

## Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2007/08

If English is not your first language and you would like more information about this document, or if you require information in large print, Braille or on tape please contact the Children's Information Service on 0800 9172121.

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ انگریزی کے علاوہ کسی دوسری زبان میں درکار ہو تو برائے مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 0800 9172121 پر فون کر کے حوالہ نمبر بتائیں۔

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਨੰਬਰ 0800 9172121 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਰੈਫਰੈਂਸ (ਹਵਾਲਾ) ਨੰਬਰ ਦੱਸੋ।

यदि आप यह प्रकाशन अंग्रेज़ी के अलावा अन्य भाषा में चाहते हैं तो कृपया संदर्भ नम्बर (रेफरन्स नम्बर) बताकर निम्नलिखित 0800 9172121 पर संपर्क करें।

如果你需要其它语言的版本，請與以下電話聯係並報出參考號碼： 0800 9172121

যদি আপনার ইংরেজী ছাড়া অন্য কোন ভাষায় এই প্রকাশনাটির দরকার থাকে, তাহলে 0800 9172121 নম্বরে ফোন করুন এবং সূত্র নম্বর উল্লেখ করুন।

إذا رغبتم الحصول على هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى غير اللغة الإنجليزية نرجو الاتصال بنا على رقم الهاتف التالي : 0800 9172121 مع ذكر رقم الإشارة.

Jeśli chciał(a)by Pan(i) otrzymać polską wersję językową tego dokumentu, proszę zadzwonić pod numer 0800 9172121 i podać numer identyfikacyjny dokumentu.

**BRaille**



**LargeType**

**Details on this document will be made available on request in Braille, tape or large print.**



## CONTENTS

Section	Sub-section	Page No.
Foreword		5
Executive Summary for Parents & Children		6-9
Introduction		10
Background - Demographics	What does the Borough of Darlington look like?	11-16
	Cluster A	12
	Cluster B	12-13
	Cluster C	13
	Cluster D	14
	Cluster E	14-15
Section One	What is Childcare?	17
	Assessing Parental Demand - Methodology	17-18
	a) Parental Demand for Different Types of Childcare	19-20
	b) General Parental Satisfaction with Childcare Services	21
	c) Key Groups - Satisfaction with Childcare Services	22-23
	(i) Parents of Children with a Disability	22
	(ii) Teenage Parents	22
	(iii) Children's Views	22-23
(iv) Employers' Views	23	
Section Two	Supply of Childcare Places in Darlington	24-30
	Cluster A	25
	Cluster B	26
	Cluster C	27
	Cluster D	28
	Cluster E	29
	The 3 & 4 Year Old 'Free Entitlement'	30
Section Three	Is there a Childcare Gap in Darlington?	33-40
	a) Specific Types of Childcare	
	(i) Out of School, Breakfast and Holiday Provision	33-36
	(ii) Waiting Lists/Vacancies for Out of School Provision	36-37
	(iii) Developing the Childcare Market to meet Parental Demand	37-38
	(iv) Homework Clubs	38-39
	(v) Daycare Unit attached to a Nursery School	39
	(vi) Cross Border Demand for Childcare	39-40
	b) Location of Childcare	41-42
	c) Age of Children Catered for	43
	d) Timing of Childcare	44-45
e) Affordability of Childcare	46-51	
(i) Tax Credits	47-49	

<b>Section</b>	<b>Sub-section</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
	f) Key Groups - Unmet Childcare Demand	52-58
	(i) Parents of Children with a Disability	52-55
	(ii) Teenage Parents	55
	(iii) Children's Views	55-57
	(iv) Employers' Views	58
	g) Lack of up-to-date Information	59-60
	h) Factors Affecting Future Childcare Demand	61-64
	(i) Demographics and Economic Regeneration	61-62
	(ii) Support for Lone Parents	62-63
	(iii) 'Flexible Free Entitlement'	63-64
<b>Summary</b>		65
<b>Maps</b>	Map 1 - The Tees Valley	11
	Map 2 - Children's Services Localities	16
	Map 3 - Urban Childcare Provision, November 2007	31
	Map 4 - Urban and Rural Childcare Provision, November 2007	32
	Map 5 - Children in Low Income Households	50
	Map 6 - Lone Parent Households	51
<b>Tables</b>	Table 1 - Estimated Usage & Demand for Childcare Services by Children Resident in Darlington	19
	Table 2 - Parental Childcare Satisfaction	21
	Table 3 - Childcare Profile of Cluster A	25
	Table 4 - Childcare Profile of Cluster B	26
	Table 5 - Childcare Profile of Cluster C	27
	Table 6 - Childcare Profile of Cluster D	28
	Table 7 - Childcare Profile of Cluster E	29
	Table 8 - Breakfast and After School Club Profile	33
	Table 9 - Holiday Club Profile	35
	Table 10 - Full Daycare Profile	36
	Table 11 - Out of School Club Vacancies	37
	Table 12 - Current Usage & Demand for Childcare Services (Children with a Disability)	52
<b>Figures</b>	Figure 1 - Childcare Services in a Convenient Location per Cluster	41
	Figure 2 - Childcare Services in a Convenient Location per Age Group	42
	Figure 3 - Fully Satisfied with the Accessibility of Childcare Services per Age Group	43
	Figure 4 - Childcare Services Available on the Days and Times Required per Cluster	44
	Figure 5 - Childcare Services Available on the Days and Times Required per Age Group	45
	Figure 6 - Childcare Services are Affordable per Cluster	46
	Figure 7 - Awareness & Claims of Working Tax Credit by Cluster	48

<b>Section</b>	<b>Sub-section</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
	Figure 8 - Awareness & Claims of Child Tax Credit by Cluster	49
	Figure 9 - Feeling Informed about the Options Available	59
	Figure 10 - Feeling Informed about the Options Available per Age Group	60
	Figure 11 - Interest in the April 2010 Extension of Free Places Entitlement	64
<b>Annexes</b>	Annex 1 - Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan	66
	Annex 2 - Demand Survey Consultation	67
	Annex 3 - Acronyms	68
<b>Footnotes</b>		69

## FOREWORD

Welcome to Darlington's 2007-08 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. This document is based on the guidance produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and is a product of consultation and engagement with local parents (and expectant parents), children and young people (including those with disabilities), childcare providers, schools and local employers.

The data gathered by this audit will enable the Local Authority to fulfil one of its main duties under Section 6 of The 2006 Childcare Act of 'managing' the local childcare market to ensure that there is sufficient provision to enable parents to work and better balance work and family life. However, as well as supporting the Government's full employment agenda this childcare audit supports Darlington's 'Children and Young People's Plan, 2006-09'. Access to good quality, affordable childcare/activities for children aged 0 to 14 years (17 years for those young people with disabilities) will undoubtedly *'improve the outcomes and maximise the life chances of all children and young people in Darlington by delivering effective, high quality, integrated services'*. The development of additional, more inclusive, more flexible out of school and holiday provision for school age children can only assist with the Local Authority's five main objectives for our children and young people of:

- being healthy;
- staying safe;
- enjoying and achieving;
- making a positive contribution; and
- achieving economic well-being.

If you have any comments or queries about this document please contact Nicola Davies, Early Years Projects Officer on (01325) 388803 ([nicola.davies@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.davies@darlington.gov.uk)) or Lynne Henderson, Acting Early Years Service Manager on (01325) 488176 ([lynne.henderson@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.henderson@darlington.gov.uk)).

I hope you enjoy reading the findings of the 2007-08 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and our plans to 'shape' the childcare market in Darlington.



**Murray Rose**  
**Director of Children's Services**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The 2006 Childcare Act has given every Local Authority in England the duty of ensuring that there is sufficient childcare within its area to enable parents to go to work and balance work and family life. As a first step to doing this, the government (Department for Children, Schools & Families) asked every Local Authority to carry out a 'Childcare Sufficiency Assessment' (CCSA) or a childcare audit and this had to be completed by March 2008.

The remit for this childcare audit was fairly wide, as well as including registered nurseries, playgroups, childminders and out of school provision the Local Authority also had to try and include any activities for children and young people up to the age of 14 years (17 years for those young people with a disability) which is supervised by an adult and occurs on a reliable basis, this could include homework clubs, swimming clubs, football sessions, etc.

Local Authorities were also told that they had to talk to parents, children and local employers to find out not only what they thought of existing childcare but also what childcare/activities they want to attend. So, in March 2007 Darlington Borough Council carried out a large telephone survey: 573 parents (and expectant parents) were questioned and this gave us information about the childcare needs of 878 local children. Parents were asked how they currently use childcare, what their ideal care arrangements would be, their preferred location of care, their preferred timings for care and the level of service flexibility they would like, what they felt the barriers were to accessing childcare and whether they felt care was expensive.

In addition, we ran two focus groups during May and June, one with parents of children and young people with a disability and one with teenage parents to gather information about their particular childcare requirements. A range of classroom activities took place during June with children aged 5 to 14 years (including children with disabilities) in four of our schools to find out what they do when they are not in school and more importantly, what they would like to do when they are not in school! Also, during the Summer interviews were carried out with 17 local employers of differing sizes, from different sectors (including some which operate shift patterns) to find out whether they currently operate family friendly practices and whether they have had difficulties filling vacancies or retaining staff due to childcare related issues.

All of this information was gathered together in a report which gave the Local Authority an idea of where the childcare gaps are in the Borough. If you want to look at the report in full please go to <http://intranet/Generic/LifeStyles/childcareaudit.htm>. If you do not have access to

the internet a paper copy is available by ringing Darlington's Children's Information Service (CIS) on 0800 9172121.

The second part of this audit was to collect information about local childcare providers, including where they are, the number of places they offer generally, the number of places they offer for children with disabilities, the times they operate, the cost of their sessions, etc. This was carried out during the Summer and early Autumn 2007.

The next part of the childcare audit involved comparing the gaps we were told about by parents, children and employers with the information we had gathered from our childcare providers, to see if a gap really does exist or whether the childcare places are actually there, they just need to be better advertised. The results were very interesting...

The childcare audit has told us that across the Borough there is a lack of out of school provision ie breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs. Indeed, data shows that for every 100 children aged 5-14 years (17 years for those young people with disabilities) in the Borough there is only an average of 5 breakfast club places, 8 after school places and 5 holiday places. Feedback suggests that there is unmet demand for out of school places for 5 to 10 year olds and that this gap between demand and supply is particularly noticeable in the 11 to 14 year old (17 for those young people with disabilities) age range.

Other issues which appear to be creating a barrier to accessing childcare are lack of service flexibility ie the ability of parents to change the way they use childcare at short notice to fit their work requirements. The survey has told us that 50%, 41%, 37% and 32% of parents would like to access holiday play schemes, breakfast clubs, after school provision and supervised activities flexibly. Again, access to flexible provision seems to be more of an issue for parents the older the child becomes. Feedback from the consultation suggests that the need to access childcare outside of the standard working day ie 8:00am until 6:00pm is minimal, perhaps with parents relying on more informal types of childcare during these hours such as relatives and friends.

The cost of childcare is also a barrier to access for parents as it seems to either prevent or limit use of childcare services. Indeed, the type of care where price seems to affect parental use the most is holiday play schemes with price limiting use for 50% of parents. Finally, lack of access to up-to-date information about childcare is proving to be a barrier for some parents. When asked to comment generally about childcare in the Borough 30% of parents identified the lack of up-to-date information as a barrier to access. Again, it would appear that the older

the child becomes the less informed the parent feels about the options available to them.

In the case of parents of children with a disability when the different aspects of childcare were evaluated, these parents consistently reported lower satisfaction levels than other parents and feedback suggests that many more of these parents want to use childcare than currently access it. For this group of parents access to childcare during school holiday periods is particularly problematic with twice as many (58%) parents of children with a disability having problems accessing holiday care than other parents (26%). Access to after school provision has also been highlighted as a problem: when the local school does not offer after school clubs/activities using provision at another school can be problematic ie there may be transport problems and also, settling in to an unfamiliar environment with different children may be problematic for the child. It is also worth noting that for a lot of our existing clubs/activities a generally accepted age limit seems to be around 14 years, this does not fit with the Local Authority's requirement to provide care/activities for children with a disability up to the age of 17 years.

Interestingly, 47% of parents of children with a disability disagreed that childcare services fully meet their child's individual needs compared to only 13% of parents generally. Also, 50% of these parents felt ill-informed about the childcare services available to them, not knowing where to go to obtain information compared with 24% of parents generally.

The feedback from the children themselves shows that any type of sports activities are popular, including basketball, horse riding, tennis, swimming, dancing, football (for boys and girls), cricket, gymnastics and skating. Art and craft clubs are also popular with the younger children and the older children/young people expressed an interest in computing, animal and science clubs. Generally, the reasons provided by children for not currently undertaking out of school activities was lack of awareness of these activities being provided locally. It was apparent that the older the child is the less likely they are to use formal childcare. It was also worth noting that although they may want to, the children with special needs/disabilities were far less likely to participate in these out of school activities.

There was significant diversity of opinion amongst employers on what being a 'family friendly employer' really means, ranging from a general willingness to be flexible with working hours to more extensive support including workplace nurseries and posts dedicated to assisting staff in addressing childcare needs and achieving an appropriate work life balance. It was noted that smaller businesses in particular find it difficult to meet the flexibility required of family friendly working



practices. The majority of employers said they had not encountered any problems in recruiting or losing staff due to childcare problems. However, it is worth noting that employers awareness of these problems may be limited, potential candidates may rule themselves out of applying for a post due to an awareness of childcare problems and reasons for leaving may not be followed up or recorded in all cases. The main areas where local employers felt the Local Authority could provide support were the provision of information on available childcare to employees, extending provision for shift-workers, reducing the cost of care and increasing the amount of after school provision available.

This childcare audit has provided a picture showing where the childcare gaps are in Darlington and what the current barriers are for parents wanting to access local provision. Another of the Local Authority's duties from the 2006 Childcare Act is to 'manage' or 'shape' the local childcare market. These findings will be used to inform discussions about future service development with various interested stakeholders, including existing and prospective childcare providers (please see Annex 1, page 66 - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Action Plan).

## INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of the 2006 Childcare Act is to ensure that through the provision of childcare, parents are able to work and are better able to balance work and family life. Section 6 of the Act places a statutory duty on Local Authorities *from April 2008 to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to enable parents to:*

- ❑ *take up, or remain in, work, or*
- ❑ *undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.*

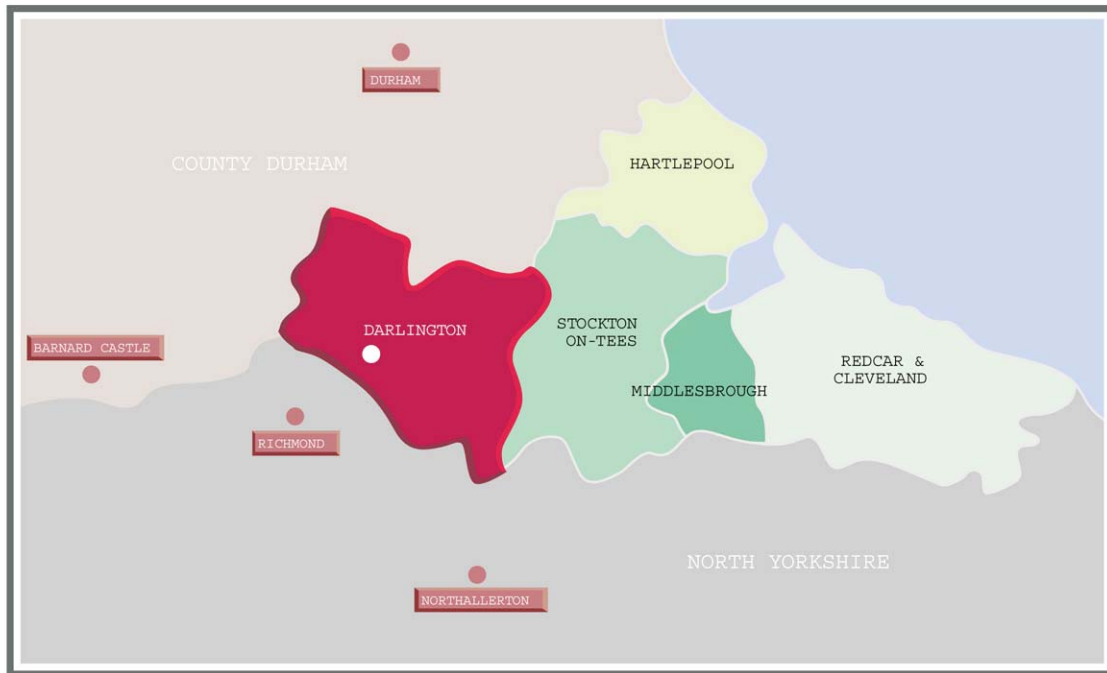
*Whilst determining whether the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the above requirements, Local Authorities must have regard to the needs of the parents in their area for:*

- ❑ *the provision of childcare in respect of which the childcare element of working tax credit is payable, and*
- ❑ *the provision of childcare which is suitable for children with a disability.*

The Childcare Act 2006, Section 11 requires Local Authorities to assess the sufficiency of childcare provision in their area in order to carry out the duty to secure sufficient childcare under Section 6. This duty to assess sufficiency came in to effect in April 2007 and Local Authorities are required to complete their assessment by April 2008. The childcare assessment must cover children and young people up to the age of 14 and children and young people with a disability up to the age of 17. This document is Darlington Borough Council's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

## BACKGROUND - DEMOGRAPHICS

### Map 1 - The Tees Valley



The Borough of Darlington covers an area of almost 200km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 99,344 (Darlington has the third lowest population out of all 46 English Unitary Authorities) which includes 18,061 children under the age of 14 years and an ethnic minority population of 2.1 per cent (1).

Within Darlington there are significant pockets of deprivation. From the last published Indices of Deprivation in 2004 7 out of the 24 Borough wards were within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the country. The Indices also revealed that 45 per cent of the population in Darlington lived in 10 wards that were within the 25 per cent most deprived wards in the country. Overall, Darlington is ranked as the 90th most deprived local authority area in England (out of 354). In January 2007 Darlington had an unemployment rate of 3.2 per cent, above the national rate of 2.5 per cent. In June 2007 twelve wards in Darlington had over 20 per cent of their households classed as 'low-income households with children' (2).

## **What does the Borough of Darlington look like?**

The 2006 Childcare Act encourages Local Authorities to conduct its assessment within smaller geographic areas or 'sub-local authority' areas. It was decided by the Local Authority that the most useful way to assess childcare sufficiency would be to look at school cluster areas. There are five such cluster areas in Darlington as shown on the map on page 16.

### **Cluster A**

(includes wards of Faverdale, Cockerton West, Cockerton East & Pierremont)

This cluster contains the Branksome estate in the ward of Cockerton West to the north west of the town and the relatively new housing estates of High Grange and West Park situated in the ward of Faverdale which contain a relatively high proportion of family housing. Cockerton West ward is ranked in the most disadvantaged 5% of wards nationally (on the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation): its unemployment rate is higher than the Darlington average (4%) at 4.3%; it is the ward with the second highest rate of worklessness in the Borough at 37.1%; and it has the highest rate of people claiming benefits in the Borough. Indeed, 32.6% of children resident in this ward live in low income households, compared with the Borough average of 23%.

In contrast, Faverdale has a low unemployment rate of 1.4% and the lowest rate of worklessness in Darlington. It also has the lowest rate of children living in low income households at 9.4%. There is also the ward of Cockerton East which has a poor record of dental health for children under 5 years. Finally, included is the ward of Pierremont which has an ethnic minority population of 1.8% (Borough average is 2.1%) and where 21.1% of children live in low income households. This ward has the lowest rate of open space in the Borough.

### **Cluster B**

(includes wards of Northgate, Central (mid-section), North Road, Harrowgate Hill)

Within this cluster Northgate ward contains an element of the town's central retail area and is ranked in the most disadvantaged 9% of wards nationally. Compared with the Darlington average of 2.1% it has a high ethnic minority population of 9.5%. This ward has a high unemployment rate of 6.6% and the second highest level of children living in low income households, it also has the second highest level of working age families receiving key benefits. In total, 41.7% of households in this ward do not own a car compared with the national average of 26.8%. This ward is

the area with the second least amount of open urban space in the Borough. This cluster also contains the mid-section of Central ward where the vast majority of Darlington's retail activity is situated. This ward is ranked in the most disadvantaged 3% of wards nationally. It is the ward with the highest rate of unemployment in the Borough at 7.1% and has the highest rate in the Borough of working age population classed as being in receipt of key benefits at 35.1%. Its ethnic minority population is 3.8%. The rate of children classed as living in low income households in this ward is high at 59.4%.

Another of the wards included in this cluster is North Road which is ranked in the top 12% most disadvantaged wards nationally. This ward has a long term unemployment problem with 18.5% (second highest rate in the Borough) of its unemployed residents being unemployed for more than 12 months. It also has 30.2% of its children living in low income households and 43.7% of its households do not own a car. The ward of Harrowgate Hill is also part of this cluster with an ethnic minority population of 2% and a comparatively low unemployment rate of 2.2%.

### **Cluster C**

(includes wards of Haughton West, Central (upper-section), Haughton North & Haughton East)

This cluster contains the ward of Haughton West which has a relatively low rate of unemployment and where there are low levels of households where no one is working (20.1%) compared with the Borough rate of 25.5%. The upper-section of Central ward with its small industrial sites is also included within this cluster, as is Haughton North, located to the north east outskirts of the town's major housing estates. This ward has a comparatively low unemployment rate of 2% but has a high level of long term unemployment at 18.2% (Borough average is 12.6%). The ward has below average number of children in low income households (22.6%). There is also limited open space within the ward.

The ward of Haughton East is also part of this cluster and included within this is Red Hall estate. The ward is ranked in the most disadvantaged 12% of wards nationally. Although its unemployment rate is in line with the Borough average, it has the 5th highest proportion of single parent households in the Borough, 39.8% of households do not own a car and it has the second highest rate in Darlington of houses rented from social landlords (40.5%).

### **Cluster D**

(includes wards of Lingfield, Banktop, Lascelles, Eastbourne, Middleton-St-George, Sadberge & Whessoe & Hurworth)

This cluster is probably the most socially diverse of the clusters and contains some of the most disadvantaged wards in the Borough. The ward of Lingfield is spread across a significant industrial area which includes some housing and it is within the 19% most disadvantaged wards nationally. It has the highest level of youth unemployment in the Borough, an ethnic minority population of 2.2% and 35.7% of its households do not own a car. The ward of Banktop covers the area behind the town's main railway station and it is within the 8% most disadvantaged wards nationally. It has an unemployment rate of 3.9%, 32.2% of its children live in low income households and 44.3% of its households do not own a car.

Lascelles is within the 9% most disadvantaged wards nationally, it has an unemployment rate of 4.6%, 30.4% of its children live in low income households (this is the third highest rate in the Borough) and 44.9% of its households do not own car.

The south easterly ward of Eastbourne is also included within this cluster and the majority of this ward is comprised of Firthmoor estate. The ward has an unemployment rate of 5.2%, 28.5% of its children live in low income households, it has the second highest percentage of single parent households at 5.1%, the highest rate of pregnancies under 18, 42% of its households do not own a car, 33.2% of its houses are rented from social landlords and the ethnic minority population is 2.2%.

This cluster also contains a number of rural wards including Middleton-St-George and although this ward has a low unemployment rate of 1.6%, its youth unemployment and long term unemployment rates are ranked within the highest in the Borough. Another of these wards is Sadberge & Whessoe which is a large rural area with scattered housing. The ward has a low unemployment level at 1.2% but it has the highest long term unemployment rate in the Borough at 21.4% compared with the Darlington rate of 12.6%. Finally, there is Hurworth which again has a low unemployment rate at 1.2% but has a long term unemployment rate of 13% (which is slightly higher than the average Borough rate of 12.6%).

### **Cluster E**

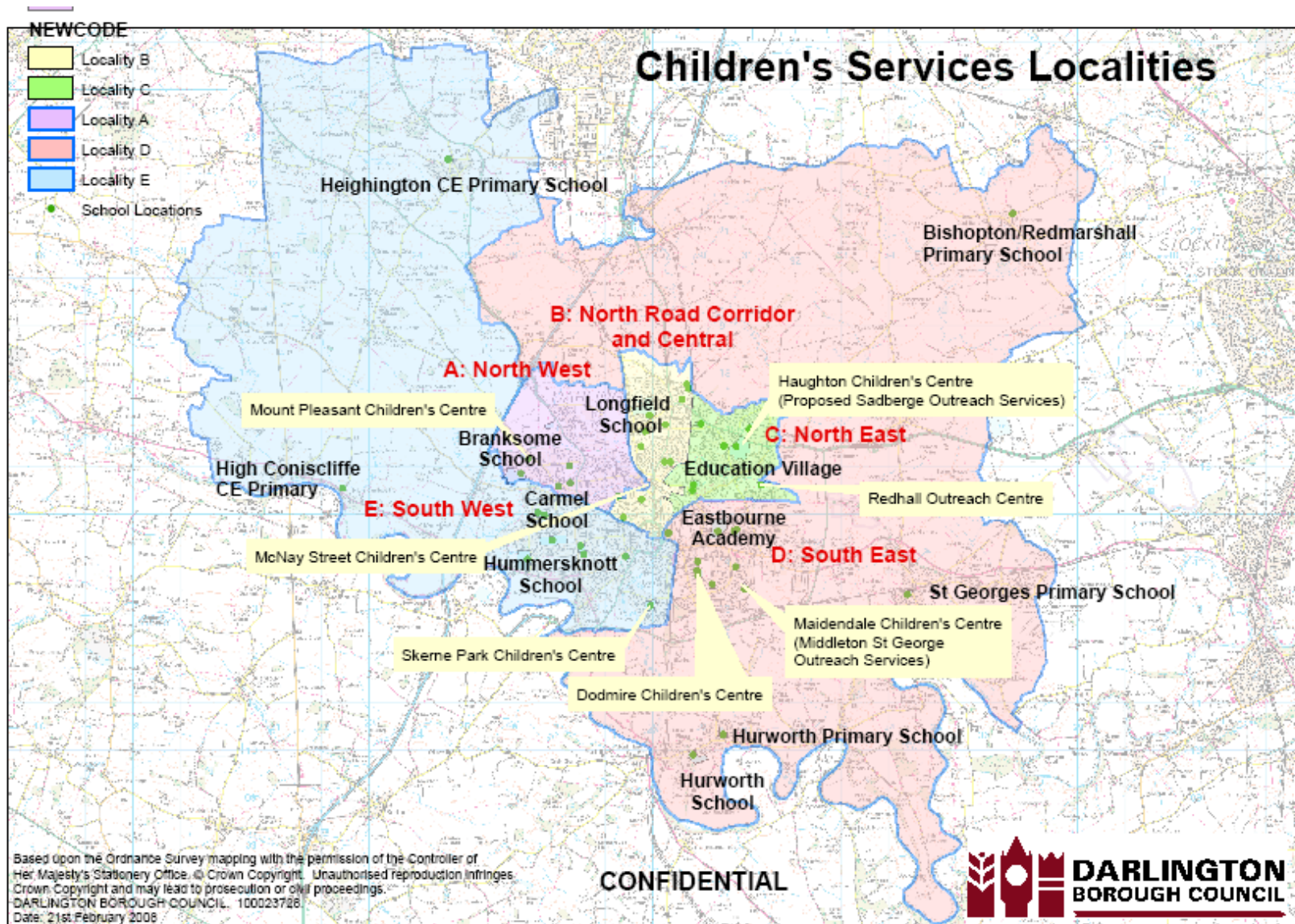
(includes wards of Mowden, Hummersknott, Central (lower-section), College, Park East, Park West, Heighington & Coniscliffe)

This cluster area contains some of the least disadvantaged wards in the Borough. It includes the wards of Hummersknott which has the lowest unemployment rate in

the Borough, College which has a low unemployment rate of 1.2%, Park West which although it has an overall low unemployment rate does have a high youth unemployment rate of 38.2% (compared with the Darlington average of 31.2%) and Mowden which again has a low unemployment rate but has a higher youth unemployment rate of 33.3% (compared with an average Borough rate of 31.2%). Hummersknott also has the lowest percentage of its working age population receiving key benefits at 6.8% (compared with the Darlington average of 15.9%). College is the ward with the lowest percentage of single parent households in the Borough. All of these wards have a relatively high population over retirement age and a relatively low ethnic minority population. Also included is the predominantly rural ward of Heighington & Coniscliffe to the far west of the cluster, this ward has the second lowest unemployment rate in the Borough of 0.9%.

Other wards included in this cluster are the lower section of Central which is a retail area with a proportion of terraced and social housing. Park East is also included which contains the large South Park area and Skerne Park estate. This ward is within the 9% most disadvantaged wards nationally: it has an unemployment rate of 5.2%; the fourth highest rate of working age population receiving key benefits; the highest rate of single parent households in the Borough (5.3%); the second highest rate of pregnancies under 18 in the Borough; 42.1% of its households do not own a car; and an ethnic minority population of 3.4%.

(Data Source: Darlington Social Issues Map, June 2007)





## **SECTION ONE - WHAT IS 'CHILDCARE'?**

According to The Childcare Act 2006 'childcare' means any form of care for a child which includes education and any other supervised activity for a child. 'Childcare' does not include education (or any other supervised activity) provided by a school during the standard school day for a registered pupil who is not a young child or any form of health care for a child ie a stay in hospital. 'Childcare' does also not include parental and residential care or custody.

As well as including the more formal, Ofsted registered childcare settings such as private day nurseries, playgroups, breakfast, after school and holiday clubs, childminders and crèches, this much wider definition of childcare also includes many of the 'varied menu of activities' currently offered by primary and secondary schools. As long as the activity offered by a school such as a homework club or a football session, is supervised by an adult and is run on a 'reliable' basis which enables parents to work or access training (with a view to gaining employment), under the 2006 Childcare Act this activity can now be classed as childcare.

## **ASSESSING PARENTAL DEMAND - METHODOLOGY**

In order to assess the sufficiency of existing childcare provision and to plan future service development in March 2007 DBC commissioned a large-scale telephone survey of parental demand for childcare. A total of 573 parents resident in the Borough were surveyed, providing information about the childcare needs of 878 children.

The research investigated a range of issues including:

- current usage of childcare provision;
- ideal care arrangements;
- preferred location of care;
- preferred timing and levels of flexibility required;
- barriers to accessing care; and
- price sensitivity.

During May to June 2007 additional activities were also undertaken to assess the needs of particular groups including:

- a focus group with parents of children and young people with disabilities (via Darlington Association on Disability);

- in depth interviews with teenage parents at the 'Bump & Baby' group based at Mount Pleasant Children's Centre;
- craft activities and video interviews with children and young people aged 5 to 14 years, including children and young people with a disability (via Skerne Park Primary, Alderman Leach Primary, Longfield Comprehensive and the Education Village); and
- in depth interviews with 17 businesses in the Borough to explore what their views are around family friendly policies, to find out what family friendly practices are operating and whether employers have had problems filling vacancies or retaining staff due to childcare related issues. The companies questioned included those employing shift workers (5) and from sectors employing significant proportions of the workforce in the Borough: Public Sector (3); Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (3); Finance and ICT (3); and Manufacturing (3).

