criteria for the funding are set nationally and are as follows:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit
- tax credits and you have an annual income of under £16,190 before tax
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

A child can also get 2 year EYFE if any of the following apply:

- they're looked after by a local council
- they have a current statement of [special education needs \(SEN\)](#) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan

- they get [Disability Living Allowance](#)
- they've left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

Early Education Funding Entitlement comprises of 570 hours of childcare per year. This is often taken as 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year. Parents can choose to take less than 15 hours per week or stretch the offer over 52 weeks. Sessions cannot be longer than 10 hours or shorter than 2.5hours or be taken before 7a.m. or after 7:30p.m.

To apply for 2 year funding an online application must be submitted via the council website:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/childrens-services/family-information-service/funding-2-year-olds>

Professionals can submit applications with agreement from parents on their behalf.

Three and Four year funding

All three and four year olds are eligible for 15 hours of EYFE.

Some three and four year olds who meet the following criteria will be eligible for an additional 15 hours. Eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Both parents must be in work, as defined below, and for single parent families, the sole parent must be in work
- For the purpose of this scheme, 'in work' is defined as being in employment (including self-employed) and earning more than the equivalent of the minimum wage for working 16hours a week. As an example, the current minimum wage is £7.20 per hour for over 25s, so the minimum weekly income to be eligible would be £7.20 x 16 = £115.20
- Each parent must also earn less than £100,000 per year
- One parent must be 'in work' if the other receives disability benefit or benefits related to caring responsibilities

Universal three and four year Early Education Funding Entitlement comprises of 570 hours of childcare per year. This is often taken as 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year. Parents can choose to take less than 15 hours per week or stretch the offer over 52 weeks. Sessions cannot be longer than 10 hours or shorter than 2.5hours or be taken before 7a.m. or after 7:30p.m. To apply for universal EYFE parents contact a provider of their choice. Details of these providers can be obtained from the family's information service, please contacts for details.

The additional three and four year Early Education Funding Entitlement for eligible families comprises of 15hours per week every 3 months term time whilst eligibility is still confirmed.

If eligible; parents will receive an eligibility code. Parents take this number to their preferred provider, a list of providers can be obtained from the family information service, please see contact list.

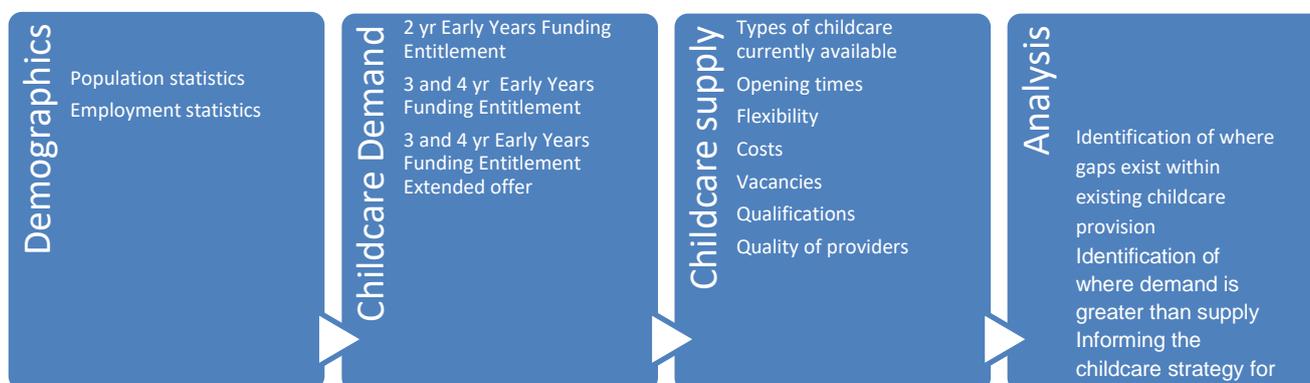
Once the provider has confirmed the code, parents can then start to take up the offer. Parents will need to recheck the code every 3 months to continue to prove eligibility for the funding. If a parent falls out of eligibility there will be a grace period please see below, once the grace period has ended parents would need to pay for the additional hours or ensure their child just attends for the universal EYFE hours.

Date Parent receives ineligible decision on reconfirmation:	LA audit date:	Grace Period End date:
1 st Jan – 10 th Feb	11 th February	31 st March
11 th Feb – 31 st March	1 st April	31 st August
1 st April – 26 th May	27 th May	31 st August
27 th May – 31 st Aug	1 st September	31 st December
1 st Sept – 21 st Oct	22 nd October	31 st December
22 nd Oct – 31 st Dec	1 st January	31 st March

To apply for the additional 15 hours of EYFE parents must log onto the following site:
<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

2.4 Methodology

Data and information was collected using a variety of methods including the use of questionnaires.



