

Darlington's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, 2016-17

CONTEXT

The Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, March 2016' requires local authorities to 'secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children'. In carrying out this requirement local authorities should 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents. The report should include specific reference to how they are ensuring there is sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of: disabled children, children from families in receipt of the childcare element of working tax credit or universal credit, children aged two, three and four taking up free early education, school age children and children needing holiday care.'

It should be noted that due to pressure on Local Authority finances, unlike in 2008 and 2011, no budget has been available to carry out preparatory demand research for this assessment.

INTRODUCTION

The findings (set out below) were and are in line with the main findings from previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessments and the Family and Childcare Trust's 'Childcare Costs Survey, 2016' which states that 'just 9 per cent of English local authorities had enough after-school childcare for 5-11 year old children, a gap that has widened significantly since 2011, when 28 per cent of local authorities had enough childcare for this age group'. The report adds that 'This year's survey shows persistent problems with childcare provision in the U.K. It is expensive and fails to deliver for too many working families, particularly those who are on low incomes, for parents who work atypical hours, and for parents of disabled children.' This picture is replicated in the Family and Childcare Trust's 'Holiday and Childcare Survey, July 2016' which states that 88 per cent of local authorities in Britain reported having insufficient holiday childcare....The number of children aged between four and 15 living in local authorities with insufficient holiday childcare is estimated to be

5,076,755...Just 17 per cent of responding local authorities in England...had sufficient holiday childcare for children with SEND'.

The main findings of previous childcare audits were that:

- ❖ unmet demand exists in Darlington for affordable, after-school and holiday childcare/activities for all age groups and older children (over 8 years) in particular; and
- ❖ unmet demand exists for affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare for school age children and young people with disabilities (up to the age of 18 years).

SOCIAL ISSUES DURING 2015-16

a) Demographics and Employment

Darlington's current population is 105,400, 64,800 of this population are of working age (16-64 years old). Since 2012 we have seen a reduction of working age population of almost two per cent due to Darlington's ageing population. Within this working age population, 79 per cent are economically active (in work or unemployed), 58 per cent of these people work in the borough and 21 per cent commute out of the Borough to work.

On almost all indices Darlington's economy has out performed regional and national growth trends. Recent trends show an improving picture regarding the skills and productivity of Darlington residents, with an increase in the employment rate, average earnings, coupled with dramatic reductions in the claimant count and unemployment rate. Darlington has a healthy employment rate of 73.5 per cent; taken as a percentage of the economically active population aged 16 - 64. Darlington's employment rate is above the North East average of 69.5 per cent, third of all 12 North East authorities and performing just under the national average (73.7 per cent). The unemployment rate fell from 10.5 per cent (Jan 2012-Dec 2012) to 6.9 per cent (Jan 2015- Dec 2015). This equates to a reduction in unemployment in the borough of 1,800 people, leaving 3,600 of the economically active population currently unemployed.

Since January 2013 Darlington's claimant count, the measure of people claiming Job seekers allowance or universal credit while actively seeking

work, has reduced by two point eight per cent currently sitting at 1,945 claims or three per cent of the working age population.

The productivity of jobs within the borough (measured by Gross Value Added per hour worked), has grown by 5.8 per cent since 2012, much higher than national growth for the same time period of just 0.1 per cent. Darlington businesses value to the national economy due to the production of products and services has grown by 8.9 per cent between 2013 and 2014 now standing at just over £2.5 billion, this was the 5th highest percentage growth nationally of 228 areas, the top four are all London boroughs.

Darlington's business base is characterised by a smaller number (two point seven per cent) of medium to large businesses (those with more than 50 employees), 87 per cent of Darlington businesses are micro businesses employing less than 10 employees with a further 11 per cent being small businesses with between 10 and 50 employees. Darlington currently has approximately 4,892 businesses including sole traders. The most recent, available data shows that in 2014, 90 per cent or 45,100 of all jobs in Darlington are within the Service sector. Within that Public Administration, Education and Health sector is the accounts for 33 per cent or 16,500 jobs. Financial & Other Business Services account for 22 per cent (11,000) jobs. Wholesale & Retail including Motor trades is 15 per cent (7,500), manufacturing is seven point two per cent (3,600) and Information & Communication is six point two per cent (3,100).

The only indices which has seen a reduction since 2012 is Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) which has reduced in real terms by £342 per person, per year whereas nationally this has increased by £260 per person, per year. GDHI takes into account the combined incomes of all people sharing a particular household or place of residence, and includes every form of income (e.g. salaries and wages, pensions, benefits etc.). The recent reduction in Darlington's GDHI can be attributed to two factors; the welfare reforms and Darlington's ageing population. When considering Darlington's working families, this indicates less income being available to spend on childcare.

The 'Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Resident Analysis' (Nomis website, accessed 1st July 2016) indicates that since 2010 the proportion of full-time workers in the Borough has increased slightly by 1.5 per cent or 500 extra workers. At the same time the proportion of residents in part time employment has also grown but at a more rapid rate of 4.5 per cent or 700 additional part time workers.

Date	No. of Full Time Workers	No. of Part-Time Workers
2010	32,400	15,600
2011	36,300	14,600
2012	32,700	17,100
2013	31,800	14,900
2014	33,900	16,300

Since 2012 Darlington has identified four key growth locations for economic growth and regeneration. These include the North Western Growth Zone (Faverdale); Central Growth Zone (Town centre, central park, Bank top), Eastern Growth Zone (Lingfield Point, Link 66) and the Durham Tees Valley Airport Growth Zone. Since 2012 these areas have seen major investment and regeneration in excess of £150 million pounds.

Regeneration projects are evident throughout the Borough of Darlington, for example, Central Park saw the opening of £6.6 million Business Central in April 2015 to support start and growth on businesses. 2015 also saw the opening of the £38 million National Biologics Manufacturing Centre, a ground breaking development by the Centre for Process Innovation that positions Darlington as a national and international centre for the biologics and bio-pharma industries. Future developments include further investments in Central Park by Teesside University in the National Horizons Centre and the Centre for Process Innovation in the Factories of the Future which are planned for 2017-2019. These developments will all act as catalysts for the creation of new jobs, particularly in the Biologics, advanced manufacturing and sub-sea sectors. Central Park will continue to be developed with the added attraction of it being part of the Tees Valley Enterprise Zone programme as well as current work underway to explore the possibility of it becoming a recognised Science park.