It was agreed that the best time to consult formally with local childcare providers was in the Spring (via an information event) when the parental demand report would be completed, although the main audit findings were communicated to providers in the Autumn. This event would enable the LA to gather feedback from providers regarding the findings and would also form the basis of discussions with existing providers as to how identified childcare 'gaps' could be bridged.

## A) PARENTAL DEMAND FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILDCARE

The telephone survey showed that with the exception of parent and toddler and au-pair provision, predicted demand was higher than current usage in all different types of childcare services. The most significant gaps identified were for school-aged children. Demand for homework clubs was more than 2.5 times current use, and roughly double the current use for after school clubs and breakfast clubs. Other services that had significant gaps between current usage and demand were day care attached to a nursery school and holiday play schemes where demand was roughly double current use.

Overall in Darlington, in March 2007 there were five childcare services where significant gaps were predicted between current use and future demand based on parents ideal childcare arrangements. As shown in the table below, these were **day care attached to a nursery school, after school clubs, breakfast clubs, holiday play schemes and homework clubs**. It is however important to note that the survey measures parents ideal care arrangements and there are a number of key barriers which may prevent parents from turning a desire to use care into actual service take up.

**Table 1 - Estimated Usage & Demand for Childcare Services by Children Resident in Darlington**

Service	Children currently accessing care	Children wishing to access care in next 12 months	Gap
Private day nursery	1,210	1,380	+170
Parent and toddler group	150	110	-40
Play group / pre-school	500	670	+170
<b>Crèche</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>+130</b>
Nursery school within the public sector	1,180	1,230	+50
<b>Day care unit attached to a nursery school</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>+160</b>
Workplace nursery	0	30	+30
<b>After school clubs</b>	<b>2,020</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>+2,080</b>
<b>Homework clubs</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>+430</b>
Registered childminder	1,400	1,490	+90
Nanny	140	180	+40
Au-pair	10	0	-10
<b>Holiday play scheme</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>+830</b>
Supervised activities	3,950	4,390	+440
<b>Breakfast clubs</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>1,550</b>	<b>+760</b>

At cluster area level, the largest gaps between current use of childcare services and ideal care arrangements were:

- Cluster A**
  - *homework clubs (unregistered)*
  - *breakfast clubs*
  - *after school clubs*
  - *play group / pre-school services*
  - *holiday play schemes*
  - *day care unit attached to a nursery school*
  - *crèche services*
  
- Cluster B**
  - *day care unit attached to a nursery school*
  - *holiday play scheme*
  - *after school clubs*
  - *homework clubs (unregistered)*
  
- Cluster C**
  - *after school clubs*
  - *homework clubs (unregistered)*
  - *crèche services*
  - *breakfast clubs*
  
- Cluster D**
  - *day care in a private nursery*
  - *after school clubs*
  - *holiday play schemes*
  - *breakfast clubs*
  - *homework clubs (unregistered)*
  
- Cluster E**
  - *homework clubs (unregistered)*
  - *after school clubs*
  - *holiday play schemes*
  - *parent and toddler groups*
  - *crèche services*

With the exception of day care attached to a nursery school, this would suggest that the main focus for the future expansion of provision should be on services for school aged children.

## B) GENERAL PARENTAL SATISFACTION WITH CHILDCARE SERVICES

As part of the parental childcare audit, parents using or wishing to use formal services were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements relating to childcare provision. More than one quarter of parents disagreed that care is affordable (28%) and that they feel fully informed of what is available (26%). However, ratings were most positive regarding the convenience of service location (64% agree) and the quality of care available (63% agree quality is high), as table 2 shows.

**Table 2 - Parental Childcare Satisfaction**

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
	%	%	%	%
Feel fully informed of options	50	21	26	3
Care available on days and times required	57	13	19	11
Care is available in convenient location	64	10	17	10
Care is affordable	40	15	28	16
Care can fully meet needs of my child	58	15	15	14
I can access all care required	56	15	19	10
Available care is of a high standard	63	13	5	19

Also, when parents were asked whether care is available on the days and times required ratings were positive with 57% of parents agreeing. In general, parents are more satisfied with available care for pre-school rather than school-aged children as agreement ratings are consistently lower for parents of older children.

## **C) KEY GROUPS - SATISFACTION WITH CHILDCARE SERVICES**

### **(i) Parents of Children with a Disability**

Feedback from the parental childcare audit was that very few parents of children with a disability/special need use childcare services with more than two thirds of children (72%) being looked after by their parent/guardian, family or friends. More parents would like to access childcare services than currently do so: only 48% indicated that they do not want to use formal childcare provision in the future.

Demand amongst this group of parents was highest for after school clubs (26%), supervised activities (25%) and holiday play schemes (17%). **Parents of children with a disability/special need (58%) have more problems accessing childcare in school holiday periods than other parents (26%).** The lack of services for their children, timing and cost of services were the main inhibiting factors. Indeed, when the different aspects of childcare services were evaluated, parents of children with a disability/special need consistently reported lower satisfaction levels than other parents.

### **(ii) Teenage Parents**

Unfortunately, the research with this group was relatively limited. It has become clear that as part of the childcare audit review in 2008-09, the LA will need to re-think how this group is involved on an on going basis with the process of sufficiency assessment. However, key points from this discussion group included the fact that these parents have a preference for informal care, choosing to defer employment until their children are of school age. The suggestions put forward by these parents for increasing take up of services included reducing cost, extending care outside normal working patterns, increasing the availability of childcare within walking distance and increasing the frequency of activities for babies and toddlers.

### **(iii) Children's Views**

The children interviewed identified a range of activities that they would like to access/use more in the future with sporting activities predominating. Many children aged 5-7 years wanted an art club, other popular suggestions for this age group related mostly to sporting activities. Children aged 8-10 years were also interested in sports and arts/crafts although their support for an art club was less pronounced. Again, sports clubs were popular with 11-12 year olds, with a variety of different sports being mentioned. Children aged 13-14 years were mainly interested in sports clubs with other suggestions including computing, animal, and science clubs.

The feedback from children suggests that the older the child is the less likely they are to use formal childcare, the location of services became more inconvenient, less is known about the childcare options available and it becomes more difficult to access childcare at the appropriate days and times. There is actual demand for services amongst older children but it appears there may be a lack of 'childcare' options.

#### **(iv) Employers' Views**

The majority of employers (12 out of 17) said they had not encountered any problems in recruiting or losing staff due to childcare problems. As two respondents noted however, employers awareness of these problems may be limited, potential candidates may rule themselves out of applying for a post due to an awareness of childcare problems and reasons for leaving may not be followed up or recorded in all cases. One employer identified the cost of care as a barrier, having experienced workers reducing their hours because the cost of care wiped out the benefit of working.

The main role identified for the LA was the provision of information on available childcare to employers (8), other employers identified a role in extending provision for shift-workers (2) and reducing the cost of care (2). Increased after-school provision was also suggested (1) and direct input in the form of supplying emergency childcare provision was put forward as a suggestion (1). A few companies (4) expressed interest in developing a partnership with a local provider.

## **2) SUPPLY OF CHILDCARE PLACES IN DARLINGTON**

In November 2007 the number of Ofsted registered childcare providers in the Borough were as follows: 160 childminders (however, only 130 are 'active' ie currently want to care for children), 22 private day nurseries, 15 playgroups, 21 after school clubs, 11 breakfast clubs, 13 holiday clubs and 21 maintained nurseries and maintained nursery units.

In total there are 233 Ofsted registered settings providing 5,292 full-time equivalent, 'active' places.

Split down to school cluster level the breakdown looks like this:



**Table 3 – Childcare Profile of Cluster A**

Type of childcare provider	No. of Ofsted registered settings	No. of 'active' places	%age of places	Age ranges covered	Average price*	No. of SEN places**
Day Nursery	5	299	32%	0 - 12 years	£136 per week	0
Playgroup	3	78	8%	2 - 5 years	£3 per session	1
Maintained Nursery	2	60 fte	6%	3 - 5 years	N/A	2
Childminder	25	141	16%	0 - 14 years	£3 per hour	2
Holiday Club	2	102	11%	3 - 14 years	£20 per day	0
After School Club	4	154	16%	3 - 14 years	£21 per session	Data not available
Breakfast Club	2	102	11%	3 - 14 years	£6 per session	Data not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>100%</b>			

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

The earliest childcare is available in this cluster is at 7:00am (childminder) and the latest is at 6:30pm (childminders & after school provision). Care is not currently available on a weekend.

\* prices have been rounded up or down to the nearest £.

\*\* this shows the number of childcare places currently occupied by a child with disability/special need

**No. of childcare places available in cluster A per 100 population of children aged 0-14 years (17 years with a disability) is 27.**

(N.B. - population data was provided by TVJSU, mid 2006 estimates which are based on GP registrations. JSU were unable to provide population estimates for the no. of 15-17 year olds with disabilities in the Borough. Recognised national average for this figure is 10% of the age cohort rising to up to 17% to include children with special needs. A figure of 10% of the population for each age cohort 15-17 was used in this instance).

**Table 4 - Childcare Profile of Cluster B**

Type of childcare provider	No. of Ofsted registered settings	No. of 'active' places	%age of places	Age ranges covered	Average price*	No. of SEN places**
Day Nursery	3	213	25%	0 - 8 years	£156 per week	0
Playgroup	3	110	14%	0 - 5 years	£6 per session	6
Maintained Nursery	4	180 fte	21%	3 - 5 years	N/A	10
Childminder	14	69	8%	0 - 16 years	£3 per hour	1
Holiday Club	2	68	8%	3 - 14 years	£19 per day	Data not available
After School Club	2	104	12%	3 - 14 years	£10 per session	3
Breakfast Club	2	104	12%	3 - 14 years	£6 per session	Data not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>100%</b>			

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

The earliest childcare is available in this cluster is at 6:30am (childminder) and the latest is at 6:30pm (childminder). Care is not currently available on a weekend.

\* prices have been rounded up or down to the nearest £.

\*\* this shows the number of childcare places currently occupied by a child with disability/special need

**No. of childcare places available in cluster B per 100 population of children aged 0-14 years (17 years with a disability) is 24.**

**Table 5 - Childcare Profile of Cluster C**

Type of childcare provider	No. of Ofsted registered settings	No. of 'active' places	%age of places	Age ranges covered	Average price*	No. of SEN places**
Day Nursery	3	166	23%	0 - 5 years	Info. not available	Data not available
Playgroup	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	Data not available
Maintained Nursery	4	158 fte	22%	3 - 5 years	N/A	Data not available
Childminder	23	128	17%	0 - 16 years	£3 per hour	0
Holiday Club	1	84	12%	0 - 8 years	Info. not available	Data not available
After School Club	1	90	13%	0 - 8 years	Info. not available	Data not available
Breakfast Club	1	90	13%	0 - 8 years	Info. not available	Data not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>100%</b>			

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

The earliest childcare is available in this cluster is at 6:00am (childminder) and the latest is at 10:00pm (childminder). Care is currently available on a weekend (childminder).

\* prices have been rounded up or down to the nearest £.

\*\* this shows the number of childcare places currently occupied by a child with disability/special need

**No. of childcare places available in cluster C per 100 population of children aged 0-14 years (17 years with a disability) is 27.**

**Table 6 - Childcare Profile of Cluster D**

Type of childcare provider	No. of Ofsted registered settings	No. of 'active' places	%age of places	Age ranges covered	Average price*	No. of SEN places**
Day Nursery	6	254	22%	0 - 14 years	£27 per day	3
Playgroup	4	107	9%	2 - 5 years	£7 per session	Data not available
Maintained Nursery	8	249 fte	21%	2 - 5 years	N/A	10
Childminder	36	136	12%	0 - 16 years	£3 per hour	1
Holiday Club	3	106	9%	3 - 12 years	£17 per day	Data not available
After School Club	5	235	20%	3 - 14 years	£16 per session	Data not available
Breakfast Club	2	86	7%	3 - 5 years	£3 per session	Data not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1,173</b>	<b>100%</b>			

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

The earliest childcare is available in this cluster is at 6:00am (childminder) and the latest is at 10:00pm (childminder). Care is currently available on a weekend (childminder).

\* prices have been rounded up or down to the nearest £.

\*\* this shows the number of childcare places currently occupied by a child with disability/special need

**No. of childcare places available in cluster D per 100 population of children aged 0-14 years (17 years with a disability) is 22.**

**Table 7 - Childcare Profile of Cluster E**

Type of childcare provider	No. of Ofsted registered settings	No. of 'active' places	%age of places	Age ranges covered	Average price*	No. of SEN places**
Day Nursery	5	336	21%	0 - 12 years	£31 per day	1
Playgroup	5	157	10%	2 - 5 years	£5 per session	Data not available
Maintained Nursery	3	90 fte	6%	3 - 5 years	N/A	2
Childminder	32	143	9%	0 - 16 years	£3 per session	1
Holiday Club	5	286	18%	3 - 14 years	£18 per day	Data not available
After School Club	9	394	23%	3 - 14 years	£5 per session	2
Breakfast Club	4	213	13%	3 - 11 years	£4 per session	Data not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>100%</b>			

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

The earliest childcare is available in this cluster is at 7:00am (childminder) and the latest is at 8:30pm (childminder). Care is currently not available on a weekend.

\* prices have been rounded up or down to the nearest £.

\*\* this shows the number of childcare places currently occupied by a child with disability/special need

No. of childcare places available in cluster E per 100 population of children aged 0-14 years (17 years with a disability) is **34**.