Demographics

Office of national Statistics (ONS) population data was used to plot the number of children in each age band, to identify any localities with a higher density of children under 5 and identify if demand could increase for Early Years Entitlement Funding (EYFE) in future years.

Childcare Demand

Headcount data for EYFE determined the amount of need across Wirral. In future it may be beneficial to consult with parents on the amount of hours and days of childcare they need and where it should be located.

Childcare Supply

To determine a greater understanding of childcare supply across the borough, self-completion audits were distributed via a combination of post and email to all registered childcare providers on Wirral; Child-minders, Day Nurseries, Pre-schools, Holiday Clubs and Out of School Clubs.

Analysis

All the data collated was analysed to check there is sufficient childcare provision to meet parents need and assess if there will be any circumstances that may affect Wirral's sufficiency of childcare in future years.

3. Findings from the 2016 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Recommendation 1

Continue to assess and review the sufficiency of childcare provision across the Borough on an annual basis with the primary aim to support families with their childcare requirements.

Response

Sufficiency has been reviewed through February and March with a report to be published in April 2017. The council is also looking to purchase an online tool to support the review of childcare sufficiency on a more regular basis. Sufficiency has also been reviewed when a provider is judged to be Inadequate or requires improvement by OFSTED to ascertain if children receiving a funded place in the setting should be moved.

Recommendation 2

Continue to work in close partnership with childcare providers, alongside local families, to support the continuous improvement of childcare.

Response

The Early Childhood service launched in April 2016; with Quality Improvement Officers supporting settings. The team have developed a framework of targeted support for providers; awaiting their first inspection or received an inspection judgement of anything other than Good, Outstanding or met. The team also support providers through providing training, attending Child minder groups, offering advice and support as and when requested. All providers are also invited to attend briefings on a regular basis.

Recommendation 3

Continue to promote the financial support available to parents, families and carers who choose to use formal childcare.

Response

All financial support offered to support payment of childcare for example Tax free childcare and Early Years Entitlement Funding (EYFE) are promoted through various sources for example the my child can face book page, the Wirral website and through posters displayed throughout each locality.

Recommendation 4

Further promote the requirement to provide inclusive practice, and provision across all childcare providers.

Response

The Early Years SEND team support providers to deliver inclusive practice through tailored support, training and advice and guidance.

Recommendation 5

Further promote the Early Education Offer for 2 year olds, ensuring that eligible families are aware of the offer.

Response

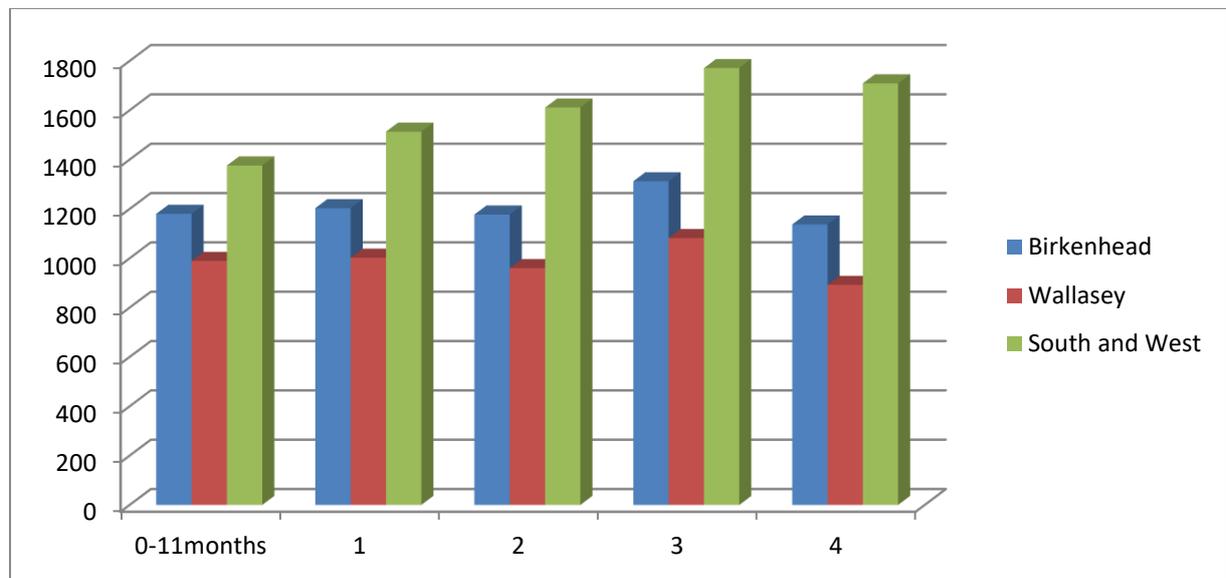
This has been a pledge for the 20:20 vision and a particular focus for the Early Childhood Service. To ensure families are aware of the offer children's centre staff provide assertive outreach to eligible families to support completion of application forms through to identifying appropriate provision.