Other core regeneration activity delivered includes the £30 million pound Feethams Leisure Development, incorporating a multi-screen cinema, hotel and bars and restaurants which has created new jobs and additional town centre footfall. £10 million pound Opus North retail development on North Road as well as multi-million-pound, mixed-use commercial property development on the former Torrington site off Yarm Road including a 60 room hotel, restaurant and other commercial sites.

Finally; plans are being developed for investment in Bank Top station to improve it as an economic driver for the whole of Tees Valley and to exploit opportunities from strategic investment to decrease journey times to London (source: Economic Regeneration Team). It is clear, given the regeneration

activity taking place in Darlington that, alongside the creation of jobs, there needs to be sufficient, flexible, affordable, high quality childcare in the borough to meet the needs of working families.

a) Housing

The Council is currently producing the Darlington Local Plan for the period 2016 - 2036, which will be adopted in 2018. The policies in the plan will set out the number of dwellings required in the Borough during the period and allocate the sites on which they should be built. To inform the plan, the Council commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in 2015, which identified a need for 11,160 additional dwellings over the 25-year period 2011-36. This is a significant increase from previous projections and will require a step change in rates of housing delivery in coming years, to around 500 dwellings per annum. The SHMA also sets out the mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the next twenty years, based on household and population projections and taking account of migration and demographic change. In the short term, residential development in the Borough continues, with new dwellings being recorded on sites at Lingfield Point, West Park and Central Park, as well as a range of smaller sites in locations around the Borough. (source: Economic Growth Team). Again, the creation of additional family housing indicates a need for childcare which meets the needs of working families.

b) Other Factors

It is extremely difficult to predict how childcare demand will change over time, particularly in such a changing political landscape, for example, it is unclear what effect the decision to leave the European Union will have on the local labour market but this in turn affects a family's ability to pay for childcare. Parental behaviour with regard to childcare can be influenced by so many fluctuating variables such as parental employment type (for example does the parent have a job with constantly changing shift work or has one parent changed their working patterns due to their partner losing their job), family income, childcare availability, the age of the child, where the family lives, do they have transport to childcare or are they near a bus route, the accessibility and availability of 'informal' childcare such as grandparents, other relations or friends, are there cultural barriers around using childcare, does the family have a disabled child, are older children in the family expected to care for younger siblings, etc. Also, it is not necessarily the case that austerity will lead to a decline in childcare demand. One effect can be that a particular age range or type of childcare is in high demand, for example, baby places. An explanation for this could be that, despite improved maternity and paternity rights, women may be returning to work earlier as a result of male unemployment.

Other factors having an impact on parental ability to pay for childcare and childcare demand are the changes to elements of the welfare system such as income support for lone parents, the freezing of work age benefits generally, tax credits and local housing allowance until 2020 and the reduction of the household benefit cap to £20,000 from April 2016. This is compounded by the fact that 'childcare is still a significant item of family expenditure. A family with one child under two in part-time childcare and one child at an after-school club can now expect to pay £7,933 per year for childcare, over 28 per cent of median household income in the U.K. and 25.8 per cent of the gross median annual earnings of a primary school teacher' ('Childcare Costs Survey, 2016', Family and Childcare Trust).

PROGRESS DURING 2015-16

During 2015-16 the childcare sufficiency duty has remained part of the remit of the Development and Commissioning Team within Services for People. Childcare place data continues to be collected by People and Families' Information Support (PFIS), a term-time supply audit was conducted in December 2015 and a holiday supply audit in July 2016.

As part of the last supply data collection, as well as collecting quantitative supply data, the supply questionnaire was extended to gather qualitative information from providers about the effect the recession has had on their business, how they feel the Local Authority can assist them and what their development plans are for the future. This information is combined with feedback about childcare business sustainability collected by the Childcare Development Officers, to give a picture of how healthy/ robust the local childcare market is.

On the childcare demand side, a simple parental questionnaire is located on the Darlington Borough Council childcare audit website. Unmet parental demand is recorded on a regular basis and can be fed into childcare assessments and reviews. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment continues to be available on the Council's website so that parents are aware of the Local Authority's duty regarding Childcare Sufficiency.

During 2015-16 the Early Years Team has visited all settings to undertake an annual audit of provision, to identify strengths and areas for development in order to improve the quality and to increase capacity. In addition to this settings are supported to analyse and use their child progress data which is obtained from the Darlington tracking tool; this enables them to reflect on the service they deliver and to assess how this meets the needs of the local

community. There are currently 94 per cent of settings who are judged good or better by Ofsted. One setting is awaiting their first inspection.

Childminders offer a flexible service to parents often being able to accommodate early mornings and late finishes, weekend and overnight care. They are able to take children to and pick up from local schools; however there are a small number of schools who have no or very few childminders picking up from them. To address this 'childminding as a career' is to be promoted in specific areas of need. Childcare Development Officers are visiting all childminders to complete an annual audit which will highlight their strengths and areas for development in order to improve the quality and increase capacity. There are currently 33 childminders with contracts with the Local Authority enabling them to offer free childcare to two year olds and 20 childminders with contracts enabling them to offer free childcare to three and four year olds, 17 of these 20 childminders also deliver free childcare for two year olds.

Developing Quality Childminders training is offered to potential childminders in Darlington and is delivered by the Childcare Development Officers which is priced competitively to other local authorities and training companies. Priority for this training is given to those who live in areas of unmet demand, that is: serving a particular geographical area; offering services to disabled children; and/or offering services to children over the age of eight. During 2015-16 seventeen prospective childminders have attended training delivered by the Childcare Development Officers, they are subsequently supported to register and offered continuing support to ensure quality.

There are currently 91 active childminders in Darlington, 95 per cent of them are judged good or better by Ofsted. Of the childminders who have completed the initial training offered by Darlington Borough Council, 100 per cent have been judged good or better at their first Ofsted inspection.

