

Darlington's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, 2017-18

CONTEXT

The Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, March 2017' 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: children with special needs and disabilities, children from families in receipt of the childcare element of working tax credit or universal credit, children with parents who work irregular hours, 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) are in line with the main findings from previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessments and the Family and Childcare Trust's 'Childcare Costs Survey, 2017'. Parents have reported a lack of easily accessible after school provision to fit working patterns and a lack of accessible, affordable holiday provision. As the Family and Childcare Trust reminds us 'For millions of parents in Britain, childcare accounts for a significant proportion of family expenditure. Parents make decisions about whether, where and for how many hours they work based on the cost and availability of childcare in their local area. Access to high quality childcare is also vital for children's educational outcomes, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups.'

SOCIAL ISSUES DURING 2016-17

It is extremely difficult to predict how childcare demand will change over time. 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.. Below are some issues which have a direct impact on childcare demand and usage.

Demographics and Employment

Darlington's current population is 105,600, 64,700 of this population are of working age (16-64 years old). Since 2012 we have seen a reduction of working age population of 1.3 per cent or 1,200 people due to Darlington's ageing population. Within this working age population, 79.7 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 outperformed regional and national growth trends. Darlington has a healthy employment rate of 75 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 69.8 per cent and the national average of 74.2 per cent. Darlington's in employment figure ranks second highest of all 12 North East authorities. The unemployment rate fell from 9.4 per cent (April 2012 –March 2013) to 6.4 per cent (April 2016 – March 2017). This equates to a reduction in unemployment in the borough of 1,400 people, leaving 3,500 of the economically active population currently unemployed. It is estimated, 3.5 per cent of our 16 – 64 population or 2,235 people are claiming work related benefits; this estimate has risen by 0.4 per cent or an additional 195 claimants, compared to the June 2016 estimate.

The productivity of jobs within the borough (measured by Gross Value Added per hour worked), has grown by 4 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 5.8 per cent between 2014 and 2015 now standing at just under £2.6 billion, this was the 7th highest percentage growth nationally of 228 areas.

Darlington currently has approximately 3,190 businesses. The most recent, available data shows that in 2015, Darlington Businesses had over 52,000 employee jobs, rising by 2,000 additional jobs since 2014 and 4,000 additional employee jobs since 2012. When looking at longer term trend data from 2012 to present day, it is apparent that Darlington's business base is growing at a slower rate (18%) than the Tees Valley (19%) and National averages (26%).

Darlington's business base is characterised by a smaller number (two point four per cent) of medium to large businesses (those with more than 50 employees), 87.7 per cent of Darlington businesses are micro businesses employing less than 10 employees with a further 9.8 per cent being small businesses with between 10 and 50 employees.

Workless households remains an issue in Darlington with 6,100 of Darlington households in this category, this is above the national average of 15.3 per cent but below the Tees Valley average of 22 per cent however trend data does show Darlington has seen a considerably larger reduction in workless households (5.8%) than the national average (2.8%) and the Tees Valley average of (2.9%).

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, £54.4 million of this being spent in the town centre.

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 2018-2019. 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 Feethams Leisure Development, incorporating a multi-screen cinema, hotel and bars and restaurants which have created new jobs and additional town centre footfall. £10 million 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 moving in to the borough.

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. In the medium to long term, the Local Plan will allocate new sites for development between 2018 and 2036. It will also include policies to guide the type, tenure and mix of new dwellings, including family housing. Whilst work to select the development sites is on going, it is likely that urban extensions and sites in and around villages will be required to enable the Council to meet the Borough's housing needs. (source: Economic Growth Team). Again, the creation of additional family housing indicates a need for childcare which meets the needs of working families.

CHILDCARE PLACES FUNDED TWO YEAR OLDS

Supply

Darlington Local Authority introduced funded two year old places on a phased basis in April 2014. Children whose parents access certain low income benefits are eligible for a funded place, as are two year olds who: have an Education, Health and Care Plan; receive Disability Living Allowance; have been adopted from Local Authority care; have left care under a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangements Order which specifies with whom the child lives or an Adoption Order; or are looked after by a local Council.