4. Demographics

This section details essential information about the population of Wirral and the culture of people who live there to support the level of need for childcare across Wirral and in the three localities; Wallasey, Birkenhead and South and West.

Wirral is situated in the North West of England covering a total area of 160Km² (60 square miles).

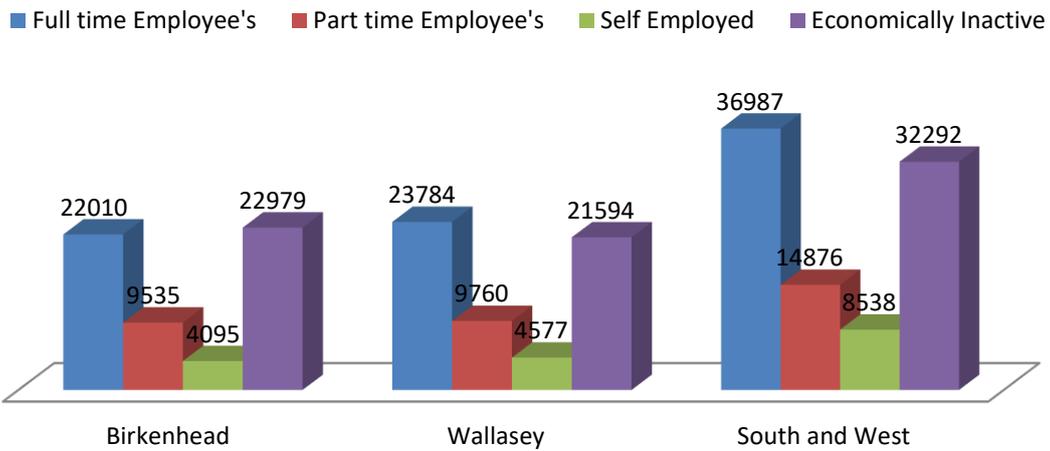
Population profile



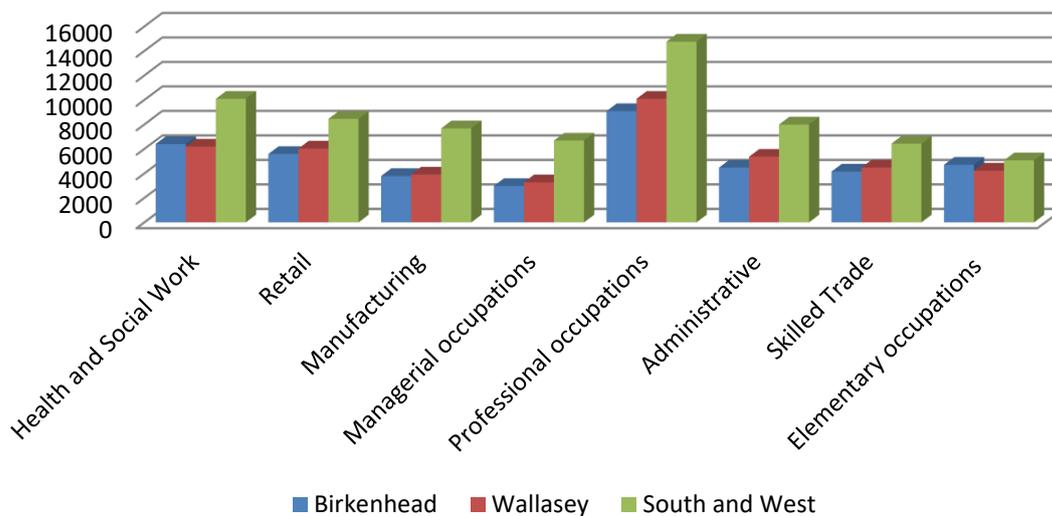
Data from the Office National Statistics mid-2015 population data.

