

## **Manchester Childcare Sufficiency Report - October 2023**

### **What is a childcare sufficiency report?**

Local authorities have a legal duty to complete a Childcare Sufficiency Report annually (Childcare Act 2006 and the 'Early Education and Childcare' Statutory Guidance 2018) evaluating current formal childcare provision in the city, assessing what upcoming demand might look like as well as considering the future needs of the sector.

Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment and for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). The duties of the Childcare Act (Section 6) also require local authorities to shape and support the development of childcare in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community. In addition, Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006 extends upon Local Authorities' existing duty to provide Information, Advice and Guidance duty to parents/carers relating to childcare.

### **Why is childcare important?**

High quality, accessible and affordable childcare is key to enabling families to participate in the employment opportunities available. Childcare settings must adhere to a rigorous Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and are subject to OfSTED inspection. Early education plays an important role in equipping young children with the skills required for early learning and lays the foundations for a positive transition to primary school. Lifting low-income households out of poverty and debt is one of the eight themes of the Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan. Childcare plays a pivotal role in enabling families to work and is therefore a key tool in the City's Anti Poverty toolkit.

Manchester's Anti Poverty Strategy 2023-27 comes at a time of challenging economic conditions, with the impacts of Brexit, COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine all playing a part in creating a cost-of-living crisis that has seen household costs and the demand for support and services rapidly increase. Pressure on food, energy and housing costs has been particularly significant, and consumer price index inflation has been at its highest level for decades. Manchester enjoys a dynamic and growing economy that is generating the skills and employment opportunities that can play a role in increasing incomes and reducing poverty.

**'We will strive to create a truly equal and inclusive city, where everyone can thrive at all stages of their life, and quickly and easily reach support to get back on track when needed'. (Our Manchester Strategy)**

The City Council has embarked upon a 3–5-year partnership with the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) to put children's rights at the heart of all its work for children and young people as the City seeks UNICEF UK Child Friendly City status. The aim is to create a city where all children have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives. Access to high quality, accessible and inclusive early learning and childcare is an essential starting point.

### **What is childcare?**

Childcare is the term traditionally used to describe provision that cares for children while their parents are at work. This can be provided from within the first few months of a child’s life up to the child being in full time education when it may required before and after the school day and in the school holidays. Government funding enables children aged 2 – 4 years of non-working and low income families to access early childhood education and care which is seen to positively impact life chances and educational outcomes. From September 2024, children from 9 months to 2 years of age with working parents will also benefit from government funding towards the cost of childcare. **See Appendix A for a Glossary of childcare terms.**

### What Early Childhood Education and Care do we have in Manchester?

Manchester benefits from a mixed economy of high-quality childcare. The table below illustrates the breakdown of childcare provision by age range and type;

| Provision type                 | Age range  | Number of providers city-wide  |
|--------------------------------|------------|--|
| PVI daycare                    | 0-4 years  | 114  |
| Childminders                   | 0-11 years | 337  |
| Maintained nurseries           | 0-5 years  | 2  |
| Out of School and holiday care | 3-11 years | 20 providers on compulsory and/or voluntary register.<br>51 establishments on the childcare register of which there are two parts; the childcare register CCR and the voluntary register VCR.<br>31 VCR - registered for children aged 8 years plus<br>16 CCR/VCR registered for children aged 5 years plus<br>1 CCR only registered for children aged between 5 and 7 years<br>Otherwise the numbers of childcare provision that does not require registration are unknown. |
| Schools with nursery classes   | 3-5 years  | 132  |

\*This data is subject to change each term but is correct for Summer term 2023

Ofsted is the ultimate arbiter of the quality of education. Most childcare providers are registered with Ofsted to offer childcare places across the age groups. This is subject to Ofsted regulations and means that childcare can be flexible to meet the needs of local families. Daycare providers may choose to reprofile their daycare offer based upon their staffing quota and demand for places. For example, increasing the number of 2 year old places where they are seeing increasing demand for this age group and offsetting this with a reduction in provision to other age groups. Therefore, the data on the number of places available that daycare providers share with local authority is based upon the Ofsted registration although this may not reflect how the setting is operating.