Funded two year olds are able to access their entitlement across 85 providers across the borough, including private day nurseries, pre-schools, nursery schools, maintained and academy nursery units and with childminders. Darlington was given a place creation figure by the DfE of 634 and in July 2017 there are around 665 high quality places in existence across the borough. Work is on-going to increase the number of places available with childminders, the number of childminders offering places has already increased from 32 in Summer 2016 to 50 in Summer 2017. Work is also underway to increase the number of funded two year old places available

along the North Road corridor. In addition, potentially new providers to the borough are routinely 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 the number of places available is changeable i.e. childminders in particular can move on and off the provider list with little notice, depending upon their personal circumstances.

Parents are entitled to 15 hours of free early education and childcare over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year, this equates to 570 hours. However, they are also able to 'stretch' their entitlement and this is available in specific settings, enabling parents to take fewer than 15 hours a week but over more weeks of the year, for example, to cover the Summer holidays. Some of our private providers offer this pattern of attendance. This avoids large gaps in childcare and creates continuity of care for the child.

Demand

The initial DfE estimate of the number of eligible two year olds in the borough was 640. The Department for Work and Pensions releases a list seven times a year of the number of families with a two year old in the borough who access low income benefits and/or DLA for a child. Since January 2016 the average number of families on the list has been around 540. There tend to be seasonal variations in the number of families on the list, numbers reduce in the Autumn term and increase in the Spring term perhaps as a result of parents taking short term jobs in the run up to Christmas. Since the Spring 2016 term the average number of eligible children accessing a place has been 435. Funded two year olds percentage take-up rates in Darlington are set out in the table below:

Table 1 - Termly take-up

Term	Percentage take-up
Spring 2016	79%
Summer 2016	83%
Autumn 2016	85%
Spring 2017	76%
Summer 2017	83%

The national average take-up in Spring 2017 is 71% (national Summer 2017 data is not yet available).

The on-line two year olds eligibility checker on the Council's web pages has made the customer journey much simpler, it enables 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. Parents can then approach providers and choose a place for their child, support is still available via People and Families' Information Support (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 contact the PFIS.

The table below shows the number of children accessing a funded two year old place in Summer 2017 in each sector of the local childcare market.

Table 2- Take-up

Sector	No. of children	Percentage
Private Day Nurseries	234	54%
Pre-schools	53	12%
Child minders	8	2%
Nursery Schools	75	17%
Nursery Units	66	15%
Totals	436	100%
Private and Voluntary Sector	295	68%
Schools	141	32%

The table below shows which part of the funded two year olds eligibility criteria children meet in Summer 2017, this is for children who access their place in the private and voluntary sector. This data is not available for children who access a place in school in the Summer term.

Table 3 - Eligibility

Criteria	No. of children
ECO (Economic)	290
HSD (Special Needs)	1
LAA (Looked After)	4
Total	295

The following two tables show the number of funded two year olds in Summer 2017 living in each Darlington ward and in each Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) decile band.

Table 4 – Residential Wards

Ward	No. of children	Percentage
Bank Top and Lascelles	41	9%
Brinkburn and Faverdale	13	3%
Cockerton	42	10%
College	4	1%
Eastbourne	32	7%
Harrowgate Hill	29	7%
Haughton and Springfield	20	5%
Heighington and Coniscliffe	5	2%
Hummersknott	2	0%
Hurworth	4	1%
Mowden	1	0%
North Road	31	7%
Northgate	36	8%
Park East	49	11%
Park West	3	1%
Pierremont	33	8%
Red Hall and Lingfield	32	7%
Sadberge and Middleton St George	7	2%
Stephenson	37	8%
Whinfield	9	2%
Non Darlington ward	6	1%
Totals	436	100%

Table 5 - IDACI

IDACI Decile Band	No. of children	Percentage
0-10	123	28%
10-20	100	23%
20-30	44	10%
30-40	81	19%
40-50	36	8%
50-60	10	2%
60-70	12	3%
70-80	8	2%
80-90	4	1%

90-100	15	3%
Out of borough children	3	1%
Totals	436	100%

The table below splits children accessing a funded two year old place in Summer 2017 in to Children's Centre reach areas based on their residential address.