The population data shows that Wirral has quite a static birth rate overall. However South and West has steadily been dropping over the past five years. The employment data overleaf shows that Birkenhead have the most economically inactive (39.20%) with South and West having the least economically inactive (34.83%). So would expect there to be a slightly higher need for childcare in South and West. In terms of type of employment by profession most families work in the Health and Social care sector which indicates that childcare needs to be fairly flexible to meet parental needs.

Employment



Profession



Summary

- The birth rate remains fairly static to support a buoyant market; however the small decline should be monitored.
- There is a slightly higher need for childcare in South and West.
- Childcare across Wirral needs to be fairly flexible in order to meet the needs of parents.

5. Childcare Demand

Two year olds

The national average for number of two year old children eligible for Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) is 40%, Wirral range from between 37% to 43% each term. In February 2018 the Department for Education identified 1223 (32.89% of two year olds) eligible for EYFE. Of the children identified 1223 (91.33%) took up the offer of two year funded place.

Three and Four year olds

According to the Local Authority's funded early education headcount figures from January 2017 to March 2017, Wirral funded 3613 three and four year olds living within the borough, this equates to 97% of the total three and four year old population.

The Department of Education (DfE) have informed us that 2640 three and four year olds will be eligible for the extended offer (30hours EYFE) for working parents. From a recent parental survey the DfE have published that around 80% of parents will take up this offer and on average will use 12 hours of the additional hours. This equates to 2112 children needing an additional 25,344 hours (DFE 2016)

Children with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND)

Wirral's Disability register has now been set up for families to register their child's Special Educational Need or Disability. This will allow the council to commission services and provide increased capacity to existing services to meet the needs of children and their families.

Currently there are 69 children under the age of 5 with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), 5 children attend a Private Voluntary or Independent (PVI) setting; 16 children attend Wirral schools and 48 children attend a Special school.

The ASC team have had 222 new requests for involvement in the last twelve months and of those 89 were children in the under the age of 5.

Current Position of Childcare providers on Wirral

There are 440 on JSNA childcare providers on Wirral. This is an increase of 4 providers since the sufficiency report of 2016.

	Child-minder	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Extended Care	School with F1 provision	School with F1 and 2 year provision
Birkenhead	33	21	4	12	26	8
Wallasey	40	20	7	4	17	8
South and West	123	35	32	25	17	8
Total	196	76	43	41	60	24

There are 175 childcare providers, 3 maintained nursery schools and 19 schools delivering 2 year funded places.

	Child-minder	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Maintained Nursery School	Independent school	School
Birkenhead	16	20	1	0	0	8
Wallasey	11	15	7	1	0	8
South and West	57	29	18	1	1	3
Total	84	64	26	2	1	19

There are 198 childcare providers, 2 maintained nursery schools and 54 schools delivering 3 and 4 year old funded places.

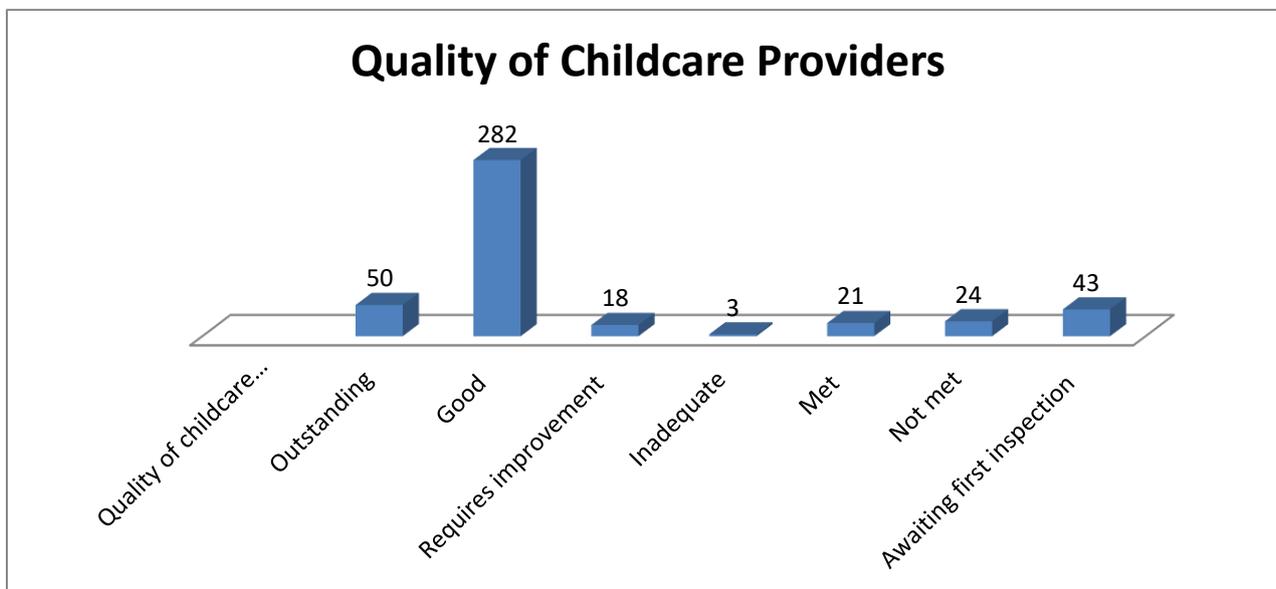
	Child-minder	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Maintained nursery school	Independent school	Maintained school
Birkenhead	17	19	2	0	3	21
Wallasey	10	16	7	1	0	16
South and West	68	30	25	1	1	17
Total	95	65	34	2	4	54