Many of the out of school clubs in Darlington form part of a daycare provider and as such will be included within their Ofsted inspection therefore will not be issued a separate inspection grading. The Childcare Development Officers continue to support the stand alone clubs to increase quality and capacity.

The annual audit will continue to be rolled out to group care settings focusing on the new Common Inspection Framework.

The Early Years Team continue to work with schools in the target areas, both maintained and academies, and the private, voluntary and independent sector, to develop and create new free funded places for two year olds. Providers are creating some sessional places, some of which are flexible and some of which are stretched over more than 38 weeks, thereby creating a mixed market that

offers choice and diversity for parents when they are looking for a place for their child. Settings' Local Offer is detailed on People and Families Information Support's (PFIS) database. Childcare Development Officers have worked in partnership with PFIS and childminders to include their Local Offer on the same database therefore enabling parents to access information and choice of childcare.

One of the Early Years Team's focuses for 2016 - 17 is to support providers to plan for the implementation of plus 15 hours from September 2017.

The Local Authority also continues to operate a brokerage service via the Darlington People and Families' Information Support Service whereby childcare enquiries for children with disabilities who require more specialist placements are progressed by the Childcare Development Officers. In 2015-16 by far the most prevalent area being identified in cases of special educational needs was that of communication and interaction, of the 27 settings which received support, 16 were regarding the area of communication and interaction, this equates to a total of 52 out of 64 children supported and the data so far indicates that this will be replicated in 2016-17. During 2016 - 2017 the Childcare Development Officers plan to complete an audit with all stand-alone out of school childcare, as this is the area highlighted in previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessments as not meeting families' requirements. This will include a specific focus on provision for children with special educational needs and /or disability. Officers will gather information on any specialist equipment, access and resources the provision has, as well as any training practitioners have undertaken. The audit will also include information on children that attend or have attended and details of their specific requirements and how this was supported. Officers will also be requesting that out of school childcare inform the People and Families' Information Service of their Local Offer which will then be included on their website in order to provide information to parents.

The focus for the Early Years Team during 2016 - 17 will be to continue to support existing settings to increase quality and sustainability by offering advice in relation to their identified needs. The annual audit with settings and childminders will support the identification of their priorities.

LOCAL CHILDCARE MARKET, 2016 - SUPPLY OF CHILDCARE (please see the Borough map on page 32 showing the Early Intervention and Prevention Areas).

FUNDED PLACES FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

During 2015-16 the 'two year old funded places' project group has met every six weeks. There are a number of work streams within this project, for example, monitoring of the existing number and quality of places, the creation of new

places to meet expected demand within schools, with childminders and within the private and voluntary sectors, capital monitoring and marketing of the offer.

a) Eligible Children - demand

Darlington Local Authority implemented the DfE's national September 2014 eligibility criteria for a funded two year old place six months early, from April 2014. In Darlington parents are also able to access the 'stretched entitlement' whereby the full offer is accessed over more weeks of the year, including school holidays, at a rate of fewer hours per week, a pattern which is often better for working families. In April 2015 an on-line two year olds eligibility checker was introduced on to the Council's web pages which enable parents/carers, professionals, childcare settings and schools to assess a child's eligibility for a free childcare place for those children who meet the low family income criteria. This has made the whole process easier for parents by significantly reducing the number of steps involved. For those children who meet this criteria, parents are issued with a letter either by post, by e-mail or text and a list of the childcare providers who operate the scheme. Parents can then approach providers and choose a place for their child, support is still available via the PFIS and the Early Years Team for those parents who require support in accessing a place or for those children who have specific requirements. For those children who are eligible for a place under the non low income criteria, parents can either approach a childcare provider directly for an assessment or they can still contact the PFIS.

During the period July 2015 to July 2016 an on-going marketing campaign has been undertaken locally in order to increase participation rates in the scheme. Families meeting the Free School Meals and the DLA criteria are included on a termly list released by the Department for Work and Pensions, where possible, children who are already accessing a place are removed from the list and the remaining families are sent a postcard informing them about the free childcare offer. Children's Centre staff are then able to contact families who are still not accessing their entitlement and provide appropriate support. An information sharing agreement is currently with Harrogate and District Foundation Trust to enable health visitors' access to this list, they will also then be able to provide appropriate support where a place is not being accessed. Marketing in the past has included adverts/articles in the 'Darlington Together' borough wide magazine, Facebook advertising, posts on Twitter, an article in the Education Direct magazine, advertising in the Northern Echo, advertising on local bus tickets, bus stand adverts, an article in the e-newsletter for local businesses, an article in the Council house residents' newsletter, posters and leaflets which are distributed to schools, providers, professionals including health visitors and Jobcentre Plus and other interested stakeholders, information included in the birth packs, adverts on Star Radio and a radio interview, information streamed

on to display screens in the Dolphin Centre, libraries and in the Customer Contact Centre, free DfE video screen advertising in medical centres, GPs, chemists and in the DfE building, People & Families' Information Support outreach to Children's Centres, at Darlington by the Sea event, at the Community Carnival, National Play Day, Dolphin Centre, school parent groups, parent and toddler groups, at swimming lessons during school holidays and information sessions with the social work teams, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Mobile Advice Co-operative. In 2015-16, due to reduced budgets and less resources, marketing of the offer has significantly decreased although an advert regularly appears in the borough wide magazine. However, existing networks, such as health visitors, the Children's Centres, the PFIS, schools and childcare providers are utilised to promote the entitlement and the most effective method of 'spreading the word' is of course parental word of mouth.

Children who are eligible can access their place the term after the term in which they become two years old and funding continues until the term in which they turn three and they gain access to their three and four year old early years entitlement. If a child is accessing a funded place and their circumstances change and they no longer meet the eligibility criteria, the project group have agreed that the child should remain in the funded place. Only providers who are deemed by Ofsted to be at least rated 'good' are admitted on to the provider list, those providers who fall below this Ofsted grading whilst they are on the list are assessed on a case by case basis and where appropriate, they are allowed to remain on the list and intensive support is given by the local authority. The quality of places on the scheme are also monitored by the Early Years Team and eligibility and admission processes are monitored by the Development and Commissioning Team.