Table 6 – Children's Centres

Children's Centre	No. of children	Percentage
Dodmire	24	6%
Haughton	50	11%
Maidendale	101	23%
McNay Street	113	26%
Mount Pleasant	86	20%
Skerne Park	55	12%
Out of borough children	7	2%
Totals	436	100%

Families on the DWP list 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 if required. An information sharing agreement has been set up with Harrogate and District Foundation Trust to enable health visitors access to this list, they are also then able to provide appropriate support where a place is not being accessed. As 'Free Childcare for Two Year Olds' has become more well known amongst parents, the marketing campaign has been scaled back. However, advertising still takes place in the borough wide magazine 'One Darlington', on Facebook and via posters and leaflets. 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.

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. These providers, where appropriate, remain on the list and intensive support is given by the local authority, however, during this period they are not permitted to admit additional funded children. The quality of places on the scheme are monitored by the Early Years Team and eligibility and admission processes are monitored by the Development and Commissioning Team.

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.

UNIVERSAL ENTITLEMENT FOR THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS

Three and four year olds in Darlington are able to access their Universal Entitlement of 15 hours a week early education and childcare in a mixed market of 90 providers spread across the borough, including private day nurseries, pre-schools, nursery schools, maintained and academy nursery units and with childminders. During 2016-17 pre-schools have remained at 11 and one private day nursery in Area One (please see the Borough map on page 30 showing the Early Intervention and Prevention Areas) opened and then closed but this was due to low occupancy so is unlikely to greatly affect the supply of early education places. 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 available for over twenty years. Data indicates that in Darlington in January 2017, 97 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 95 to 106 per cent (for those local authorities who import more children to early education than they export). The average figure in England is 94 per cent.

There are no indications via the PFIS unmet demand list or the parental childcare questionnaire that the current supply for Universal Entitlement 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 the duty to increase the entitlement hours for eligible three and four year olds from September 2017, the local authority must ensure that two year olds are able to seamlessly move on to their entitlement 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.

The table below shows the number of three and four year olds accessing a Universal Entitlement funded place in Summer 2017 in each sector of the local childcare market.

Table 7 – Take-up

Sector	No. of children	Percentage
Private Day Nurseries	773	41%
Pre-schools	195	10%
Child minders	16	1%
Nursery Schools	161	8%
Nursery Units	763	40%
Totals	1908	100%
Private and Voluntary Sector	984	52%
Schools	924	48%

EARLY YEARS PUPIL PREMIUM

Around 380 three and four year olds whose families are in receipt of low income benefits or who are looked after by a local Council or who have left care and are accessing their Universal Entitlement, are also eligible for the Early Years Pupil Premium. This is a grant paid to registered providers to improve the early education they provide to three and four year olds and for a child who is accessing their full entitlement of 15 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year, it equates to around £300 a year. Ofsted requires evidence of the impact of this funding, showing that the gap in children’s outcomes has narrowed as a result of its use.

The table below shows which part of the EYPP eligibility criteria children meet in Summer 2017, this is for children who access their place in the private and voluntary sector. This data is not available for children who access a place in school in the Summer term, however, it is available for the Spring term. The corresponding figures for Spring 2017 term were 150 children in the private and voluntary sector and 213 children in schools.

Table 8 – Eligibility

Criteria	No. of children
EE (economic reasons)	159
EO (eligible through other reason)	13
EB (eligible through both reasons)	2
EU (eligible through unknown reason)	7
Not eligible for EYPP	803
Grand Total	984

EXTENDED ENTITLEMENT FOR WORKING PARENTS OF THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS

Supply

From September 2017 every local authority in England has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of 30 Hours early education and childcare places for eligible three and four year olds. Children are eligible when:

- Both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family) and each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW); and
- Each parent earns less than £100,000 per year.