Summary

- There has been a reduction in the number of children eligible for two year funding; this is due to the Department for Education information not including families on Universal credit who would be eligible.
- There will be an increase in demand for 3 and 4 year funded places due to the government's increase in funded hours for working parents.
- The falling birth rate could mean less demand for child care in the future. This would need to be carefully monitored over the coming years.

6. Childcare Supply

A very large majority (**93.57%**) of providers are judged to be Met, Good or Outstanding. This is a huge increase from the 2016 sufficiency report which stated a majority (**66%**) of providers were judged to be good or outstanding.



Of the 433 childcare providers 287 (66.28%) offer 3 & 4 year universal funded places of these 45.64% offer two year funded places and 74.56% offer 3&4 year extended funded places.

Local childcare market

The table below details the types and make up of childcare providers across Wirral that responded to the questionnaires. *Responses received by 28th March 2017.*

Provider Type	Questionnaires sent	Questionnaires returned	Return percentage	2016 response rate
Childminder	211	131	62.08%	52%
Day Nursery	70	70	100%	85%
Pre-school	69	56	81.15%	79%
Extended care	84	21	25%	30.23%
School	52	33	63.46%	N/A
Total	486	311	63.99%	54.27%

Availability of childcare

Opening hours across all types of provision have extended, most settings excluding pre-schools and schools were open between 8am till 6pm Monday to Friday, see table below for more detail. There are 0 providers delivering childcare places on a Saturday or a Sunday. In 2016 there were two providers open on Saturdays.

There are 18 providers (16 child minders, 1 Day Nursery and 1 Pre-school) delivering childcare overnight. This is an increase on 2016 when only 12 child minders offered overnight childcare.

There are 186 (90 child minders, 62, Day Nursery, 18 Pre-schools, 6 extended care and 4 schools) delivering emergency short term care. This is an increase from 2016.

21 Childcare providers deliver a flexible offer between 8:45am and 15:30pm and 174 childcare providers delivering a flexible offer outside of 8:45am and 15:30pm.

Average opening hours of the following providers, Monday to Friday

Provider Type	Open	Close	Total hours
Child minder	7:30am	7:00pm	11.5 hours
Day Nursery	7:30am	6:00pm	10.5 hours
Pre-school	8:45am	3:30pm	6.45 hours
Extended care	7:45am	5:45pm	10 hours
School	8:45am	3:30pm	6:45 hours

Special Education Needs or Disability (SEND)

Of the 311 questionnaires returned 81.35% (253) of providers stated they had experience of working with children with SEND. All childcare providers are required to have a SEND policy show they are inclusive of all children. Wirral's disability register is established and is promoted to families.

Vacancies

There is an increase in vacancies across the sector from 1395 full time equivalent spaces in 2016 to 2434 this year. This could be due to a number of factors:

- Increase in response of questionnaires
- Increase in number of providers
- Misunderstanding of question

There is no anticipated issue for vacancies of the extended offer if all providers with 3 and 4 year spaces are claiming funding.