### **What is the quality of Early Childhood Education and Care in Manchester?**

Manchester benefits from a wealth of high quality provision which is delivered across the City. 93% of ECEC settings are judged to be Good or Outstanding by OfSTED (Summer 2023), a position which has remained consistent despite sector turbulence. Manchester's Early Years Quality Assurance team provide valuable support and guidance to the sector as described in the section below. **Appendix B shows pie charts showing the OFSTED outcomes of ECEC in Manchester (Summer 2023).**

### **Do we have sufficient childcare in Manchester?**

Data shows that there is currently sufficient early education and childcare provision for pre-school aged children in Manchester when settings are operating at, or close to, their maximum registered places. However, in the current climate nurseries are more likely to be operating at around 80% place capacity due to recruitment and retention of staff issues, cost of living pressures and inadequate place funding rates. In addition, settings sometimes have to work to tighter staff to child ratios in response to the high degree of emerging needs of the children in their care. When sufficiency is measured using 80% place availability the pressure on supply increases and more wards are face insufficiency. As a result of the known pressures on the sector, sufficiency has been assessed using three scenarios; 100%, 80% and 70% place capacity. **See maps at Appendix C which show the impact of this on 2, 3 & 4 year old places by ward.**

Wards showing an undersupply of places are often bordered by, or close to, wards where there is an oversupply of places, thus relieving the insufficiency pressure. Factors affecting the demand for childcare include changing work patterns and practices (ie. working from home, flexible and hybrid working), family members sharing pick ups and drop offs. In addition to this, there has been a fall in the 0-4 population of 7% since 2017/18. Manchester's childcare providers are operating in a turbulent economic period which has led to nursery closures, a situation which is reflected nationally.

### **Place based analysis of sufficiency of Early Years provision (Summary from ward analysis of 2, 3 & 4 year old places) October 2023**

Place sufficiency is generally measured by comparing the resident population of 0-4 year old children with the number of registered places available within the ward. For 2 year old FEEE, sufficiency is measured using the number of registered places compared to the numbers of children on the DfE's eligible child list. Due to the pressures in the sector, nurseries are increasingly operating below their maximum registration and as a result assessments of sufficiency have been completed on three scenarios; 100% place availability, 80% place availability and 70% place availability. See maps at Appendix C.

In **North** district, all wards are sufficient at 100% place availability. Moston is showing insufficient places for 2 year olds entitled to FEEE when place availability is measured at 80%. Cheetham, Crumpsall and Piccadilly show insufficiency of 3 & 4 year old places when measured against 70% place availability. However, neighbouring wards are showing an oversupply of places which is likely to be offsetting any pressure.

In **Central** district, Gorton & Abbey Hey and Longsight continue to experience a shortfall in 2, 3 & 4 year old places when compared to the numbers of children entitled to FEEE who live locally. New nurseries are on the cusp of opening in Gorton & Abbey Hey which will reduce the shortfall in this ward, yet it remains to be seen how far this will address pressure on places. Supply remains limited in Longsight. Although families are engaging with Sure Start stay and play sessions, they are less inclined to access formal childcare even when they are entitled to 15 hours free early learning. Opportunities to increase take up of the free offer will continue to be explored however, the lack of demand makes it a challenging area for new daycare to be established. Moss Side ward is showing insufficiency of places at 80% place capacity for 3 & 4 year olds with Rusholme and Levenshulme showing insufficiency at 70% for the same cohort. The remaining wards in Central district are oversupplied.

In **South** district, Old Moat, Withington, Fallowfield and Woodhouse Park are showing a shortfall of 2 year old places at 100% place availability with Old Moat also showing insufficiency of 3 & 4 year old places. At 80% place availability, Brooklands, Burnage and Woodhouse Park begin to show a shortfall in 3 & 4 year old places and this becomes a pressure for Didsbury West and Sharston when assessing against 70% place availability.