Working includes the employed and self-employed and those on zero-hour contracts and also, those away from work due to statutory sick pay, maternity, paternity or adoption leave and where one parent is working and the other is in receipt of benefits due to caring responsibility or disability. Unlike a funded two year old place, where a child is accessing a 30 hours childcare place and their parents cease to meet the eligibility criteria, a national 'grace' period will operate. The grace period will depend upon when the family's circumstances change. For example, children whose circumstances change in the first half of a term will receive funding to the end of that full term, children whose circumstances change in the second half of the term will receive funding to the end of the next full term.

Darlington local authority has been informed by the DfE that around 820 children resident in the borough will be eligible for 30 Hours childcare. Of the 1,282 three and four year olds who accessed early education in Darlington in the private, voluntary and independent sector in May 2017, 809 children (63 per cent) were attending the provision for more than 15 hours a week and 170 of the 1,282 children (13 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.

During Spring and early Summer 2017 the private day nurseries, pre-schools, nursery schools and schools with nursery units in the borough were audited. During the audit visits providers and schools were asked to estimate the number of eligible families each setting would have in September 2017 or to estimate the number of 30 hour places they could make available from September 2017. Where only the estimated number of families was provided, the local authority has assumed that rather than lose business, the provider would cater for its eligible families. Where a provider has estimated both figures, the higher figure has been used. Please see table 9 for a breakdown of the anticipated supply of 30 hour places in each sector in September 2017. In December 2016 Darlington local authority was awarded DfE

capital funding of £115,000 to enable a local pre-school and an academy primary school to create 94 new 30 Hour childcare places.

The total number of anticipated places in September 2017 is 891, compared with the DfE’s estimate of the total number of eligible children of 820. However, even bearing in mind that a proportion of four year olds will be in reception and therefore ineligible and not all parents will want to access the full 30 hours a week (the DfE have based their initial funding to local authorities on an 80 per cent take-up rate of 12 additional hours a week), the local authority believes the figure of 820 to be a slight underestimate. Therefore, the supply of places will be continuously monitored, paying particular attention to the Summer 2018 term when parental knowledge and take-up is likely to be at a high, to ensure a sufficiency of high quality places which provide choice and diversity for working parents. The local authority will also need to monitor 30 Hours demand in rural areas, where additional housing is being built. There are schools with spare capacity who are not delivering 30 Hour places from September. Also, childminders of an appropriate quality are being encouraged to deliver the offer, as are any new providers to the borough. There are also various partnership models of delivery which could be used, for example, the additional hours could be delivered by a school working in partnership with local childminders or an after school club, the introduction in September 2016 of the parent/carer and childcare provider ‘right to request’ wrap-around and holiday childcare on school sites may assist with this. Other issues which may also impact on place delivery and need to be monitored include the early years workforce strategy and a lack of appropriately qualified staff to deliver the additional places.

Table 9 – 30 Hours Places

Setting/school	Estimated no. of places available in September ‘ 17
Private Day Nurseries	357
Pre-schools	140
Out of School Clubs	23
Nursery Schools & Units	265
Childminders	106
Total	891

Demand

During Spring 2017 30 Hours Childcare posters and fliers were distributed to schools, childcare providers, other stakeholders, such as Children’s Centres and places where families with young children go to access services, for example, GP surgeries and Jobcentre Plus. From May 2017 adverts and editorials about the 30 Hours have appeared in the borough wide magazine ‘One Darlington’. Information has also been available on display screens in the Customer Contact Centre, the Dolphin Centre, the Department for Education building and in Children’s Centres and

in the Council business on-line newsletter. Schools and settings have also received information about the 30 Hours via their provider networks and a 30 Hours provider toolkit has been disseminated which includes a simple parental demand survey, sample admissions criteria and sample delivery models. Parents will be able to 'stretch' their 30 Hours a week over the school holidays with specific providers. Schools and settings have received a bespoke package of support from the Early Years team to enable the delivery of high quality childcare places that recognise the needs of individual children and families throughout an extended day. Bespoke support has also been given to providers who have not previously delivered funded places. This support will continue as the extended entitlement becomes embedded into practice.