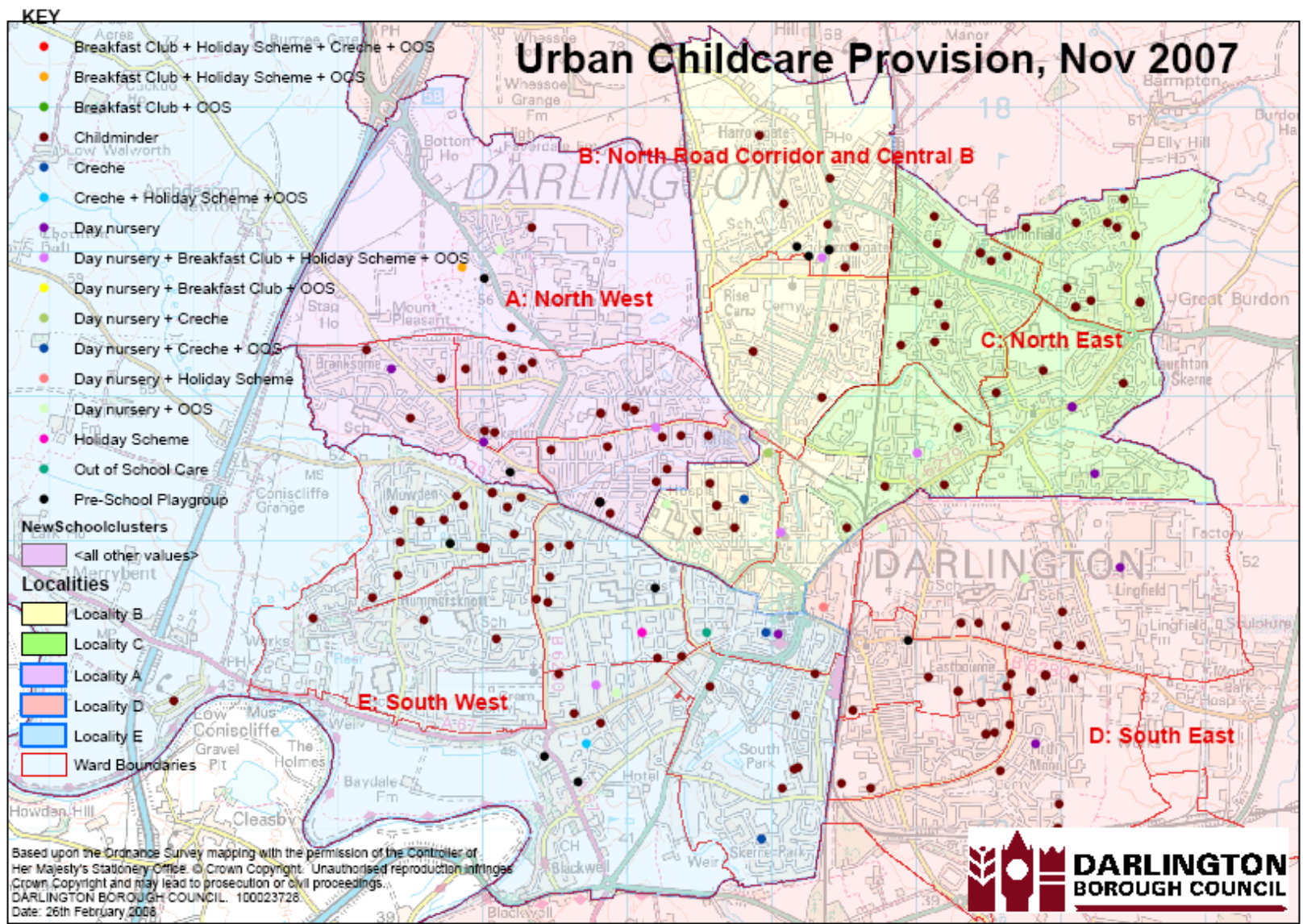
### The 3 and 4 Year Old 'Free Entitlement'

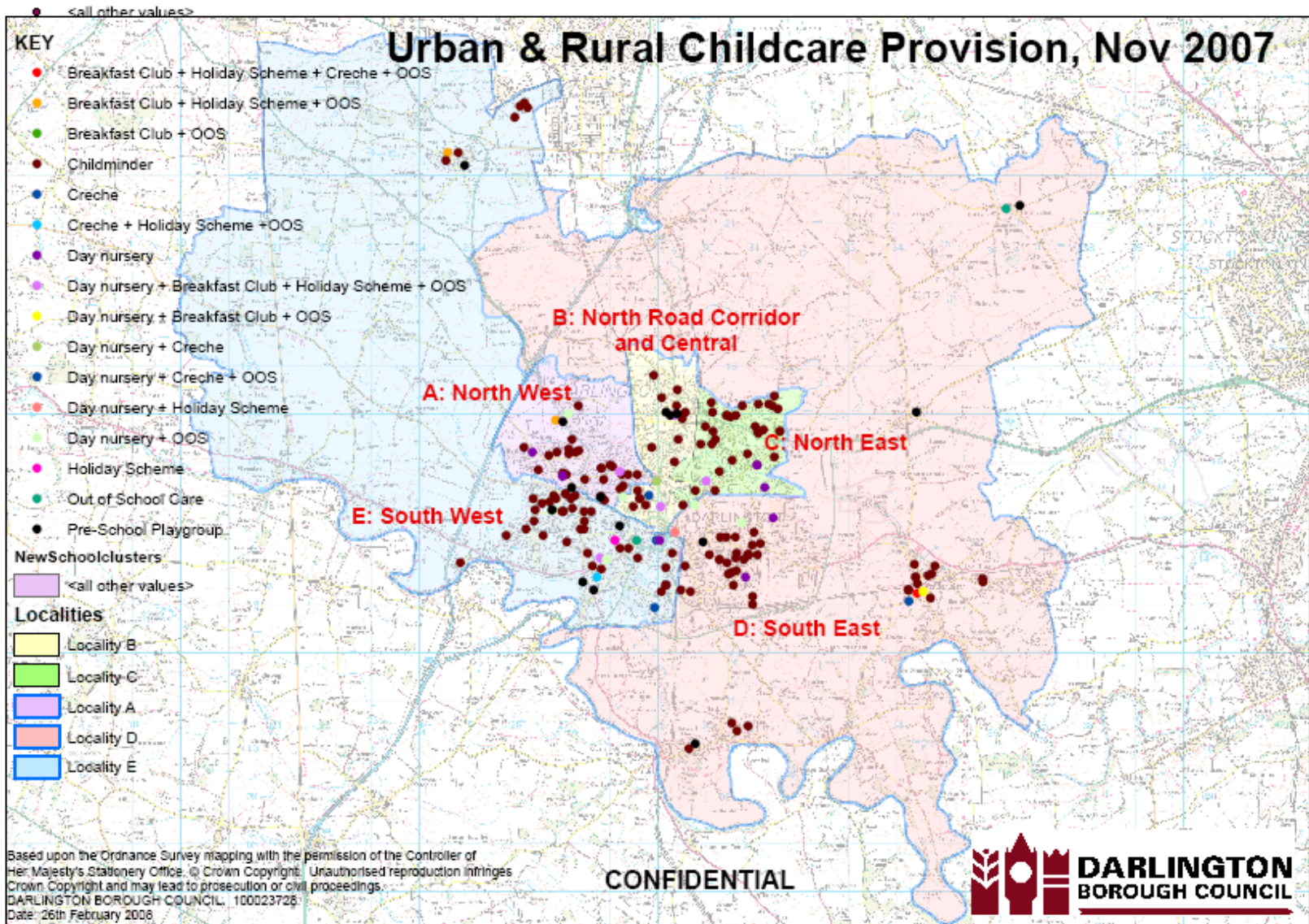
At present in the Borough there are 3 and 4 year old 'free entitlement' (or early years education) places in LA maintained nursery schools, nursery units and reception classes, also 16 of the Borough's 22 private daycare providers offer early years education, as do 11 of our 15 playgroups.

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

During the Summer 2007, Autumn 2007 and Spring 2008 terms an average of 2,219 pte 'free entitlement' places were filled in the Borough (13). Population projections indicate that in 2008-09 there will be around 2,320 3 and 4 year olds resident in the Borough and this will fall by 2010-11 to around 2,280 3 and 4 year olds (6). Although this predicts a slight shortfall of 3 and 4 year old places (61) by 2011, the private and voluntary sectors do have the capability to be more flexible and take additional 3 and 4 year olds, meeting demand when required.

It is clear that an overall lack of 3 and 4 year old 'free entitlement' places has not been highlighted by the parental audit. However, the demographic make-up of the Borough appears to be constantly changing as new houses are built and the population of some of our existing housing estates becomes older. As a result, it may be that there are sufficient 3 and 4 year old places but that these existing places are now in the wrong location, this will require further investigation.







### 3) IS THERE A CHILDCARE GAP IN DARLINGTON?

#### A) SPECIFIC TYPES OF CHILDCARE

##### (i) Out of School, Breakfast and Holiday Provision

The parental demand survey suggests there is insufficient out of school childcare provision ie places in breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs for children aged 5 to 14 years (17 years for those young people with disabilities). Is this the case or is this simply parental perception, are there actually sufficient out of school places in the Borough and is it, for example, that better marketing of these places is required?

In the case of breakfast and after school provision, it is more likely that a place will be required near to the child's school rather than the child's home. In order to assess whether there is a childcare gap we have looked at the number of children aged 5 to 14 years (17 years for those young people with disabilities) attending primary and secondary schools in each cluster area and compared this with the actual number of places available in registered out of school provision within that cluster area.

**Table 8 - Breakfast and After School Club Profile**

Cluster	No. of children aged 5-14 years (including young people aged 15-17 with disabilities *) attending schools in this cluster**	No. of registered breakfast club places***	No. of registered breakfast club places per 100 population of children aged 5-14 years (17 years with a disability) ****	No. of registered after school places***	No. of registered after school places per 100 population of children aged 5-14 years (17 years with a disability) ****
A	1,730	102	6	154	9
B	1,700	104	6	104	6
C	2,106	90	4	90	4
D	3,079	86	3	235	8
E	3,632	213	6	394	11

\* measured by including the no. of young people with statements at each school. (Data source: Children's Services Performance Management Team).

\*\* within all LA maintained primary and secondary schools, all independent schools and the Eastbourne Academy. (Data source: Children's Services Performance Management Team).

\*\*\* this includes all 'active' places registered with Ofsted. (Data source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

\*\*\*\*the figure has been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number

Given that the average number of registered, 'active' breakfast club places across the five cluster areas is only 5 places per 100 children aged 5-14 years (including young people aged 15-17 with disabilities) and that in cluster D the figure is as low as 3 places, this would suggest that there is a considerable shortage of supply for this type of childcare. Again, in the case of after school places, the average number of registered, 'active' after school places across the five cluster areas is low at 8 places per 100 children aged 5-14 years (including young people aged 15-17 with disabilities) also suggesting a considerable shortage of supply for this type of childcare.

It is however, worth noting that in the case of assessing provision for young people aged 15-17 with disabilities, it would appear that breakfast and after school clubs across the Borough only tend to take children up to the age of 14 years.

In the case of holiday provision, it is more likely that a place will be required near to the child's home rather than the child's school. In order to assess whether there is a childcare gap we have looked at the number of children aged 5 to 14 years (17 years for those young people with disabilities) resident in each cluster area and compared this with the actual number of places available in registered holiday clubs in this cluster area.

**Table 9 - Holiday Club Profile**

Cluster	No. of children aged 5-14 years (including young people aged 15-17 with disabilities *) resident in this cluster	No. of registered holiday club places**	No. of registered holiday club places per 100 population of children aged 5-14 years (17 years with a disability) ***
A	2,325	102	4
B	2,216	104	5
C	1,762	90	5
D	3,405	86	3
E	3,229	213	7

\* Recognised national average for this figure is 10% of the age cohort rising to up to 17% to include children with special needs. A figure of 10% of the population for each age cohort 15-17 was used in this instance. (Data source: Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit.)

\*\* this includes all 'active' places registered with Ofsted. (Data source: Darlington Children's Information Service).

\*\*\*the figure has been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number

Given that the average number of registered, 'active' holiday places across the five cluster areas is only 5 places per 100 children aged 5-14 years (including young people aged 15-17 with disabilities) and that in cluster D the figure is as low as 3 places, this would suggest that again there is a considerable shortage of supply for this type of childcare.

Again it would appear that when assessing provision for young people aged 15-17 with disabilities, holiday clubs across the Borough only tend to take children up to the age of 14 years.

To put these figures in to comparison we have looked at just one type of childcare provider which provides care for pre-school children ie full daycare providers.

**Table 10 – Full Daycare Profile**

Cluster	No. of children aged 0-4 years resident in this cluster*	No. of registered full daycare places**	No. of registered full daycare places per 100 population of children aged 0-4 years ***
A	1,205	299	<b>25</b>
B	1,410	213	<b>15</b>
C	1,015	166	<b>16</b>
D	1,825	254	<b>14</b>
E	1,645	336	<b>20</b>

\* Data source: Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (March 2007 Extract of PCT GP Registrations)

\*\*this includes all 'active' places registered with Ofsted, there may be some double counting of childcare places as some full daycare providers also offer breakfast, after school and holiday places.

\*\*\* the figure has been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number

When looking at the number of registered full daycare places per 100 children the figures are appreciably higher than those for breakfast, after school and holiday places. The average number of registered, full daycare places across the five cluster areas is 18 per 100 children aged 0 to 4 years and in cluster A the figure is as high as 25. This gap is further compounded by the fact that data regarding anticipated service usage suggests that one childcare place in a breakfast, after school or holiday club is more likely to be fully occupied by one child, whereas one full daycare place is more likely to be occupied by more than one child, indeed, the telephone survey showed that only 7% of parents require a full daycare place for 41 hours or more per week.

**(ii) Waiting Lists/Vacancies for Out of School Provision**

Feedback from the Borough's out of school providers suggests that they tend not to keep waiting lists. However, they do retain vacancy data as shown in the table below.

**Table 11 – Out of School Club Vacancies**

	Registered Breakfast Clubs - vacancy rates	Registered After School Clubs - vacancy rates	Registered Holiday Clubs - vacancy rates
<b>Cluster A</b>	18%	14%	Nil
<b>Cluster B</b>	7%	60%	66%
<b>Cluster C</b>	11%	11%	12%
<b>Cluster D</b>	12%	15%	38%
<b>Cluster E</b>	2% *	6% **	7% ***

(Data Source: Darlington Children's Information Service)

- \* unable to gather data from one club
- \*\* unable to gather data from two clubs
- \*\*\* unable to gather data from one club

We know from the parental telephone survey that demand for out of school childcare is not being 'satisfied' and we also know from the childcare places data that the number of out of school places per 100 children is very low across the Borough. However, there appear to be vacancies in this childcare sector. One explanation for the holiday club vacancies could be the time at which the data has been collected ie if it is collected at the beginning of a school term, parents are more likely not to have put their child's name on the list yet. Also, anecdotal evidence from the CIS seems to suggest that some providers may be registered for a certain number of out of school places but may limit their intake to below this, if taking an extra child forces them to employ an extra member of staff to meet staffing ratios. Another explanation for the vacancy rates could also be lack of easily available, up-to-date information about unfilled places which parents can access.

So it is clear that in conjunction with increasing the number of available out of school places, the issue of existing vacancies will also need to be examined further.

**(iii) Developing the Childcare Market to meet Parental Demand**

Given that a shortage of childcare supply has been identified in the case of breakfast, after school and holiday places how can this 'childcare gap be bridged'?. Information which has been collected as part of the parental childcare demand survey suggests that it is not simply a case of increasing the number of places

available, a profile of anticipated service usage suggests that these childcare services also need to be more responsive to meet demand.

For example, in the case of after school provision although most children would need between 1 and 10 hours of care per week (85%), there is evidence to suggest that longer hours are required with 13% wishing to access care for between 11 and 20 hours per week and 3% for 21 to 30 hours per week. Flexibility is important as well with 37% of parents anticipating regular changes in childcare use. Also, over one in ten (13%) would like to use care outside 7.30 am to 6.00 pm and 7% suggest they would use care at weekends if it was available. In the case of breakfast clubs, again although the majority of children would be seeking care for between 1 and 10 hours per week (91%), 9% would use higher volumes of between 11 and 20 hours. Two fifths expect access to be flexible (41%), 16% would like care available outside the hours of 7.30 am and 6.00 pm and 5% would like to access provision at weekends.

In the case of holiday provision although the largest proportion of users wish to access provision for between 11 and 20 hours per week, longer periods of care were required by 35%. One in two would like to access care on a flexible basis, 9% would like care outside the hours of 7.30 am and 6.00 pm and 9% would be interested in care at weekends.

It is clear that a childcare gap has been identified in the case of breakfast, after school and holiday provision in that the telephone survey suggests that parental demand is not satisfied and supply data shows a lack of places across the Borough. Also, the survey suggests that parents are looking for a more flexible service to meet their training/work requirements. Finally, the issue of vacant places needs to be explored further. The Local Authority will also need to gather more detailed information from sources such as the Children's Information Service and providers themselves about the exact nature of unmet demand. The Local Authority will then be required to work closely with existing registered providers, with those settings such as schools where more 'informal' out of school care is being delivered and prospective childcare providers to shape the market to ensure that parental demand is met.