Take-up data has risen from 59 per cent in Spring 2015 to 83 per cent in Summer 2016, this equates to 440 children occupying a funded place and is Darlington's highest take-up rate since the scheme began. The increases are a result of the introduction of the on-line eligibility checker, more places being implemented in schools and greater parental awareness. Of these 440 filled places, 321 children are in a private day nursery, playgroup or with a childminder (73 per cent) and 119 children are in schools (27 per cent). When considering take-up rates, it is important to note that, some parents have commented they feel a child who is in the term following their second birthday is too young to access a place, some parents would prefer to delay access until their child is a little older. There is no feedback from parents to suggest that they are unable to access a place, however, there have been a small number of complaints from parents who would like a place but are not eligible according to the national criteria. Patterns of take-up are interesting, they show that particularly when looking at the Working Tax Credit families, parents are willing and able to travel

to access their free childcare place, with places in provision in the west end of town continuing to be accessed by children from across the borough.

b) Place Creation - supply

Darlington was given a place creation figure by the DfE of 634 and there is well in excess of 640 high quality places in existence across the borough in private day nurseries, playgroups, nursery schools and nursery units and with childminders. Work is on-going to increase the number of places available with childminders and projects are being developed to increase places in the Eastbourne area and along the North Road corridor. Also, potentially new providers to the borough are provided with information about free childcare for two year olds. To ensure sufficiency of places and choice and diversity for parents, it is good practice to create places over and above the DfE target because places are fluid i.e. childminders in particular can move on and off the provider list with little notice, depending upon their personal circumstances.

FREE, FLEXIBLE ENTITLEMENT FOR THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS

Darlington has historically had a strong private and voluntary childcare sector. Currently, our three and four year olds can access their Flexible Free Entitlement (FFE) in 19 private day nurseries (out of a total of 19), ten playgroups (out of 11), with 20 childminders (out of 91), in two nursery schools and in 17 nursery units so parents can choose from a mixed market. Take-up of nursery FFE in Darlington, as with most other local authorities, is high. Although nursery education is not statutory, the offer is universal and has been up and running for many years. Data indicates that in Darlington in January 2016, 96 per cent of three and four year olds were accessing their free 15 hour a week place. This figure compares with an average of 98 per cent across the North East local authorities, the data range is 94 to 104 per cent (for those local authorities who import more children to early education than they export). The average figure in England is 95 per cent.

In January 2016, the proportion of three and four year olds accessing their early education in the Borough in the differing sectors is as follows: 854 children (33 per cent) in the private, voluntary and independent sector and 1,716 children (67 per cent) in nursery schools, nursery units and reception classes in primary schools and in a special school. Split further the data shows that of the three year olds accessing early education in the Borough, 662 children (51 per cent) were in the private, voluntary and independent sector and 632 children (49 per cent) were in nursery schools and nursery units in primary schools. Of the four year olds accessing early education in the Borough, 192 (15 per cent) were in the private, voluntary and independent sector and 1,088 children (85 per cent) were in nursery schools, nursery units and reception classes in primary schools

and in a special school. (data source: Statistical First Release, Department for Education, published July 2016)

The Government's Childcare Bill became law in Spring 2016 and it includes a duty to implement an increase from 15 to 30 hours a week of free early education and childcare from September 2017 for those eligible three and four year olds whose parents want this. Darlington local authority has been informed by the DfE that around 820 children resident in the borough will be eligible. The eligibility criteria states that two parent families and lone parent families must be working a minimum of the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum/living wage to qualify, this includes self-employed parents/carers and there are some exceptions, such as where parents are on parental, maternity or paternity leave, adoption leave or statutory sick leave, where one parent meets the criteria and the other parent has substantial caring responsibilities (based on specific benefits received for caring) and where one parent meets the criteria and the other parent is disabled or incapacitated (based on receipt of specific benefits). Parents will be able to 'stretch' their additional 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year i.e. 570 hours a year in total, over the school holidays. Unlike free childcare for two year olds, if a child's family circumstances change and they are no longer eligible for the additional 15 hours, these will be removed following a 'grace period' of around half a term. There are circumstances where it is beneficial for a child's well being to remain in the childcare place, for example, in cases involving domestic violence and local authorities will have discretion to extend the period in which the child receives the additional free hours for a short time.

Of the 1,008 three and four year olds who accessed early education in Darlington in the private, voluntary and independent sector in June 2016, 438 children (43 per cent) were attending the provision for more than 15 hours a week and 183 of the 1,008 children (18 per cent) were accessing 30 hours or more a week. This is relevant because not all eligible children will need their place extending, some of them will already be accessing a place in the private and voluntary sector for longer than their current weekly entitlement of 15 hours. In April 2016 Darlington local authority submitted a successful expression of interest for the DfE's capital bidding round, having been invited to develop this further in late June, the local authority formed a task and finish project group and contacted all private day nurseries, playgroups, nursery schools and primary schools and in August 2016 a capital application was submitted. Darlington was classified as a medium rated authority, based on the expected number of eligible children and was therefore limited to the submission of a maximum of four projects. The DfE are expected to announce successful projects in December 2016, with capital funding being released January to March 2017. In addition to the capital bidding round, for those

areas of the borough where eligible children are not already accessing early education for more than 15 hours a week, the DfE is encouraging strong partnership working between all sectors of the childcare market. For example, the additional hours could be delivered by a school working in partnership with local childminders or an after school club and the introduction in September 2016 of the parents'/carers' and childcare providers' 'right to request' wrap-around and holiday childcare on school sites may assist with this. Development work regarding the +15 hours free childcare in Darlington is underway, parents are being encouraged to complete an on-line survey which provides useful place planning data about how many additional hours will be used, how they will be accessed and in which type of settings and work is also taking place regarding an on-line link to the HMRC +15 hours/ Tax Free Childcare eligibility checker. Feedback from the Early Implementer local authorities will also inform Darlington's plans.