Parents contact HMRC who carry out an eligibility check, eligible children are given a unique code which is then validated by a childcare provider or school. In May 2017 the local authority received DfE accreditation for its in-house secure provider portal which enables providers to validate 30 Hours codes. This makes the parental journey simpler because parents do not have to contact the local authority. In January 2017 the Development and Commissioning Team was awarded £21,000 from the DfE's 30 Hours Digital Acceleration Fund. An assessment of the local authority's early years data and payments system requirements is planned for Autumn 2017. By mid July 2017 376 HMRC codes had been allocated to Darlington parents. The in-house checker also collects demand data from parents, such as, what proportion of the 30 hours parents intend to claim and patterns of usage. This data will be fed in to the place planning process which sits with the Early Years project group.

So far this data has showed that during the period mid June to the end of August 2017 there were 115 responses:

- 108 parents plan to access the full 30 hours entitlement each week;
- Of those parents who do not plan to access the full 30 hours, the average number of hours which will be accessed is 18.5
- Reasons for not accessing the full entitlement are:
 - grandparents would like do some childcare;
 - child will be attending school nursery for 15 hours per week;
 - childcare is shared with local preschool;
 - child is with grandparents on the other day;
 - to spend time with dad;
 - 20 hours childcare a week is sufficient.
- 18 parents will use the additional hours to replace informal childcare (i.e. unpaid care from other family members, friends or neighbours)
- 20 parents will use the additional hours to increase their working hours
- 93 parents will access their full offer in the same childcare setting
- For those parents who are using more than one setting, the most popular model is Private Day Nursery/Nursery School and Pre-School Playgroup/Childminder

- 57 parents would like to 'stretch' their full entitlement
- 18 parents would like to access their entitlement outside of standard working hours (8am until 6pm)
- 1 parent would like to access their entitlement at weekends

CHILDMINDERS

Over the past few years there has been a slight decrease in the number of registered and 'active' childminders in the Borough from 96 in June 2015, 91 in July 2016, to 87 in July 2017. There are still significantly fewer registered and 'active' childminders in the Borough than there were nine 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.

Childminders provide a flexible childcare service to families being able to accommodate early mornings and late finishes, weekend and overnight care to children from birth to age 16. Of the 87 childminders, 60 have been judged Good or better by Ofsted, 11 have met the requirements of the Childcare register and 16 are awaiting their first inspection. There are currently 50 childminders who have contracts with the Local Authority enabling them to offer free childcare to two year olds and 51 childminders with contracts enabling them to offer free childcare to three and four year olds, 47 of these 51 childminders also deliver free childcare for two year olds. Childminders are able to offer an extended service by working in partnership with other settings and schools, this supports families by offering an attractive package of childcare and maintaining continuity of care for children. This type of partnership arrangement is going to be important in meeting any unmet demand regarding 30 Hours Childcare. The Early Years team deliver training for prospective childminders and have recently produced new training that can be delivered flexibly to suit learners' requirements enabling them to access the training at the point of enquiry. This will support the sufficiency of childcare particularly in areas of need.

A childminder vacancy analysis which was conducted in July 2017 showed that Area 3 has the highest percentage of childminders with no vacancies at 50 per cent, compared with Area one with 49 per cent with no vacancies and Area two with 48 per cent. Areas One has the highest proportion of childminders with two plus vacancies.

OUT OF SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY PROVISION

During 2016-17 the number of out of school and holiday clubs has remained static. A number of providers cater for older children aged 8 to 11 years. 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

grading. A number of breakfast clubs are also registered on school sites and their Ofsted rating is shared with the school. The Early Years team continues to support the stand alone clubs to increase quality and capacity and in 2016-17 an audit of provision has been introduced which includes looking at a club's capacity to deliver good quality, accessible places for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Out of school clubs have been encouraged to inform People and Families' Information Support of their contribution to the Local Offer so that parents can make better informed childcare decisions.