#### **(iv) Homework Clubs**

In November 2007 there were 212 more 'informal' after school supervised activities/clubs operating for children ranging from 5 years to 16 years taking place in Local Authority maintained schools across the Borough (Data source: Darlington Children's Information Service.) At cluster area level, activities such as homework clubs were

counted within the parental childcare audit as having amongst the largest gaps between current use of childcare services and ideal care arrangements. It is difficult to measure the supply of such clubs and hence the additional provision required because they often operate on an 'ad hoc', unregistered basis within schools, not only can they alter from term to term but in some cases from week to week. One way of starting to measure supply would be to encourage such groups to operate on a more 'reliable' basis, this would in turn enable parents to utilise this type of care to work or access training (with a view to gaining employment).

#### **(v) Daycare Unit attached to a Nursery School**

According to the childcare parental demand survey in cluster A demand for a daycare unit attached to a nursery school is 43% higher than current use and in cluster B, demand for a daycare unit attached to a nursery school is 71% higher than current use. However, other evidence suggests that perhaps current and future demand is not quite so high, for example, in the case of cluster A the local Children's Centre at Mount Pleasant offers childcare for 3 and 4 year olds 'wrapped around' the nursery unit's early education session, however, although this provision has been open for well over a year there are still a number of vacancies. Also, a similar project at Corporation Road School closed due to low take-up. There is a possibility that when responding to the telephone survey parents were unaware that early education integrated with care can also be offered by a private day nursery, for example.

#### **(vi) Cross Border Demand for Childcare**

The survey data indicated that in March 2007 5% of children resident in Darlington accessed childcare outside the Borough and an estimated 4% are expected to do so by April 2008. It is anticipated that by April 2008 around 130 children resident in the Borough will want to access childcare in the Tees Valley (60 with childminders and 70 in holiday playschemes) and around 160 children will want to access childcare in County Durham (70 after school clubs and 90 breakfast clubs).

The reverse flow of parents resident outside the Borough requiring services in Darlington has not been assessed by the parental demand study. However, \*during the period December 2006 to December 2007 there were a total of 61 enquiries from parents who were resident outside of Darlington but who were looking for childcare in the Borough, 39 from neighbouring Local Authorities (24 from parents resident in County Durham and 15 from parents resident in North Yorkshire).

(Data source: Darlington's Children's Information Service).

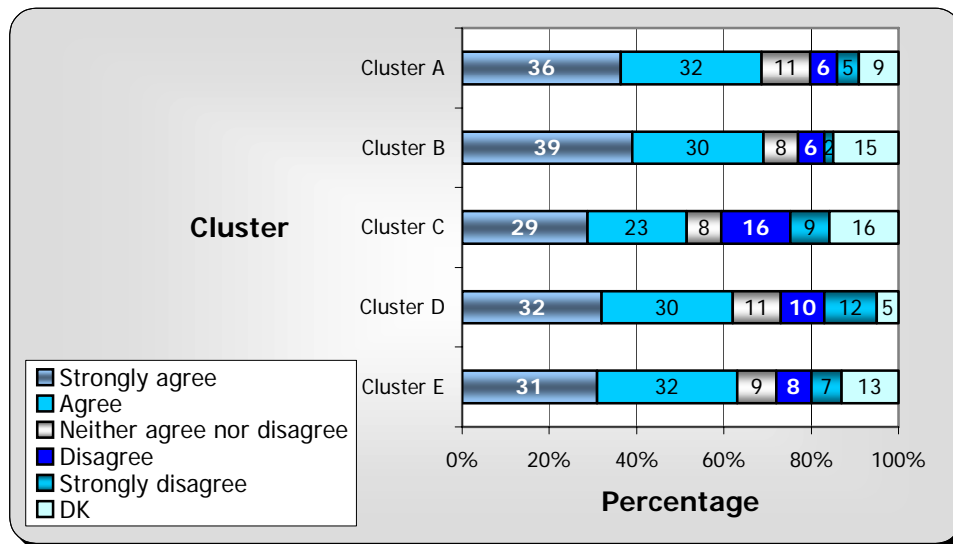
It is clear that in order to facilitate childcare sufficiency Darlington LA will need to liaise regularly, particularly with neighbouring authorities such as County Durham, North Yorkshire and Stockton to ensure sufficient childcare places are available across the region for parents who chose to cross local authority borders to access childcare.



## B) LOCATION OF CHILDCARE

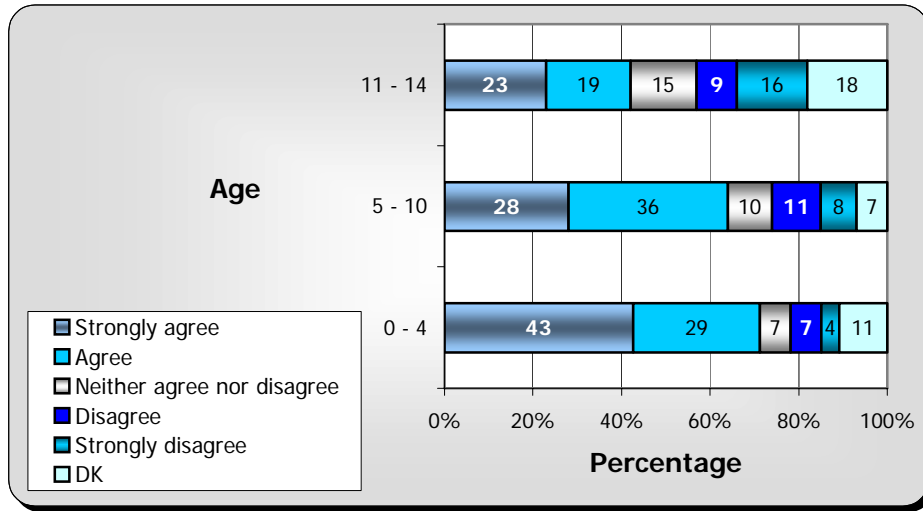
As part of the childcare telephone survey parents (or expectant parents) were asked whether they felt 'childcare services were available in a convenient location'. In general, parents mostly (64%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this although as Figure 1 below shows more parents in Clusters A and B were in agreement than in the other clusters.

Figure 1: Childcare Services in a Convenient Location per Cluster



In Cluster C, just over half of the parents agreed with this, while one quarter disagreed, indicating that they may have to travel further to access childcare services. Indeed, when looking at table 5 on page 27 showing the location of the Borough's childcare places, it is apparent that in cluster C there are fewer breakfast, after school and holiday places than in other clusters.

**Figure 2: Childcare Services in a Convenient Location per age Group**



Further confirmation of unmet demand for school age childcare places is clear in figure 2 above where parental responses indicated that the younger the child, the more satisfied parents were regarding convenience of childcare location. A total of 72% of parents with children less than 5 years old believed the location of services was convenient, but only 42% of parents with a child aged 11-14 agreed. This suggests that parents dissatisfaction is more to do with a general shortage of out of school and holiday places across the Borough rather than there being sufficient places which are badly located.

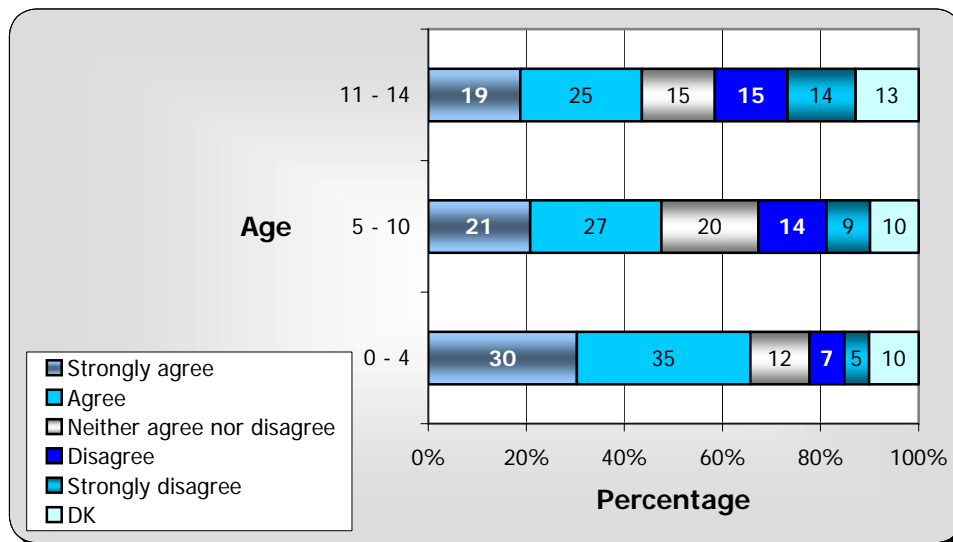
### C) AGE OF CHILDREN CATERED FOR

As part of the telephone survey parents (or expectant parents) were also asked whether they were fully satisfied that they were able to access all the childcare services they needed for their child.

As previously, a divide can be seen across the age categories (see figure 3). Parents of children in the youngest age group, less than 5 years of age, were much more satisfied than the others. Almost two thirds of them were satisfied that they could access the service required (65%), but this drops to 48% and 44% for parents of children aged 5-10 and 11-14 respectively. **Again this supports the findings from the other statements that the younger the child is the more satisfied the parent is with the childcare services on offer and is further evidence of the shortage of supply for childcare for older children.**

**It should also be noted that in the case of young people aged 15-17 years with a disability, out of school clubs in the Borough only tend to cater for children aged up to 14 years (see tables 3 to 7, pages 25 to 29).**

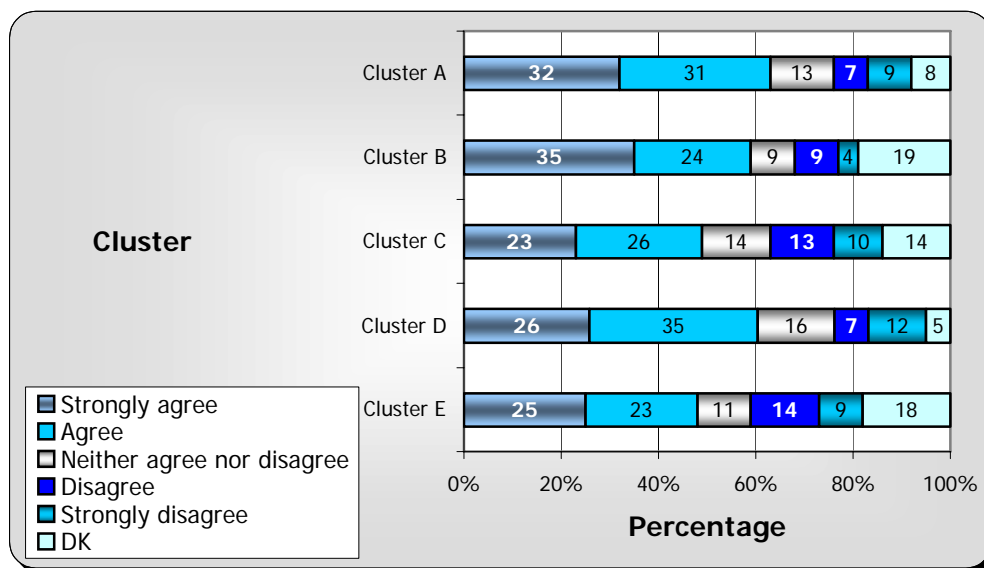
**Figure 3: Fully Satisfied with the Accessibility of Childcare Services per age Group**



## D) TIMING OF CHILDCARE

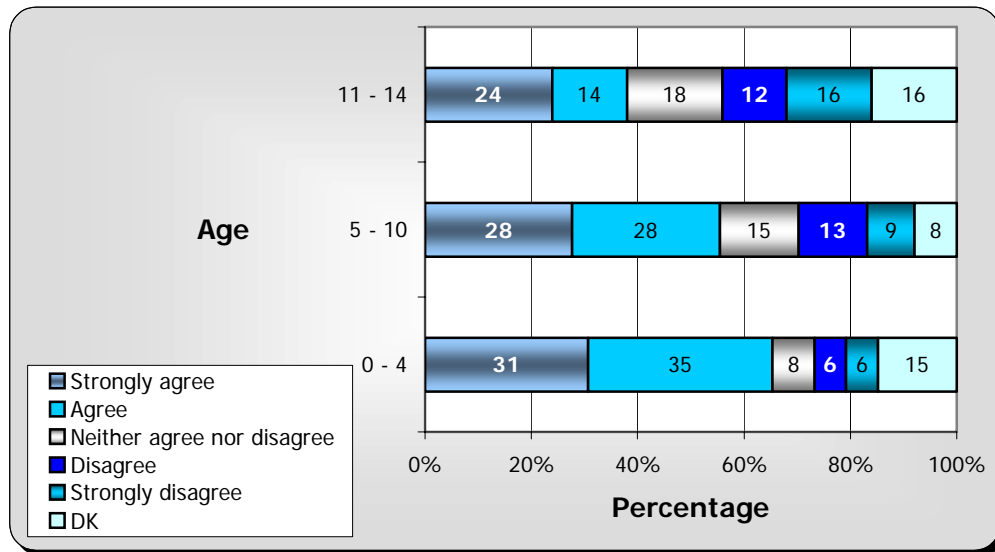
The results of the parental telephone survey suggest that demand for care outside the hours of 7.30 am to 6.00 pm and at weekends was relatively low for most types of childcare, being highest for supervised activities. When parents were asked whether childcare services are available on the days and times they require, the majority of parents (57%) agreed with this statement, but nearly one fifth disagreed or disagreed strongly. There did however appear to be cluster variations (as shown in figure 4 below), in Cluster A, 63% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, and in Clusters B and D around 60% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed. This dropped to around a half of parents in Clusters C (49%) and E (48%), suggesting that parents in these clusters have more problems accessing childcare services when required.

Figure 4: Childcare Services Available on the Days and Time Required per Cluster



Wide differences also occur when these responses are analysed by age groups. Indeed, 66% of parents with a child under 5 years old either agree or agree strongly when asked whether childcare services are available on the days and times they require. This figure dropped to 56% for parents who have a child aged 5-10 years old, and then to only 38% for parents with a child aged 11-14 years old (as shown in figure 5 below).

Figure 5: Childcare Services Available on the Days and Time Required per age Group



This feedback suggests that only a relatively low number of parents require childcare outside of standard working hours, perhaps parents who require care eg shift workers, prefer to rely on family and friends during these periods. A small proportion of childcare does exist in some of the cluster areas well beyond standard working hours ie up to 10:00pm (see tables 3 to 7, pages 25 to 29), this care is mainly with childminders. **The fact that parental dissatisfaction is highest (28%) amongst parents with older children (aged 11-14 years) suggests that childminder care is not seen as the most attractive form of care for this age cohort, perhaps care such as supervised activities would be more appealing to these families.**

**It has also become clear that flexibility in childcare service use is important across all settings with parents requiring the ability to change times and days according to their needs. Indeed, the survey tells us that one in two parents would expect to access holiday play schemes on a flexible basis, 41% of parents would expect to access breakfast clubs flexibly, 37% would expect to access after school provision on a flexible basis and 32% would want to flexibly access supervised activities.**

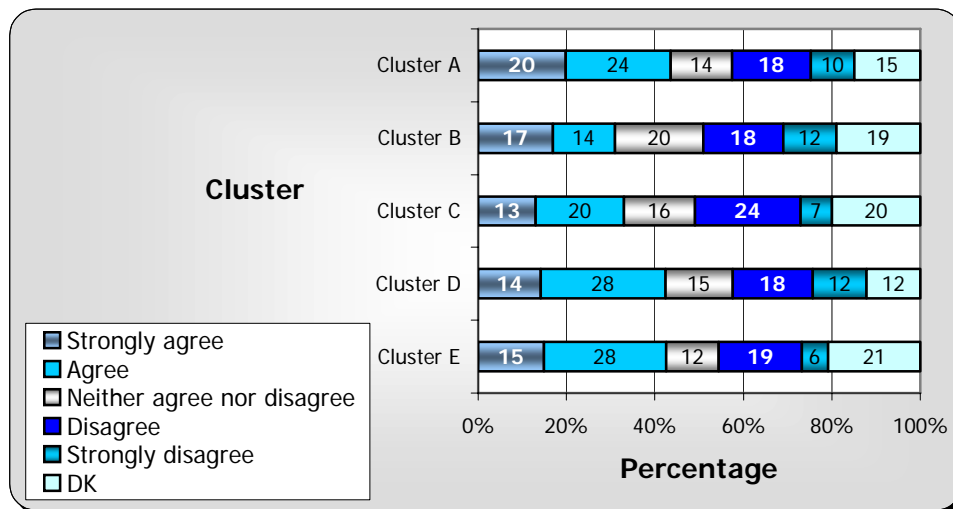
It would appear that to satisfy childcare demand as well as increasing the number of childcare places available to school age children, existing and new childcare places also need to be offered on a more flexible basis, in terms of offering a proportion of places well outside of the standard working day but also, by ensuring that parents can access childcare at short notice and easily change their pattern of accessing places to fit with their work and training requirements.