There are no indications via the PFIS unmet demand list or the childcare questionnaire that the current supply for FFE places for three and four year olds in the Borough does not meet demand. However, this is an area which will need to be monitored, providers have increased the number of places they are able to offer for funded two year olds and given this duty to increase the entitlement hours for eligible three and four year olds, we must ensure that two year olds are able to seamlessly move on to their FFE after they turn three years old and that three and four year olds who are not eligible for the additional hours are able to access their universal entitlement.

CHILDMINDERS

Since the 2011 CSA we had seen a steady increase in the number of registered and 'active' childminders in the Borough from 89 in March 2011 to 105 in March 2014, this has levelled off slightly with 96 in June 2015 and 91 in July 2016. However, there are still significantly fewer registered and 'active' childminders in the Borough than there were eight years ago, for example, 140 in March 2008. As well as the recession, the change in Ofsted registration procedures may have had an effect. Also, although the revised EYFS implemented in September 2012 is simpler, this change and the need for further training may also have had a detrimental effect on numbers. It is expected that the implementation of Childminder Agencies may also have an impact on the number of prospective childminders undertaking registration training.

A childminder vacancy analysis which was conducted in July 2016 showed that Area 1 still has the highest percentage of childminders with no vacancies at 61 per cent, compared with Area two with 56 per cent with no vacancies and Area three with 32 per cent. Areas two and three have the highest proportion of childminders with two plus vacancies.

OUT OF SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY CARE

The main areas of unmet childcare demand identified in the 2011 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment were after school and holiday childcare/activities and childcare/activities for children and young people with a disability. As the numbers of out of school and holiday clubs in the Borough have remained fairly static during 2013-16 and the child population will only have changed minimally, the comparison between the number of registered after school and holiday club places per 100 children per Area in 2008, 2010 and 2012, set out in Table 1 below, remains relevant:

Table 1 - Out of School Provision

2008 Area Stats 2010 Area Stats 2012 Area Stats	No. of registered breakfast club places per 100 population of children aged 5-14 years (17 years with a disability) attending schools in the Area	No. of registered after school places per 100 population of children aged 5-14 years (17 years with a disability) attending schools in the Area	No. of registered holiday club places per 100 population of children aged 5-14 years (17 years with a disability) resident in the Area
1	6 8 4	10 16 5	6 5 3
2	5 3 1	5 8 1	5 5 2
3	3 10 2	8 6 2	3 6 3

SUMMARY

In 2015-16 the number of private day nurseries in the Borough has remained static at 19. During 2015-16 one playgroup closed in Area 1 but this was due to low numbers of children attending so this is unlikely to have much of an impact on the local childcare market. This leaves 11 playgroups in Darlington, 10 of which offer early education. During the same period, after school clubs have remained fairly static at 22, breakfast clubs have stayed at 15 and holiday clubs at 22. Childminder 'churn' is fairly low at present with a reduction in overall numbers of five in the last year. In summary, Darlington's childcare market in 2015-16 has remained fairly stable. The average number of monthly enquiries received by Darlington People and Families' Information Support between July 2015 to June 2016 is 23 and the number of unmet childcare enquiries has remained fairly stable, perhaps suggesting that although the market is not growing there has not been a surge in unmet demand.

The childcare market as a whole in Darlington can be assessed regarding quality by using the Ofsted grade. In July 2016 the Ofsted gradings given to the various settings in Darlington were as set out below in Table Two:

Table Two - Percentage Ofsted Gradings (source: PFIS as at July 2016)

2016 Ofsted	Outstanding percentage	Good	Requires improvement/ Satisfactory	Inadequate	Met	Not met with actions	Total
Private Day Nurseries	21	63	7	0	9	0	100
Holiday Clubs	10	60	10	0	20	0	100
Out of School Clubs	13	62	8	4	13	0	100
Playgroups	1	93	6	0	0	0	100
Childminders	9	49	10	0	30	2	100

Childcare providers who only work with children from the end of Early Years Foundation Stage are registered on the childcare register. They are expected to meet the requirements relating to people, premises and provision and make a declaration that they will do so. They are inspected to ensure they are still complying with these requirements and are judged as either meeting the requirements of the register or not meeting the requirements i.e. 'Met' or 'Unmet'.

In Spring 2016 the average cost of a full-time place (50 hours a week) in holiday childcare provision in Darlington was £120.36, this compares with a North East regional average of £122.52 and an average in England of £122.34. The childcare element of the Working Tax Credit which is only available to the most deprived working families, the gradual introduction of Universal Credits with an increased childcare costs limit (85 per cent as opposed to 70 per cent) and the new Tax Free Childcare scheme have been introduced to assist families with the cost of childcare. However, providers are facing challenging times with the introduction of the living wage, pension auto-enrolment, pressure to increase the number of government funded, free early education places they provide where it is difficult to make a profit and uncertainty regarding the government's cost of childcare review and future funding rates. Taking this into account, it is not difficult to see why the Family and Childcare Trust have concluded that 'High costs remain a barrier to parental employment. Parents often still struggle to find the flexible childcare that enables them to work. We do not have enough childcare for disabled children and those in rural areas. The workforce is poorly paid yet many childcare providers struggle to make ends meet'. (source: local data - PFIS & national data - 2016 Childcare Costs Survey, Family and Childcare Trust).

As part of the 2016 supply audit the PFIS issued a qualitative questionnaire asking local childcare providers about the sustainability of their businesses, how they think the childcare market is changing, what they see as the challenges

ahead, etc. and the responses, some of which are quoted below, are all along a similar theme:

'Parents are having to reduce childcare due to less tax credit entitlement'

'I've got even fewer children than last year and people are in more financial difficulties'

'The rate of local authority pay for the three-four year olds will not compensate our fees what parents would be originally paying for wrap around care'

'Rate per hour from the Council is a lot less than my hourly rate!'

'I need to look at my provision, costs and reconsider if it's viable to continue'.

DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE

The average number of monthly childcare enquiries to the Darlington People and Families' Information Support Service in 2015-16 was 23. One explanation for the relatively low number of enquiries, apart from the obvious fact that families who lose income into the family home may no longer be able to afford to pay for childcare, could be that even parents entering the employment market are opting to maximise their income by using relatives and friends to provide informal childcare or by exercising 'shift parenting' to cover typical work patterns. Indeed, a recent survey showed that 27 per cent of parents regularly use grandparents to provide out of school care during term times (DfE Childcare and Early Years survey of parents).