The average number of monthly enquiries received by Darlington People and Families' Information Support between August 2016 to July 2017 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 main areas of unmet childcare demand identified through the brokerage system and the parental childcare questionnaire are for childcare either from a childminder or an out of school club to wrap around the school day i.e. early mornings or later in the evening. Parents have also flagged the need for more affordable holiday childcare on school sites.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

Early Years Inclusion Officers will continue to support settings and schools with the quality of their provision for children, including those with SEND. A key feature of this work is supporting settings to identify and support the needs of children as soon as possible. Of cases highlighted to the Early Years team, the largest proportion of children requiring support in 2016–17 was within the broad area of need of 'communication and interaction' which was also the case in the 2015-16 academic year.

The Local Authority 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. Advice is provided on appropriate provision for children, using the graduated approach and involving other professionals as necessary. In addition, the Early Years Inclusion Fund will continue to support children within settings. The multi-agency panel meets once a term to allocate funding based on submitted One Plans. This support and its effectiveness is reviewed on a termly basis by the Early Years Inclusion team. From September 2017 three and four year olds who are accessing early education and who attract Disability Living Allowance are entitled to an annual payment of £615 to the setting of their choice. In addition, settings have been encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of their inclusive practice through the use of an evaluation tool created by the Early Years team.

The focus for the Early Years Team during 2017-18 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 of provision with settings and childminders will support the identification of their priorities.

QUALITY

In Darlington 100 per cent of the 36 group childcare settings have been judged Good or better by Ofsted which is an improvement from last year's figure of 94 per cent and eight of these settings are graded Outstanding. This compares favourably with the national figure of 95 per cent of settings at Good or better. The indication is that all children attending these Darlington settings are receiving high quality opportunities and experiences.

In July 2017 the Ofsted gradings given to the various settings in Darlington were as set out below:

Table 10 – Ofsted Gradings (source: PFIS as at July 2017)

2017 Ofsted	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not met with actions	Awaiting 1 st Inspection	Not Required	Total
Private Day Nurseries	21%	79%	0	0	0	0	0	0	100%
Holiday Clubs	12%	52%	0	0	20%	0	4%	12%	100%
Out of School Clubs	14%	71%	0	0	4%	0	7%	4%	100%
Breakfast Clubs	40%	40%	0	0	0	0	10%	10%	100%
Breakfast Clubs (school registered)	0	80%	7%	0	0	0	13%	0	100%
Playgroups	27%	73%	0	0	0	0	0	0	100%
Childminders	13%	57%	1%	0	13%	1%	15%	0	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'.

COST

Government funded initiatives, such as, Free Childcare for Two Year Olds and the Universal and Extended Entitlements for three and four year olds have eased the financial burden families face of paying for these places. In Darlington, there is no evidence from the unmet demand list or the parental childcare questionnaire that parents are struggling to pay for baby places in local childcare settings, this is perhaps a result of parents accessing childcare at a later stage in their child's life due to better maternity and paternity leave. However, feedback from local parents does suggest that the supply of holiday childcare for school age children does not meet demand and is not affordable. The proportion of local authorities nationally with enough holiday childcare in all of their local area is highest for the youngest children, then narrows to around a quarter for 8 to 11 year olds, and around one in ten for 12 to 14 year olds. Families with disabled children also face some of the biggest shortages in holiday provision, one in six local authorities in England report they do not have sufficient holiday childcare for this group.

In Darlington the average price per child for a week of holiday childcare is £122.79. If six weeks of holiday care is required during the Summer, this equates to over £700 per child. The average weekly price in the North East is £132.98, these figures compare with an average of £127.87 across the London boroughs and £120.55 in the North West. In the last year the cost of holiday childcare has risen in England by 5 per cent with an increase of 9 per cent in the North East. In Spring 2016 the average cost for a week of holiday childcare in Darlington was £120.36, this compared with a North East average of £122.52. Parents who use holiday childcare are likely to use after school clubs during term time. There is a significant gap between the prices of after school clubs and holiday childcare. In England the average weekly increase in switching from an after school club to a holiday club is £71.82 per child and in Darlington it is £67.54 per child or over £400 per child for a six week period.