## E)AFFORDABILITY OF CHILDCARE

As part of the parental telephone survey parents (or expectant parents) who plan to use childcare services were asked whether they felt that the childcare services available in the Borough were affordable. **The cost of childcare is clearly an issue for parents as only 40% believed that the prices were affordable (of all the questions this is the area which received the lowest satisfaction rating from parents) and just fewer than one third either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were affordable.**

When each cluster was analysed it appears that parents in Clusters B and C were slightly more sceptical about the affordability of childcare services. Only around a third of parents from these clusters believed services were affordable (as shown in figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Childcare Services are Affordable per Cluster



When the results were analysed within age groups only around 40% of parents from each age group either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. **Interestingly, parents of older children were more likely to say they didn't know, reflecting either a shortage of childcare places for this age group and/or a lack of available information on provision for this age group.**

**The telephone survey suggests that the cost of care prevents use for approximately 13% of parents wishing to use after school care and 15% of parents wishing to use holiday play schemes. Parents were also asked how their use of services would be affected by a price increase and a price decrease. The data collected informs us that price limits use of childcare for many more parents.**

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that modest price reductions would increase use and that price increases would impact on a significant proportion of the current and prospective customer base, limiting or preventing use for between 23% and 57% of users. **Price sensitivity was greatest for holiday play schemes where 50% of parents said that price limits their use of this childcare service.**

Looking at the average costs of childcare for school age children across the Borough, there are some surprising results (please see tables 3 to 7, pages 25 to 29)\*. In the case of breakfast and holiday clubs the variation in average costs between cluster areas is minimal, however, the lowest charges do not necessarily occur in the clusters containing the most disadvantaged wards (maps 5 and 6 on pages 50 and 51 give an indication of the wards which contain the highest percentage of children living in lower income households in the Borough)(3). In the case of after school provision, the variation in average costs between clusters is considerable ranging from an average cost of £21 in cluster A to £5 in cluster E, again, the lowest charges do not occur in the clusters containing the most disadvantaged wards. (4)

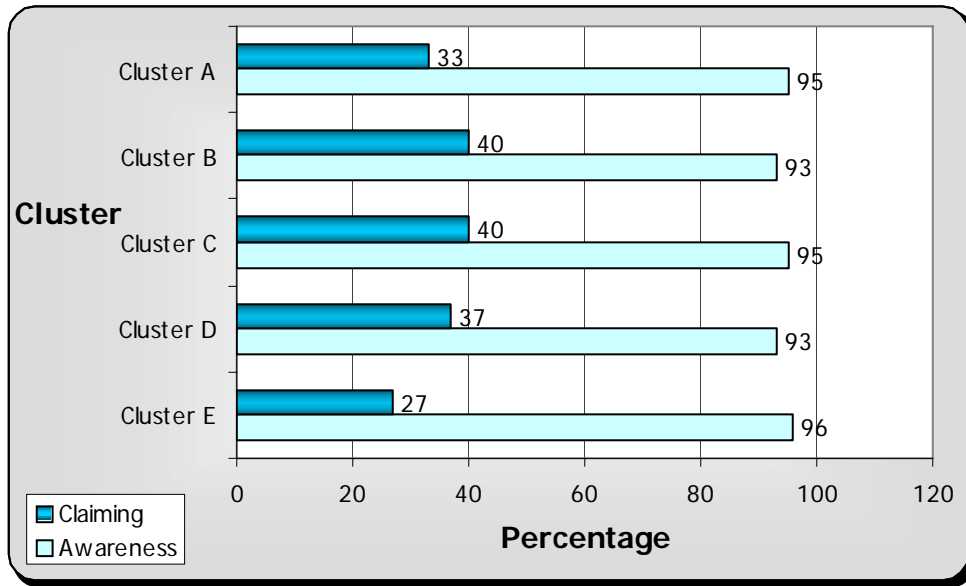
So it would seem that the cost of childcare is an issue for parents, it either limits use, particularly in the case of holiday play schemes or in some cases prevents use altogether. Interestingly, the cost of provision, particularly that of after school care, ranges and is not necessarily cheaper in the more disadvantaged areas of the Borough.

\* Data source: Darlington Children's Information Service.

### **(i) Tax Credits**

One obvious form of financial assistance for parents towards the cost of childcare is that of Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits. As part of the telephone survey parental levels of awareness and take up of tax credits were measured (as shown in figure 7). A total of 95% of the parents claimed to have heard of the Working Tax Credit, and of these respondents just over one third (35%) in the Borough are claiming the Tax Credit. There are no differences between the parents from the various clusters as far as awareness levels are concerned but there is a small difference when it comes to claiming for the Tax Credit: only 26% of parents in Cluster E who were aware of the Tax Credit claim it, this is in comparison to 40% and 39% of parents in Clusters C and B respectively. In Clusters A and D, 33% and 37% of parents claim the Tax Credit respectively.

**Figure 7: Awareness & Claims of Working Tax Credit by Cluster**

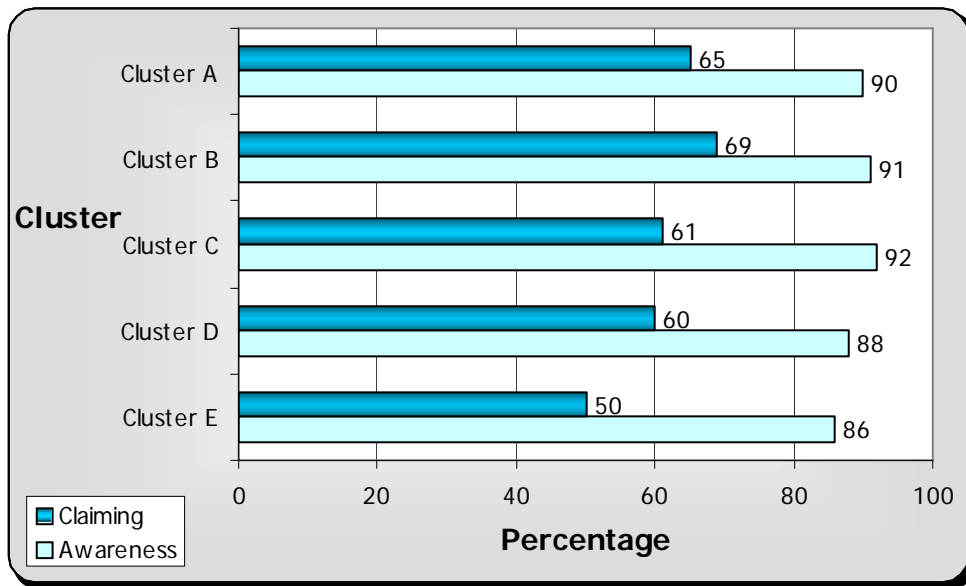


Base: All parents

Parents were also asked about the *Child Tax Credit*. The vast majority (89%) again had heard of this, but a much higher figure said that they were claiming this Tax Credit. Of the 89% of parents who had heard of it, 61% were claiming it. Similarly to the Working Tax Credit there were little differences in the awareness levels between the clusters, but a difference did exist again with regards to claiming the Tax Credit and again it was Cluster E that contained the smallest ratio of parents (50%) who were claiming it (as figure 8 below shows).



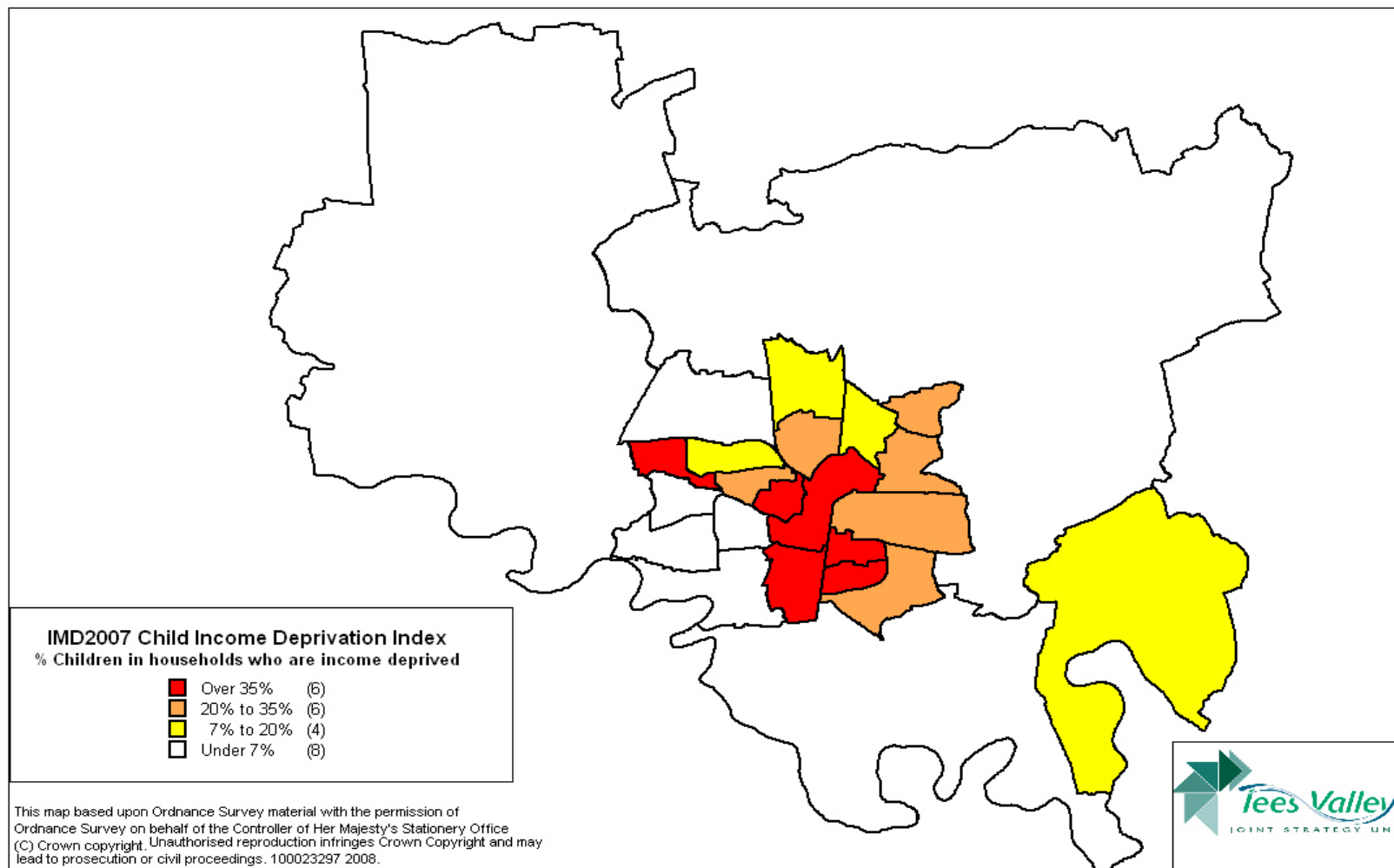
**Figure 8: Awareness & Claims of Child Tax Credit by Cluster**



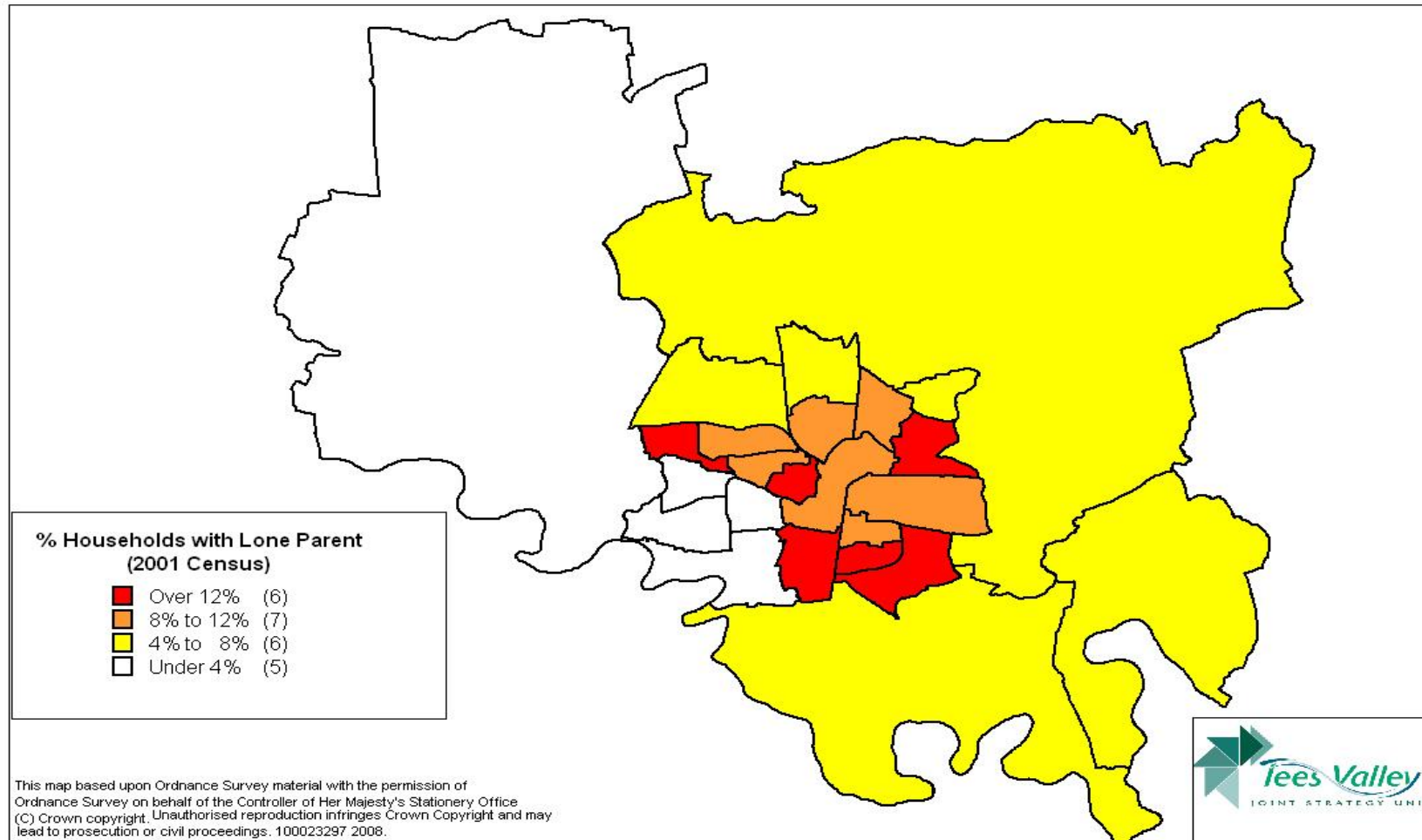
Base: All respondents

The high parental awareness levels compared to the relatively low claimant levels, particularly in the case of Working Tax Credits, may suggest that some parents falsely presume they will be unable to claim these credits. Perhaps information which is more tailored to parental circumstances may increase take-up.