Another possible explanation for the decrease in the number of childcare enquiries could be linked to the gender bias towards women in public sector employment. Recent cuts in the public sector workforce have led to a disproportionate number of jobs lost amongst women, who are then much less likely to access paid childcare. In addition, from April 2015, to make the customer journey easier for parents/carers, childcare providers and schools, the eligibility checkers for free childcare for two year olds and the Early Years Pupil Premium for three and four year olds was introduced on Darlington Council's website. The two year olds checker provides eligible parents/carers with proof of eligibility and a list of providers so there is no longer any need for parents/carers to contact the People and Families' Information Service to access a place.

During 2015 and 2016 there have been 17 recorded cases of unmet childcare demand, the corresponding figure in 2014-15 was 9, in 2013-14 was 5 and in 2012-13 it was 9. The nature of the unmet demand is linked to finding childcare

for children with a disability or additional needs, a lack of childminders in areas of the Borough and childcare to cover shift patterns of work, outside of normal working hours.

Regarding children and young people with a disability, Darlington People and Families' Information Support hold information on childminders who have expressed an interest in working with disabled children and children with additional needs, however, children are not exclusively placed with these childminders. Parents and families with disabled children and children with additional needs are given a choice of childminders as all families are. When families have difficulty locating a suitable childminder then a Childcare Development Officer will support them using their local knowledge. Once a suitable childminder is found the childcare provider can then access support from our Early Years Inclusion team, if required.

Darlington People and Families' Information Support gather feedback on parental experiences of the local childcare market from the postal or on-line 'Have your say' questionnaire. Between July 2015 and June 2016 71 questionnaires were completed. Of these 71 responses:

10 stated that local childcare is not available at the times when it is needed;
5 said that childcare is not available in a convenient location;
3 thought that childcare is not of a good standard;
17 parents explained that childcare is not affordable;
14 stated they have been unable to take up employment or training due to a lack of childcare;
13 responses have had problems accessing breakfast, after school or holiday club places for their child;
6 parents have had problems accessing childcare /activities for their child or young person with a disability;
11 parents have had problems accessing a funded place for a two year old;
8 response stated problems accessing a nursery place for a three or four year old; and
24 parents or carers said their childcare needs will change over next 12 months!

Some of the additional comments from parents on the survey include:

'I have been using childcare facilities for the last 12 years. There are very few holiday clubs that cater for hard working families. There are many available for 10-3 but there are not many families that work those hours. Child care facilities need to start thinking about the families who have no choice but to work from before 9 in the morning until after 5 in the evening - that also provide activities that the older child wants to attend.'

'There is no care for a child with a disability.'

'Childcare vouchers are available; however the cost of childcare increases annually and has a huge impact on monthly outgoings.'

'I am returning to work. There is a lack of childcare in the rural areas.'

'I find it really frustrating that I can only afford to put my child into nursery for 6 hours a week as I get no funding. I use this time to go to work.'

Clearly, the main issues for these parents are the need for local childcare to be flexible, the cost of childcare, access to holiday and out of school provision, and access to suitable childcare and activities for children and young people with a disability.

Those parents who are dissatisfied with the choice of childcare in the Borough are able to comment via the Darlington People and Families' Information Support Service or those who have not used this service, can submit comments or complaints through Darlington Borough Council's standard complaints system.

The picture regarding unmet childcare demand in Darlington is still not that different from the national situation, as the Family and Childcare Trust highlight 'unless these problems (in the childcare market) are addressed urgently, ...they will limit the effectiveness of other government support and prevent families from moving into work and out of poverty.' (Childcare Costs Survey, 2016, Family and Childcare Trust).

Given continuing economic austerity and the CSA findings, the priorities for the Local Authority particularly with regard to children who are aged 5 to 14 years or 18 years for young disabled people, continue to be to:

- assist childcare providers/ activities to be sustainable;
- work with settings and other interested stakeholders to continually improve the quality of care and make settings/ activities more inclusive; and to
- provide parents with up-to-date information about financial assistance towards childcare costs, including any available tax credits.

The Local Authority's 2016-17 actions towards childcare sufficiency are set out in the table on pages 21 to 31.

References and Information Sources

Data re. economic trends in Darlington - Darlington Borough Council's Economic Regeneration Team

Birth estimates - Organisational Planning, Darlington Borough Council

Housing Monitoring Database - Darlington Borough Council's Planning Policy Team

Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics website

Darlington People and Families' Information Support statistics

Darlington Early Years Team data

The Childcare Act, 2006

The Children and Families' Act, 2014

'Early Education and Childcare - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2014', Department for Education.

'Early Education and Childcare - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, 2016', Department for Education.

The Childcare Bill, 2016

Family and Childcare Trust '2016 Childcare Costs and Sufficiency Survey Questionnaire for English Local Authorities'

Family and Childcare Trust '2016 Holiday Childcare Survey', July 2016.

Statistical First Release, Department for Education, published July 2016.

Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan

Childcare Sufficiency Targets: Improve access to out of school and holiday childcare/ activities, particularly for children aged 5 to 14 years or 18 years for disabled young people & to ensure that all childcare/activities are inclusive.