There are of course other options for families, for example, 'shift parenting' in couple families, where parents use their annual leave at different times, the disadvantage is that there is little time spent together as a family. Some families have the option of using informal care from grandparents, other relatives or friends and term-time only working arrangements can be requested, however, in reality, these working patterns are rare outside the education sector. Support with childcare costs, including holiday childcare, is available to parents in some circumstances through tax relief and benefits. However, this is only available to parents who use Ofsted-registered childcare. Many activity-based providers, such as sports or drama clubs which run for a few weeks in the summer, as well as childcare providers only looking after children aged over 8, are not required to register with Ofsted. Parents who use government support for childcare costs therefore have a smaller choice of providers,

or miss out on financial help. Tax-free childcare should assist some families with childcare costs as it covers 20 per cent of costs up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year, or £4,000 for disabled children, for parents who are not receiving Universal Credit and where no parent earns more than £100,000 per year. Also, Universal Credit which is being phased in to replace Working Tax Credit, funds up to 85 per cent of childcare costs up to a maximum of £175 per week for one child or £300 per week for two or more children.

Holiday childcare providers are responding to a range of issues including minimum wage changes, pension auto-enrolment and business rate rises. As part of the 2017 holiday childcare 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 who do not meet the criteria for funded hours, marginally, struggle to pay and therefore drop out.'

'Experienced a reduction in hours required from parents for childcare, parents feeling the pinch due to the economic climate.'

'Got fewer enquiries than usual at this time of the year.'

'Parents are opting to have family members as their child's carer.'

'The lack of rise in wages means that parents rely on family and friends more.'

'People just can't afford holiday childcare!'

'More people seem to be getting childcare help from grandparents.'

'My business is expecting a rent increase in the next year!'

'There is a continued squeeze on parents income whilst costs are rising.'

'More people are working shorter hours, affects the business'

'Some parents can't afford childcare when they're just not eligible for funding etc!'

'The future is uncertain due to underfunding to deliver the 30 hours. Funding is being frozen for 2 years.'

CONCLUSION

Clearly, the main issues for Darlington parents are the need for local childcare to be flexible, wrapping around the beginning and end of the school day to fit with parental working patterns and the need for accessible, affordable holiday childcare.

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 priorities for the Local Authority particularly with regard to school age children 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 2017-18 actions towards childcare sufficiency are set out in the table on pages 20 to 30.

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.

Gap identified	2017-18 Objectives	2017-18 Actions	Responsibility & timeframe	Outcome
<p><u>Funded Two Year Old Places, The Universal Entitlement and The Extended Entitlement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase choice and diversity for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the existing range of providers to monitor and where possible, directly meet parental demand or to sign-post parents effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit all settings and schools to provide advice and support to maintain and improve quality. • Support a setting's self-reflection regarding quality and provide intensive support to new providers or those who have received a down-grading in their Ofsted inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Team – on-going annual audits • Early Years Team – on-going annual audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of different delivery models available for parents to access • Increased Local Authority intelligence regarding unmet demand.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage new providers to research the needs of local parents, to take account of what the market already offers and to take account of local authority data and to meet parental demand. • Encourage providers, other stakeholders eg Jobcentre Plus and parents to report unmet demand to the local authority. 	<p>judgement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist settings and schools with sustainability by raising awareness of different business delivery models. • Assist settings and schools with sustainability by providing advice regarding methods of researching parental demand. • Facilitate access to appropriate local authority data for new providers eg information about new housing developments, usable sites or vacant buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Team – on-going annual audits and providing advice regarding the local authority’s toolkit as requested/ required. • Commissioning Team – as requested/required • Commissioning Team – as requested/required 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the introduction of 30 Hours childcare does not lead to insufficient places or reduced choice for parents only entitled to 15 Hours or regarding funded two year olds places. 	<p>and unmet demand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise the People and Families' Information Support unmet demand list and the on-line parental childcare questionnaire. • Encourage providers to complete the additional questions regarding take-up and usage on the 30 Hours secure provider portal. • Fully utilise the brokerage system by questioning provider service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Families' Information Support, Early Years Team, Commissioning Team – on-going. • People and Families' Information Support, Early Years Team, Commissioning Team – on-going. • People and Families' Information Support, Early Years Team – on-going. 	
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		descriptions and testing to see if providers will deliver more flexibly on a case by case basis.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase choice and diversity of funded two year old places along the North Road corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create additional places along the North Road corridor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with and if required support, the appropriate Academy Trust to create additional high quality, accessible places for local families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning Team, Early Years Team and other appropriate Local Authority departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of available places for local parents.
<p><u>Extended Entitlement for Three and Four Year Olds</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the new 30 Hours Childcare initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a smooth introduction of 30 Hours Childcare for parents and providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase parental awareness by: continuing to market 30 Hours Childcare in the borough wide magazine, on display screens in the Customer Contact Centre, the Dolphin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Families' Information Support, the Early Years Team, the Commissioning Team – on-going. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents seamlessly accessing their entitlement.