## CHILDREN IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS



## LONE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS



## F) KEY GROUPS - UNMET CHILDCARE DEMAND

### (i) Parents of Children with a Disability

Feedback from the parental childcare audit was that very few parents of children with a disability/special need currently use childcare services with more than two thirds of children (72%) being looked after by their parent/guardian, family or friends. More parents would like to access childcare services than currently do so: only 48% indicated that they do not want to use formal childcare provision in the future.

In keeping with the telephone survey feedback from the majority of parents, demand amongst parents of children with a disability/special need was highest for after school clubs (26%), supervised activities (25%) and holiday play schemes (17%) (see table 12 below).

**Table 12: Current Usage & Demand for Childcare Services**

Service	Current Usage	Demand
Day-care in a private nursery	3%	1%
Parent & toddler group	0%	1%
Play group or pre-school	0%	1%
Nursery school (public sector)	4%	3%
Day care unit attached to a nursery school	1%	1%
<b>After school club (care based at school)</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Homework club (based at school)</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Registered childminder</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Nanny	3%	3%
<b>Holiday play scheme</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Supervised activities</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Breakfast club</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Self / partner	52%	35%
Family / friends	20%	13%
Respite care	6%	6%
Child social worker & psychologist	4%	4%

Base: Survey data on current use and ideal childcare arrangements in the next twelve months for parents of children who have a disability or special needs

The fact that a generally accepted age limit for these childcare services seems to be around 14 years across the Borough (see tables 3 to 7, pages 25 to 29), must create some access difficulties for parents of young people aged 15-17 years who may wish to use these services. The telephone survey showed that **access to childcare during the school holiday periods seems to be particularly problematic due to a high demand for places with twice as many (58%) parents of children with a**

disability/special need having problems accessing holiday care than other parents (26%). Indeed, both after school clubs and holiday play schemes were highlighted by parents with regard to their limited access. The main problem seems to be that their local schools do not operate regular clubs/schemes and whilst parents acknowledged that they could use another school for after school provision, this would involve transport problems, and, more significantly, their children would have to go into a different environment and mix with new children which may be problematic for the child.

Obtaining an accurate measure of the number of inclusive childcare places across the Borough has proved difficult, as asking a provider whether or not they are 'inclusive' is too subjective. We did however, take a measurement of the number of actual childcare places filled by children with disabilities/special needs and found that a significant proportion of providers from all the differing sectors seemed to take children with disabilities/special needs. However, what is more important is parental perception of what the childcare market can offer and it is clear that when the different aspects of childcare services were evaluated, parents of children with a disability/special need consistently reported lower satisfaction levels than other parents. More general problems highlighted by parents included limited care available for children over 14 years of age, OFSTED reports not being particularly relevant to children with disabilities/special needs, that members of staff are not trained properly to deal with children with disabilities/special needs and also not knowing where to access information regarding childcare services.

*A number of parents gave the example of a barrier to accessing services which included the experience of visiting a setting to establish availability and suitability of places: when the parent took the child to seek further information about childcare, places can be available at the service provider, but the reaction of staff members to the child puts parents off using the service. Parents have been left with the impression that their child was not wanted because the member of staff did not know how to deal with a child with a special need/disability.*

Parents felt that when selecting childcare services for their child a variety of issues including location, staff, quality of service and cost were important. They also felt ill-informed (50%) about services available to them, not knowing the choices they had, or where to obtain information to keep themselves informed. Interestingly, only around one quarter (24%) of other parents feel they are ill-informed. This does indicate that parents of children with a disability/special need have a bigger problem obtaining information about their different options.

Differences between the two sets of parents were also apparent with regard to accessing services when required. Only 23% of parents of children with a disability/special need agreed that services are available on the days and times required in comparison to 59% of other parents.

Similarly, parents of children with a disability/special need are less likely to believe that childcare services are available in a convenient location. Less than one in four are happy that the location of services is convenient in comparison to two thirds of other parents. Although the general consensus within the focus group was that parents are willing to travel to access an appropriate service, for some parents there were specific transport problems due to the nature of their child's disability. In particular, after school clubs were mentioned as a problem with a preference for care being located at the child's school. The issues related to transport difficulties and, in some cases, the additional difficulties for children switching between care environments. It was emphasised that the children require familiarity and routine.

The parental telephone survey showed that only 19% of parents with children with a disability/special need agreed that childcare services available are affordable. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that parents of children with a disability/ special need often have to pay more for their childcare than other parents because higher staffing ratios may be required. Surprisingly though when parents at the focus group were asked about the affordability of services, this was not viewed as a major barrier, with parents indicating that they were willing to pay whatever it cost to access the appropriate services.

The most positive response was with regard to childcare services being of a high quality with 44% of parents of children with a disability/special need agreeing and only 16% disagreeing. However, it was still endorsed by less than half of these parents compared with 64% of parents whose children did not have a disability or special need. The main problem as far as parents were concerned seemed to be the lack of trained staff to care for children with disabilities/special needs. Parents felt that this was evidenced in settings by staffs' demonstrable lack of confidence or ability in dealing with problems relating to their child's condition.

Finally, nearly half (47%) of the parents of children with a disability/special need disagreed that childcare services available fully meet their child's individual needs compared to only 13% of other parents. Again, this highlights the perception of childcare services being poorer amongst parents of children with a disability/special need.

In conclusion, although it has proved difficult to quantify the number of fully inclusive childcare places which currently exist in the Borough, feedback from the telephone survey and the focus group shows that parents of children with a disability/special need consistently report lower satisfaction levels than other parents. In keeping with the feedback from the majority of parents, demand amongst parents of children with a disability/special need was highest for inclusive childcare for school age children including after school clubs, supervised activities and holiday play schemes.

## **(ii) Teenage Parents**

Information collected via the focus group suggests that formal childcare services were not generally used by this group of parents other than perhaps a crèche while attending courses for parents. When discussing factors that were important when selecting childcare one parent commented that services that offer support for parents and have staff who bond with the child were crucial. The parents felt that their needs were mostly met, although some respondents had previously experienced problems accessing childcare at weekends and not being supported by a provider as much as they would like. One parent anticipated that cost could be a problem in the future.

Several parents reported that they do not use childcare services as they are currently out of work and don't want to work until the child is of school age. However, suggestions from parents for increasing take up of services included: reducing cost; extending care outside normal working patterns; increasing the availability of childcare within walking distance and increasing the frequency of activities for babies and toddlers.

Unfortunately, the research with this group was relatively limited. It has become clear that as part of its childcare audit review in 2008-09, the Local Authority needs to re-think how this group is involved on an on going basis with the process of sufficiency assessment.

## **(iii) Children's Views**

As the end users of childcare services, it is very important to consider the views of children on provision they currently access and would like to access in future. As described on page 18 children from various age groups, including a group of children with disabilities participated in various classroom based consultation activities.

The children interviewed identified a range of activities that they would like to access/use more in the future with sporting activities predominating (preferences are summarised below). Many children aged 5-7 years wanted an art club, other popular suggestions for this age group related mostly to sporting activities. Children aged 8-10 years were also interested in sports and arts/crafts. Again, sports clubs were popular with 11-12 year olds, with a variety of different sports being mentioned. Children aged 13-14 years were mainly interested in sports clubs with other suggestions including computing, animal, and science clubs.

**Clubs/activities that children aged 5-7 years old would like their school to organise**

Art (7)	Football (1)
Basketball (2)	Weaving club (1)
Cricket (2)	Horse riding (1)
Jigsaws (1)	Tennis club (1)
Baking (1)	

**Clubs/activities that children aged 8-10 years old would like their school to organise**

Art (2)	Piano lessons (1)
Gymnastics (1)	Football (1)
Swimming (1)	Athletics (1)
Games club (1)	

**Clubs/activities that children aged 11-12 years old would like their school to organise:**

Sports in general (3)	Badminton (1)
Swimming (2)	Tennis (1)
Athletics (1)	Games (1)
Cricket (1)	ICT club (1)
Gymnastic (1)	

**Clubs/activities that children aged 13-14 years old would like their school to organise:**

Computer club (1)	Sports clubs (1)
Swimming (1)	Science club (1)
Animal club (1)	

The children were also asked about what clubs/activities they participate in outside of school and also what they would like to attend outside of school. (preferences are shown below). Popular activities included dancing, sporting activities and



swimming. These are the activities that the children participate in most, but they are also the activities that children most want to do if they are not currently taking part. It was worth noting that the children with special needs/disability (13-14 year olds) were less likely to participate in out of school activities, this is further confirmation of the comments made by parents in section F(i).

Generally, the reasons provided by children for not currently undertaking these activities is lack of awareness of these activities being provided locally.

**Clubs/activities outside of school that children aged 5-7 years old would like to participate in**

Swimming (4)	Art (2)
Dancing (4)	Horse riding (2)
Football (3)	Girls football (1)

**Clubs/activities outside of school that children aged 8-10 years old would like to participate in**

Environmental club (helping the environment (1)	Ice-skating (1)
Skating club (1)	Football (1)
Wildlife club (1)	

**Clubs/activities outside of school that children aged 11-12 years old would like to participate in**

Sports (1)	Girls cricket (1)
Dancing (1)	Netball (1)
Gymnastics (1)	Singing (1)

**Clubs/activities outside of school that children aged 13-14 years old would like to participate in**

Art club (1)	Football (1)
Bowling (1)	Taekwondo (1)
Science (1)	

The feedback from children suggests that the older the child is the less likely they are to use formal childcare, the location of services became more inconvenient, less is known about the childcare options available and it becomes more difficult to access childcare at the appropriate days and times. There is actual demand for services amongst older children but as demonstrated in earlier sections, it appears there may be a lack of 'childcare' options.

#### **(iv) Employers' Views**

There was significant diversity of opinion amongst employers on what being a 'family friendly employer' really means. A general willingness to be flexible with working hours (12) was common, other employers had more structured schemes such as flexi-time where staff could vary start and finish times within agreed core hours (4). Nine out of seventeen employers offered childcare voucher schemes, signposting staff to information on childcare, benefits etc. was also relatively common (9). Several employers indicated general flexibility to give time off if required (5) whilst others had developed policies and processes for anticipating and dealing with such needs. A small number of organisations had developed more extensive support including workplace nurseries (3) and posts dedicated to assisting staff in addressing childcare needs and achieving an appropriate work life balance (1). The latter posts and two out of the three organisations with a nursery were from the public sector. Other innovative practices found in the public sector included compressed hours where the same contracted hours could be worked over fewer days. Three employers reported using term time contracts, with two being from the private sector. It was noted that smaller businesses in particular find it difficult to meet the flexibility required of family friendly working practices, having less capacity to cover absence of staff (1).

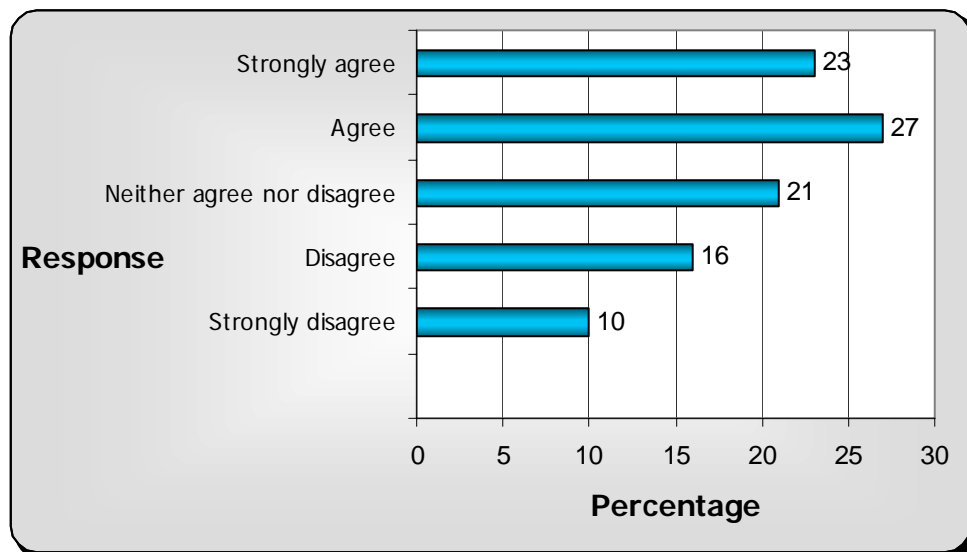
The majority of employers (12 out of 17) said they had not encountered any problems in recruiting or losing staff due to childcare problems. As two respondents noted however, employers awareness of these problems may be limited, potential candidates may rule themselves out of applying for a post due to an awareness of childcare problems and reasons for leaving may not be followed up or recorded in all cases. Interestingly, a recent survey by Jobcentre Plus which asked lone parents looking to go back to work whether they were experiencing any childcare barriers showed that the lack of breakfast and after school clubs was an issue as was the actual cost of childcare.<sup>(5)</sup> Indeed, one employer also identified the cost of care as a barrier, having experienced workers reducing their hours because the cost of care wiped out the benefit of working.

The main role identified for the LA was the provision of information on available childcare to employers (8), other employers identified a role in extending provision for shift-workers (2) and reducing the cost of care (2). Increased after-school provision was also suggested (1) and direct input in the form of supplying emergency childcare provision was put forward as a suggestion (1). A few companies (4) expressed interest in developing a partnership with a local provider.

## 6) LACK OF UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

The telephone survey and focus groups gathered the views of parents regarding specific issues with childcare such as sufficiency of differing types of places, location of places, ages of children catered for, timing of childcare and the affordability of childcare. However, parents were also able to report back on how they felt generally about childcare in the Borough and **one of the more prevalent themes (identified by 30% of parents) was the lack of up-to-date information about local childcare.** Parents were asked whether they felt informed about the childcare options available, the results can be seen in figures 9 and 10.

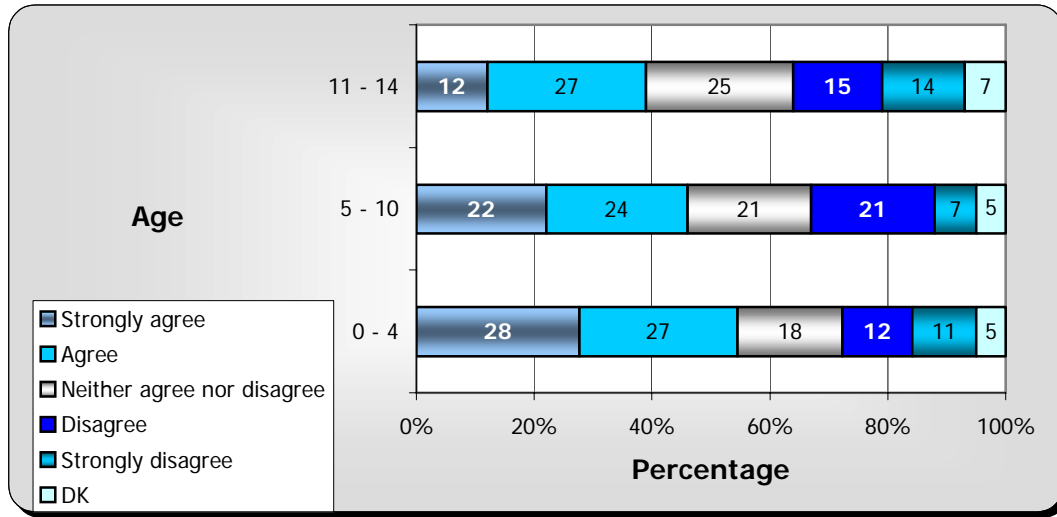
Figure 9: Feeling informed about the options available



Base: Parents and expectant parents who use or plan to use childcare services

Exactly half of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed while 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. It appears that the younger the child is, the more informed the parent is about the childcare options available. A majority of parents of a child aged less than 5 years old (55%) agreed that they did feel informed about childcare options available for their child. This figure fell to 46% and 39% for children aged 5-10 and 11-14 years old respectively.