Wirral	Child-minder	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Extended Care	School	Total
Under 2s Part time	86	371	12	0	3	472
Under 2s Full time	62	363	6	0	6	437
2 years part time	91	494	160	13	72	830

2 years full time	71	393	79	13	14	570
3-4 part time	97	536	321	130	294	1378
3-4 full time	76	491	94	62	67	790
5-7 part time	77	35	1	102	0	215

Wirral	Birkenhead	Wallasey	South west and	Total
Under 2s Part time	128	100	244	472
Under 2s Full time	111	90	236	437
2 years part time	266	188	376	830
2 years full time	171	123	276	570
3-4 part time	501	258	619	1378
3-4 full time	250	165	375	790
5-7 part time	34	39	142	215

Average Childcare Fees

In the majority childcare fees have increased across all types of provision, for the most part fees have increased by less than £2.00. Child minder charges have increased the most overall with their average weekly rate increasing by £10.11.

- ↑ Denotes increase on 2016 sufficiency report
- ↓ Denotes decrease on 2016 sufficiency report
- Denotes no change on 2016 sufficiency report
- ↔ Information not previously sort

Wirral

Provision	Per hour	Per session	Per day	Per week
Breakfast Club	£3.85↔	£3.72↔	£5.25↑	£21.70↔
After school club	£3.73→	£7.91↑	£9.63↔	£36.72↔
Day Nursery / Pre-school	£5.09↓	£20.81↓	£38.06↑	£178.50↑
Child-minder	£9.02↑	£17.65↓	£32.95↑	£151.78↑

Qualifications

Across all sectors most staff have a Level 3 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or equivalent qualification. As expected schools have the most staff with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in relation to other qualified staff. However there are a high number of qualified teachers working across every type of provision.

- 1 - Apprenticeships
- 2 - Level 2 NVQ or equivalent
- 3 - Level 3 NVQ or equivalent

- 4 - Level 4 NVQ or equivalent
- 5 - Level 5 Foundation Degree in Early Years or relevant subject
- 6 - Level 6 Honours Degree in Early Years or relevant subject
- 7 - Level 7 Masters Degree in Early Years or relevant subject
- 8 - Qualified Teach Status
- 9 - Introduction to child-minding
- 10 - Any other relevant qualifications e.g. NNEB

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Child minder	6	16	87	15	13	14	2	11	82	24
Day Nursery	99	152	707	25	35	96	2	50	2	26
Pre-school	3	39	165	11	9	22	0	61	1	19
Extended care	2	30	68	5	3	2	0	29	0	3
School	7	86	107	11	9	26	2	160	0	10
Total	117	323	1134	67	69	160	6	311	85	82

Summary

- The number of providers has increased since 2016
- The overall quality of providers has improved from 63.55% to 93.57% judged to be good / outstanding.
- The flexibility of childcare providers has increased since 2016
- The cost of childcare has not risen dramatically
- There is a good level of qualified staff across every type of childcare provider.
- There has been an increase in schools providing extended care and provision for two year olds.

7. Conclusions

The birth has been steadily falling over the past five years particularly in the South and West Locality. If this continues this could have an impact on the number of eligible children 2, 3 and four year old funding. However with the introduction of the increased Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) for working parents will mean a potential increase in demand for three and four year old places.

Over the past two years there has been a reduction in the number of children eligible for two year funding, In the main this is due to universal credit. The Department for Education informs councils of eligible children, unfortunately those in receipt of universal credit are not on this list. Wirral council are promoting the offer to all families across Wirral to ensure take up. However with the implementation from December 2017 onwards we have seen a slight reduction in take up. Wirral Council are working with partners to resolve this issue.

Wirral has seen a small increase in childcare providers with more schools offering extended provision and two year old provision. The number of providers offering funded places has increased and a large majority of these offer the 30 hour funded places.

The quality across Wirral Early Years providers has increased overall, however the number judged to be good or outstanding has decreased this is because more providers have achieved a Met and the number of providers awaiting their first inspection has doubled.

The flexibility of providers has increased since 2016; offering parents much fairer options in terms of when their child attends a childcare provider. This supports working parents particularly when they work outside of the nine to five working week.

The providers that completed the survey disclosed a number of vacancies within their provision, which, concurs with no feedback from families this year struggling to find provision as Wirral has sufficient childcare to meet current demand.

The conclusions for this report (2017) are in line with the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report 2016.

Recommendations

1. Monitor the take up of the extended Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) offer to working parents and carers.
2. Implement the online tool to monitor childcare sufficiency on a more regular basis than yearly.
3. Continue to work with providers to support them to deliver a flexible offer of the extended EYFE to parents and carers.

4. To consult with parents on their childcare needs to inform the childcare sufficiency assessment for 2018.

Contacts

Family Information Service – FIS@wirral.gov.uk

References

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