The CSA research was based on the 9 Benchmarks of Childcare Sufficiency:

- ❖ number of places (B1)
- ❖ accessibility of places (B2)
- ❖ range of places (B3)
- ❖ quality of places (B4)
- ❖ flexibility of places (B5)
- ❖ access to sufficient knowledge & information about places (B6)
- ❖ affordability of places (B7)
- ❖ inclusivity of places (B8)
- ❖ sustainability of places (B9)

Gap identified by 2011 CSA & subsequent reviews	2016-17 Objectives	2016-17 Actions	Responsibility & timeframe	Outcome
<p><u>Benchmarks 1, 2 and 3</u></p> <p><u>Maintained Nursery Schools / Units</u></p> <p>Supply is sufficient to meet the free entitlement for three and four year olds at present. However, development work is underway across the childcare sector to implement a</p>	No action required.			

sufficiency of +15 hours childcare places from September 2017.				
<u>Day Nursery Provision</u> Overall volume and location for this type of care is sufficient across the Borough.	No action required.			
<u>Childminders</u> Small gaps in some areas for day/sessional care indicated by parents but occupancy is relatively low therefore additional sessions are not required.	Support childminders to improve their quality and sustainability. Enable childminders to keep up-to-date with new regulations. Support childminders to advertise their services.	* Continue to provide support from the Early Years Team regarding quality and sustainability. * Provide support from PFIS to advertise childminder services.	Childcare Development Officers, Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2017.	Increase the number of childminders in the Borough offering good quality, inclusive, sustainable care.
<u>Pre-School Playgroup Provision</u> Gaps exist between parents' ideal use and current supply; however, provision has closed recently due to low occupancy rates. Overall volume is sufficient.	Support playgroups to improve their quality and their sustainability. Enable playgroups to keep up-to-date with new regulations. Support playgroups to advertise their services.	* Continue to provide support from the Early Years Team regarding quality and sustainability. * Provide support from PFIS to advertise playgroup services.	Childcare Development Officers, Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2017.	Increase the number of playgroups in the Borough offering good quality, inclusive, sustainable care.

<p><u>Funded Places for Two Year Olds</u></p> <p>Ensure that there continues to be a sufficiency of funded places in the Borough to cater for 40 per cent children.</p> <p>Need to increase the number of funded two year olds places offered by childminders and continue to support the schools to offer places to two year olds.</p>	<p>Support private and voluntary childcare sector to improve their quality, sustainability and marketing and offer funded places, including the 'stretched offer', across the Borough.</p> <p>Support private and voluntary providers offering places to two year olds to also offer FFE for three and four year olds.</p> <p>Ensure prospective good quality providers are encouraged to offer services to reinforce sufficiency of places and give parents choice and diversity.</p> <p>Support academy and maintained schools, where appropriate, to meet the target of a sufficiency of places and provide good quality, flexible (including the 'stretched offer'), inclusive funded places for two year olds and FFE for three and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Continue to provide support from the Early Years Team regarding quality and sustainability. * Provide support from DBC to enable the termly headcount for funded children to be undertaken. * Continue to advertise funded places. * Continue to keep parents, providers and other interested stakeholders up-to-date regarding the offer. 	<p>Childcare Development Officers, Foundation Stage Advisory Teachers, Commissioning Projects Officer, PFIS, Organisational Planning, Finance - ongoing up to September 2017.</p>	<p>A continuation of sufficiency of funded places for two year olds.</p>
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	four year olds.			
<p><u>Holiday Care</u> (in day nurseries/schools/holiday clubs/childminders)</p> <p>Parents indicate significant gaps with demand being more than three times current supply, however, occupancy very low with provision perceived to be age inappropriate for older (11 to 14 year olds/18 year olds with a disability) age groups (<i>53 per cent of provision is in day nurseries so for 11-14 year olds demand is 10.5 times current supply with only 29 per cent occupancy</i>).</p>	<p>Build on the infrastructure developed by the Holiday Childcare Pilot, 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' and D-CATCH to ensure that fully inclusive holiday places are available for older children, to meet considerable unmet demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Maintain links with existing holiday childcare pilot providers (in particular those who cater for children aged 11 and over), Sports Development Team, Groundwork and venue providers and ensure they are aware of considerable demand. * Ensure parents have access to timely, up-to-date information about inclusive holiday places (particularly for older children) via the PFIS, schools, Children's Centres, mail outs, providers and other media. * Ensure parents have access to income maximisation sessions via Children's Centres. * Monitor unmet demand. 	<p>O-11 Development & Commissioning Manager, Childcare Development Officers, Commissioning Project Officer, PFIS Manager - ongoing up to September 2017.</p>	<p>Availability of inclusive holiday places for older children.</p>

<p><u>After School</u> (in day nurseries, out of school clubs, childminders but not including reliable school activities) Childminder market for after school in some areas is sufficient; however, there are significant gaps for other provision with demand being two point seven times current supply. Parental feedback suggests choice restricted by lack of reliable provision in schools.</p>	<p>Meet the considerable unmet demand for regular, reliable after school activities on school sites.</p>	<p>* Monitor unmet demand and where possible, identify providers to 'plug gaps' for example, if schools are able, speak to the Governing Bodies or have discussions with local after school clubs or holiday providers who might be more age appropriate. Ensure schools/providers and parents/carers are aware of the 'right to request' wrap around childcare on school sites.</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers, PFIS, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2017..</p>	<p>Met demand for after school care on school sites.</p>
<p><u>Breakfast Club</u> (in schools, day nurseries, childminders) There is over capacity across the Borough and therefore no need to increase sessions, however, parents indicate there is a small gap for sessions for 11-14 year olds/ 18 year olds with a disability.</p>	<p>Close the minimal gap across the Borough for 11-14/ 18 year olds with a disability.</p>	<p>* Monitor unmet demand for breakfast provision for older children via PFIS and where possible, identify providers to 'plug gaps'.</p>	<p>* Childcare Development Officers, PFIS, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2017.</p>	<p>Improve access to breakfast clubs/ early morning 'safe place to be' for 11-14 year olds/ 18 year olds with a disability.</p>
<p>Benchmark 4 49 per cent of parents</p>	<p>Improve the quality of</p>	<p>* Monitor the outcome of</p>	<p>Foundation Stage Advisory</p>	<p>Improved quality of care</p>