**Figure 10: Feeling Informed about the Options Available per age Group**



Base: Parents and expectant parents who use or plan to use childcare services

There could be more than one reason for this: it could be that parents with young children are more motivated to find out about the options available; more services for that age group may be available so more information will be accessible; or it could simply be that more information exists about services for younger children.

## **H) FACTORS AFFECTING FUTURE CHILDCARE DEMAND**

It is important to note that demand for childcare across the Borough is constantly shifting as family circumstances change (this could include changes in income, residential location, employment status, family support, changes in knowledge or altered perceptions about childcare which may lead parents to make better informed choices) and that any attempt to measure childcare demand is merely a 'snapshot in time'. It is also important to note that when taking part in a survey parents are explaining their ideal care arrangements and there are a number of key barriers which may prevent them from turning a desire to use care into actual service take up. Other factors which may affect demand for childcare (either bringing about an increase or decrease) are of course the birth rate but also changes to government legislation, such as, an increase in the minimum wage, changes in tax credit benefits, enhanced maternity leave or increased flexible working practices.

Darlington Borough Council will be conducting another full childcare sufficiency assessment in 2010-11 and will be keeping the results of the 2007-08 assessment under constant review in the meantime. However, there are some changes which we know will occur before 2011 which need to be fed in to these reviews.

### **(i) Demographics and Economic Regeneration**

Latest data from the Local Authority's Policy Unit suggests that between 2004 and 2011 the 0-14 year old population (including 15-17 year olds with a disability\*) in the Borough is predicted to fall by around 900 (from 18,572 to 17,660 or 12,872 to 11,960 for the school age population) (6).

\* this figure was reached by taking 10% of the 15-17 year old projection

However, population projections taken from the Office for National Statistics predict a steady increase in the overall population at least until 2021. (7) Also, data from the Health Authority suggests a slight rise in the younger population in the Borough. (8)

It is clear that whichever trend is adopted ie a rise or fall in the child population of the Borough, significant fluctuations are not predicted in the short term as the sufficiency reviews are carried out.

An increase or reduction in the housing stock within Darlington is an indicator which may affect demand for childcare. It is anticipated that between 2008 and 2011 there will be around 800 new houses (9) built in the Borough, the largest of these

being at West Park and at Central Park with some smaller housing developments also being situated on the old site of Alderman Leach Primary School, on the site of the rugby club and on the site of the old Darlington College. Other sites expecting more minor housing developments are Parkside, the Eastbourne Area and the site of Sadberge Primary School. At present no major demolition of residential areas is expected in the Borough between 2008 and 2011.

It is difficult to predict whether new 'family type' housing will actually attract families and also whether they will be families moving into the Borough or families moving from another area within Darlington. However, given that the number of new houses expected in the Borough by 2011 is comparatively minor and that half of these are small scale building projects, this would suggest that the areas to monitor regarding childcare demand are West Park and Central Park.

Another indicator which may affect demand for childcare is that of employment developments within the Borough. In the medium term there are business projects which may increase demand for childcare such as the additional office space being created at Morton Palms, the proposed extension to the Queen Street shopping centre, applications for planning permission have also been submitted for retail and leisure developments at the football stadium and Durham Tees Valley airport but they have not yet been determined. (9). Again, it is difficult to predict exactly how these developments will affect childcare demand. It is however clear that if the infrastructure is to be in place (including childcare) to enable employers to move to Darlington then close working relationships are required with the LA's Planning Department and the companies concerned.

## **(ii) Support for Lone Parents**

In Autumn 2007 the government announced a number of changes to the current system of benefits and job-seeking support which will take effect over the next four years. The presumption will be that lone parents on income support who are able to work will be required to actively seek work once their youngest child is 12 years or over from October 2008, 10 years or over from October 2009 and 7 years or over from October 2010. The government's intention is that these measures will bring about an increase in the number of lone parents in work of around 100,000, lifting around 70,000 children out of poverty (10).

These changes in the benefits system will obviously have an impact on childcare demand as more lone parents with school age children require childcare to return to work or to take up work related training. A very rough indicator of the number of 12 to 14 year old children resident in the Borough who would be affected by these

developments from 2008 is 73, then an additional 45 10 and 11 year olds from 2009 and an additional 66 7 to 9 year olds by 2010 (11). Although not every child will require a full childcare place, around 184 additional children between the ages of 7 and 14 (17 for young people with a disability) may need to access some sort of childcare provision whether it be with a childminder, registered after school club or holiday activity by 2010 as a result of these government reforms.

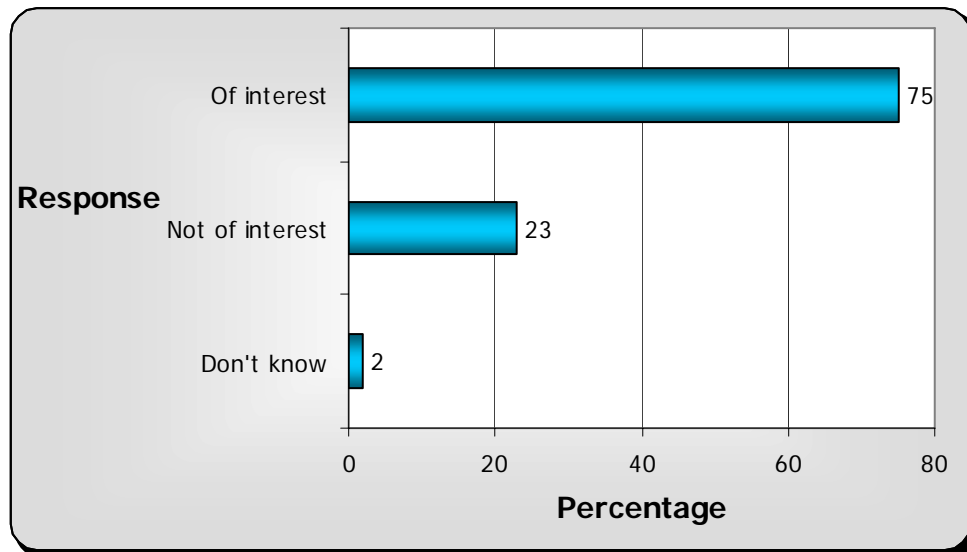
### **(iii) Flexible Free Entitlement**

The government has set a long term goal of increasing the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds from 12.5 hours a week to 20 hours a week, with an interim goal of increasing the entitlement to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year for all children by 2010. This will also include providing the entitlement more flexibly for parents over at least three days of the week. (12) Parents will be able to request this from any type of provider including the private, voluntary, independent and the maintained sectors. Indeed, it is interesting that when parents were asked how they would like to use, for example, a maintained nursery school the majority expressed a demand for between 11 and 20 hours per week (63%) and more than one in ten parents (15%) said they would use care on a flexible basis.

As well as having the obvious effect of providing increased free provision for parents, this development may stimulate the childcare market further by, for example, enabling parents who don't currently work to take up part-time employment or by simply enabling parents to use the funds they have saved to purchase additional childcare sessions in addition to the free entitlement.

Bearing this in mind, as part of the telephone survey parents with a child under 2 years old, including those expecting a child were given a description of the extension of the free places entitlement and were asked if they would be interested in accessing this. The substantial majority of parents (75%) said they would be interested (see Figure 11 below).

**Figure 11: Interest in the April 2010 Extension of Free Places Entitlement**



Base: Parents with a child under the age of 2 years old, or who were expecting a child

It is however debatable how useful feedback gathered from parents about their possible usage of the flexible free entitlement is to the planning of services at this point in time. The entitlement is not due to be implemented until April 2010 and family circumstances can change considerably within such a period of time, indeed, a proportion of the children who will be accessing this extended free entitlement were not actually born when the telephone survey took place in March 2007. It is however clear, that anticipated parental take up of the extended entitlement will need to be measured as part of the sufficiency reviews nearer to the time of implementation.



## SUMMARY

The childcare audit has told us that across the Borough there is a 'gap' in childcare provision for school age children i.e. there is a lack of out of school provision (breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs). The data shows that for every 100 children resident in the Borough aged 5-14 years (17 years for those young people with disabilities) there is only an average of 5 breakfast club places, 8 after school places and 5 holiday places.

Other issues which appear to be creating a barrier for parents who want to access childcare are a lack of service flexibility e.g. the ability to change the way childcare is used at short notice to fit work or training requirements. Indeed, the telephone survey has told us that 50% of parents would like to access holiday play schemes more flexibly and 32% of parents would like to access supervised activities more flexibly.

The cost of childcare is also a barrier to access for parents as it seems to either prevent or limit use of childcare services. Indeed, the type of care where price seems to affect parental use the most is holiday play schemes with price limiting use for 50% of parents.

Finally, lack of access to up-to-date information about childcare is proving to be a barrier for some parents. When asked to comment generally about childcare in the Borough 30% of parents identified the lack of up-to-date information as a barrier to access. Again, it would appear that the older the child becomes the less informed the parent feels about the options available to them.

In the case of parents of children with a disability when the different aspects of childcare were evaluated, these parents consistently reported lower satisfaction levels than other parents and feedback suggests that many more of these parents want to use childcare than currently access it. For this group of parents access to childcare during school holiday periods is particularly problematic with twice as many (58%) parents of children with a disability having problems accessing holiday care than other parents (26%). Access to after school provision has also been highlighted as a problem.

The main areas where local employers felt the LA could provide support with regard to accessing childcare were: the provision of information on available childcare to employees; extending provision for shift-workers; reducing the cost of care; and increasing the amount of after school provision available to employees.

**CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN**

**Insert table following further consultation and equalities/disability impact assessment?**

## ANNEX 2

## DEMAND SURVEY CONSULTATION

Method of consultation	Audience	Date
Full report and map put on internet	Parents, children, childcare providers, any other interested stakeholders, etc.	25.09.07
Article in N Echo (automatically translated in to 'Talking Newspaper for the Blind')	Parents, children, childcare providers, any other interested stakeholders, etc. Visually impaired parents & carers	29.09.07
Article in regional teletext	Parents, children, childcare providers, any other interested stakeholders, etc.	29.09.07
Article in Town Crier	Parents, children, childcare providers, any other interested stakeholders, etc.	October 2007
Flier going out with CIS correspondence	Parents, childcare providers, any other interested stakeholders, etc.	On going
Strategic briefing event	Strategic stakeholders incl D.A.D., Cllrs, JC+, employers, D'ton P/ship	10.12.07
Article in EY gazette	Childcare Providers	December 2007
Childcare Provider consultation event	Childcare Providers	05.03.08
Lone Parents event	Lone Parents	November 2007
Article gone on to 'Phoenix'	Schools	09.10.07
Article sent out as mail larger out	Foster carers	November 2007
Article gone in to Community Partnerships - newsletters including CABLE	Reaching all parents including low income parents	December 2007
McNay St Children's Centre	Bengali parents & carers	November 2007

**ACRONYMS**

*CCSA - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment*

*DCS&F - Department for Children, Schools and Families*

*DBC - Darlington Borough Council*

*LA - Local Authority*

*CIS - Children's Information Service*

*fte - full-time equivalent*

*pte - part-time equivalent*

*pvi - private, voluntary and independent childcare sector providers*

*IMD - Index of Multiple Deprivation*

*SEN - Special Education Needs*

*CTC - Child Tax Credit*

*WTC - Working Tax Credit*

*ONS - Office for National Statistics*

*PCT - Primary Care Trust*

*IS - Income Support*

*JSA - Job Seekers' Allowance*

*IB - Incapacity Benefit*

*PC - Penisons Credit*

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) mid-2006 estimates, ONS
- (2) Darlington Social Issues Map, June 2007
- (3) The map showing 'Children in Low Income Households' is based on the Child Income Deprivation Index (IDACI), 2007 IMD. This takes into account Children aged 0-15 living in income deprived households, defined as either households receiving IS/JSA-IB/PC or those households not in receipt of these benefits but in receipt of WTC/CTC with an equivalised income below 60 per cent of the national median before housing costs: this equates to £301 a week for a couple with two children aged 5 and 14 and £223 a week for a lone parent with two children aged 5 and 14. The map showing 'Lone Parent Households' is further qualified by data from Jobcentre Plus dated October 2007 which gives the top five wards with the highest number of lone parent claimants as Park East, then Eastbourne, North Road, Northgate and Haughton East and finally Cockerton West.
- (4) Indeed, a recent piece of research carried out by the Children's Services Department gave each primary and secondary school in the Borough a rating depending upon the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) of its pupil population. This showed that of the top 20 schools in the Borough with the highest income deprivation ratings, 8 of these schools were situated in cluster D, however, the average cost of an after school place in this cluster is second highest of all the clusters at £16 per session.
- (5) (Data Source: Jobcentre Plus, lone parents survey, October 2007)
- (6) figures taken from the 'Revised 2004-based SNPP Unitary Authorities: population projections by sex and quinary age groups'. They are trend based projections, which means assumptions for future levels of births, deaths and migration are based on observed levels over the previous five years. They show what the population will be if recent trends continue. The projections do not take into account any future policy changes that have not yet occurred.
- (7) taken from the Darlington Social Issues Map, Seventh Edition, June 2007, figure 9, page 12.
- (8) data taken from PCT Child Health system showing: 1191 live births in 2005; 1260 live births in 2006; and 1249 live births in 2007 - these are children resident in Darlington district at the time of birth, irrespective of place of birth.
- (9) this includes 'family type' housing ie houses with 2 plus bedrooms, smaller houses and flats have not been included. Data source is Regeneration Division, Chief Executive's Department, Darlington Borough Council.
- (10) Department for Work and Pensions, December 2007, 'Ready for work: full employment in our generation' strategy paper.
- (11) These figures have been obtained by taking the number of lone parent claimants resident in the Borough and registered with Jobcentre Plus in October 2007 (1,410) and making the following assumptions: that each lone parent has two children; that by October 2008 25% of these parents are able to take up employment; and that 50% of these parents will require some sort of out of school care ie breakfast, after school or holiday care (assuming 50% either do not work outside of school hours, rely on family members and friends to provide childcare, etc.). This gives a figure of around 73 additional children aged between 12 and 14 years (this includes an additional 7 children aged 15 to 17 with a disability) who will require childcare (assuming that none of these children currently access out of school provision) in 2008, an additional 45 children aged 10 and 11 in 2009 and a further 66 additional children aged 7 to 9 years in 2010.
- (12) Department for Education and Skills, December 2004, 'Choice for parents, the best start for children - a ten year strategy for childcare'.
- (13)(Data Source: LA Nursery Education Grant termly headcount). An average figure has been taken as pupil numbers can fluctuate considerably from term to term e.g. the number of 4 year olds in the pvi sector in the Autumn term is lower than other terms due to the LA's single point of entry in to reception class.