		<p>Centre, the DfE building and in Children's Centres; continuing to disseminate posters and leaflets; keeping the DBC web pages up-to-date; providing information to other stakeholder agencies, such as, JC+ and Health Visitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering parental and provider queries promptly and sign-posting appropriately eg to HMRC, when required. • Ensuring providers have returned their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Families' Information Support – on-going. • Commissioning Team – September 2017 and April 	
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		<p>signed funded children contracts and understand the various requirements eg with regard to continuous funded provision and charges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring providers understand the parental process regarding eligibility and validating codes. • Ensuring providers understand the local authority's termly data collection and payments system. • Monitor the unmet demand 	<p>2018.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning Team via the termly funded children audits and the Early Years Team via annual audits and provider networks. • People and Families' Information Support – on-going • People and Families' Information Support and other appropriate departments. • Commissioning Team, Early Years 	
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		<p>list, the parental questionnaire and the additional questions to ensure accurate place planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that existing and new providers are aware of any sufficiency gaps. 	<p>Project Group – on-going.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning Team, Early Years Team – on-going. 	
<p><u>Wrap-around and Holiday Places</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmet demand for accessible places which meet the needs of working parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support existing and new providers, where possible, to provide good quality, affordable care for longer hours and from areas of the borough/sites which make access easier for working parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide existing and new private day nurseries, schools, out of school clubs and childminders with unmet demand data eg hours required, ages of children, preferred location eg school sites. • Advertise the DfE ‘right to request’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning Team, Early Years Team via annual audits – on-going • Commissioning Team, People and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of different delivery models available for working parents to access which meet their needs • Increased Local Authority intelligence regarding

		<p>childcare on school sites to parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support providers who decide to 'plug the gap' with advice regarding delivery models, admissions procedures, etc. • Ensure parents are aware of available financial assistance towards the cost of childcare eg Tax Free Childcare. 	<p>Families' Information Support, Early Years Team – on-going</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Team, Commissioning Team – on-going • People and Families' Information Support – on-going 	<p>unmet demand</p>
<p><u>Inclusion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmet demand for accessible after school and holiday places for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all existing and new after school and holiday places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit all settings and schools to provide advice and support to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Team – annual audits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of places and different

<p>disabled children.</p>	<p>are inclusive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage providers, other stakeholders eg Jobcentre Plus and parents to report unmet demand to the local authority. 	<p>maintain and improve quality, including with regard to inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure settings and schools have access to support via the termly Inclusion Panel. • Ensure parents, settings and schools are aware of the new Disability Access Fund and understand how to claim this payment. • Fully utilise the brokerage system by questioning provider service descriptions and testing to see if 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years and Inclusion Team – on-going • People and Families’ Information Support, Early Years team – on-going • People and Families’ Information Support, Early Years Team – on-going. 	<p>delivery models available for parents to access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Local Authority intelligence regarding unmet demand
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		<p>providers will deliver more flexibly on a case by case basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure parents have easily accessible, up-to-date, comprehensive information about settings and services via the Service Directory and the Local Offer. • Ensure parents are aware of available financial assistance towards the cost of childcare eg Tax Free Childcare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Families' Information Support – on-going • People and Families' Information Support – on-going 	
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