<p>reported the quality of childcare to be high. Disabled parents were more likely to have negative perceptions of quality of care (16 per cent) compared to parents without a disability (11 per cent). Parents with a disabled child are also more likely to have negative perceptions of quality (23 per cent compared with 10 per cent for parents without a disabled child). Holiday clubs display highest 'churn' (change of customer) at 28 per cent, closely followed by childminders at 27 per cent. Parents suggested areas for improvement are communication about a child's progress (18 per cent), extended opening times (11 per cent) and increased flexibility (10 per cent).</p>	care/education in settings.	<p>Ofsted inspections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Monitor reasons for childcare places either not being taken up or previously leaving a childcare place via PFIS, to find out whether quality has been a barrier. * Ensure Local Offer is up-to-date and promoted to parents/carers. 	<p>Teachers, Childcare Development Officers, PFIS, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2017.</p>	/education in settings.
<p>Benchmark 5</p> <p>Only 44 per cent of parents agree that childcare in Darlington is available on the days needed and 19 per cent feel care is not available at the times needed. Groups who</p>	<p>Improve flexibility within the childcare sector for parents and employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Monitor reasons for childcare places either not being taken up or the leaving of a childcare provider ('churn'), particularly with regard to day nurseries and 	<p>Commissioning Projects Officer, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2017.</p>	<p>Greater access to more flexible childcare places for parents.</p>

<p>have most difficulties around lack of flexible childcare arrangements are disabled parents, parents of a disabled child, families where one or more parents work nights or outside the standard working day (7:30am until 6:00pm), parents of children aged 11 years onwards and lone parents.</p> <p>Unmet demand exists in all types of care for earlier and later opening, especially for day nursery and after school clubs. Demand for overnight care is extremely low and supply is limited, requests should be assessed for this type of care on a case by case basis. Demand for weekend care is also relatively low. Between 8 and 18 per cent of parents need to change their childcare arrangements once a month. <i>Employer feedback shows that more than 1 in 10 local companies say childcare is a barrier to staff recruitment, 9 per cent say it causes problems with staff retention and 16 per cent say childcare</i></p>		<p>after school clubs, to find out how many cases are due to lack of flexibility.</p>		
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<i>problems impact on work performance.</i>				
Benchmark 6 30 per cent of parents reported that they do not feel fully informed about the childcare options available to them. Top sources of information were: internet, school, friends and relatives.	Increase in parental awareness of the PFIS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Monitor PFIS/ Service Directory website to ensure information is inclusive ie available in different languages and formats. * Ensure relevant parents are aware of the Brokerage Service and the Local Offer. * Continue with PFIS information mailouts to places where parents meet eg schools, doctors' surgeries, Jobcentre Plus * Look at alternative forms of marketing/becoming more visible/accessible as a service. 	PFIS Manager - ongoing up to September 2017.	Improved access to information about local childcare for parents.
Benchmark 7 30 per cent of parents feel that childcare is not affordable. Price acts as a complete barrier at current market rates for between 21 per cent and 33 per cent of parents depending on their chosen care type, price is a	Improve income maximisation awareness amongst parents, especially sources other than tax credits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Monitor the reasons for childcare places either not being taken or leaving of a childcare place ('churn'), to find out whether affordability has been a barrier * Ensure parents have up-to-date information about income 	PFIS, Childcare Development Officers, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up to September 2017.	Increased parental awareness around income maximisation.

significant barrier across all care types. Price sensitivity was high for after school club users (19 per cent would use more care if the price dropped by 10 per cent) and very high for holiday provision (32 per cent would use more care if the price dropped by 10 per cent). Awareness of the Working Tax Credit was high at 96 per cent but lower for Child Tax Credit (88 per cent).		sources, especially those in addition to tax credits. * Ensure parents have access to the on-line Tax Free Childcare eligibility checker. * Ensure parents are aware of any income maximisation sessions they may have access to, eg at a Children's Centre.		
Benchmark 8 <u>Disabled Children & Young People up to 18 years</u> - 31 per cent of parents with a disabled child or young person say childcare arrangements are not fully meeting the needs of their child (compared with 14 per cent for parents with children without a disability). 45 per cent of parents with a disabled child say supply of holiday childcare is insufficient (compared with 25 per cent of parents of children without a disability), 40 per cent say care is not sufficiently flexible (compared with 18 per cent)	Improve access to a range of good quality, flexible care for disabled children and young people (in particular holiday care).	* complete an audit with all stand-alone out of school childcare, this will include a specific focus on provision for children with special educational needs and /or disability. Officers will gather information on any specialist equipment, access and resources the provision has, as well as any training practitioners have undertaken. The audit will also include information on children that attend or have attended and details of their specific requirements and how this was	Childcare Development Officers, PFIS - ongoing up to September 2017.	Improved access to good quality, flexible childcare provision for disabled children and young people up to 18 years.

and 39 per cent say the range and choice of childcare is not good (compared with 20 per cent of families with a child without a disability).		<p>supported. Officers will also be requesting that out of school childcare inform the People and Families' Information Service of their Local Offer which will then be included on their website in order to provide information to parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Maintain links with existing holiday childcare pilot providers, Sports Development Team, Groundwork and venue providers. * Ensure local childcare training providers, such as Darlington College, are aware of this unmet demand * Ensure parents are aware of the PFIS Brokerage Service and the Local Offer. * Ensure parents have access to timely information about inclusive holiday places via the PFIS, schools, Children's Centres, mail outs, providers and other media. 		
<p>Benchmark 9</p> <p>As a result of the recession 52 per cent of day nurseries have reported a loss of customers.</p>	Ensure providers have access to business support.	* Monitor the number of childminder vacancies and collate the number of	PFIS, Childcare Development Officers, Commissioning Projects Officer - ongoing up	Improve sustainability within the childcare sector which will in turn enable children and

<p>28 per cent of childminders are concerned about the effects of embedding the Early Years Foundation Stage and 22 per cent of day nurseries are most concerned about the Early Years Single Funding Formula. Economic uncertainty is seen as a significant challenge by 57 per cent of day nurseries and 40 per cent of childminders. When providers were asked how long they expect to continue trading, the figures gave rise for concern - 15 per cent of childminders expect to cease trading in the next 12 months and a further 20 per cent in the next two years - the respective figures for pre-schools were 7 per cent and a further 14 per cent.</p>		<p>playgroup and other sector vacancies via the bi-annual supply audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ensure providers have up-to-date information about any parental income maximisation sessions. * Ensure providers have access to business support eg via TEDCO. * Ensure providers are aware of sufficiency gaps. 	<p>to September 2017.</p>	<p>their families to access more stable childcare places.</p>
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