It is worth noting that families may choose not to access childcare in the ward within which they reside and that they can access FEEE in settings outside Manchester. Childcare choices may be influenced by factors such as being close to extended family, place of work or a sibling's school. Families may also prefer to access a childcare setting they are familiar with or have accessed for another child. Some will find it more convenient to access childcare in a neighbouring borough depending upon where they live and how convenient it is to their daily routine. However, the majority of children resident in the city access childcare locally, so monitoring on a ward basis while taking account of neighbouring ward activity is considered a robust approach. A range of strategies will be developed with key stakeholders to improve access to FEEE for families in the wards identified as experiencing sufficiency pressures.

### **Take up of Free Entitlement to Early learning places**

**Two year old Free Entitlement to Early Learning (FEEE)** – Take up of 2 year FEEE entitlement to Early Learning in Autumn 22 and Spring 23 was consistent with that seen in Autumn 21 and Spring 22 averaging 75%. However, take up for Summer 23 dipped by 7% compared to Summer 22, to 69%, bringing average take up over the past 12 months to 71.3%, 2.7% lower than the national average. The majority of Local Authorities in Greater Manchester experienced a drop in take up in Summer 2023, as did most comparator Local Authorities.

There are a range of factors that influence 2 year old take up which may have contributed to the Summer term drop, for example, settings judged inadequate being unable to offer places to new children until they have received an improved OfSTED judgement and the impact of any nursery closures. Take up of 2 year old FEEE is not mandatory, and some families and communities prefer children to remain within the family unit (in many cases their mother) until they start school, despite the known benefits which come from access to early learning. Perhaps more significantly, the DfE eligible child list for the Summer 2023 term was delayed by four weeks and this affected the LAs ability to notify parents/carers of their child's entitlement by four weeks. The delayed notification to parents may have affected take up of places in Summer term 2023.

Since last year, the City Council has completed phase 1 of a programme of capital works on MCC buildings within the early years' estate containing daycare, with Phase 2 to commence later this year. As a result of this, two new daycare contracts have been arranged in Gorton & Abbey Hey and Woodhouse Park, both previously identified as having a shortage of 2 year old provision. Local Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCCs) and Family Hubs will continue to promote

FEEE to all families through Stay, Play and Learn sessions, at ASQ development reviews when a child is 18 months and at the many free and fun events and activities happening on a weekly basis.

Steps have been taken to improve the communication to parents whose children are potentially eligible through the addition of contact via emails as well in addition to the direct mail out. This was only made possible when the DfE began providing contact email addresses and information on families' preferred methods of contact with DWP and associated partners. In addition, following assessment of the parents/carers appealing a 'non eligible' decision when completing an online 2 year old FEEE check, strategies have been developed with SSCs to contact parents/carers and carry out a reassessment based on any further information provided by the parent/carer. **See Appendix E for percentage take up by ward of 2 year old free entitlement to early learning between September 2022 to August 2023.**

**Three and four year old Free Entitlement to Early Learning (Universal 15 hours)** –The numbers of children taking up their universal 3 & 4 year old entitlement in PVI (Private, Voluntary, Independent) nurseries/childminders and schools saw a slight increase in Spring 2023 compared to Spring 2022 but a small decline in Summer 2023 compared to Summer 2022. More children continue to access their Universal 15 hours in a nursery class compared to a PVI setting and the split remains consistent at around 40% attending a PVI nursery or Childminder and 60% accessing in a school. In Summer 2022 the breakdown was 38% in the PVI sector and 62% in a nursery class.

**30 hour childcare** – Take up of 30 hour childcare rose slightly in Summer term 2023 with more children accessing in a PVI setting or school, higher than Summer 21 and 22. The PVI sector provide for most of these places. In Summer term 2023 this equated to 56% of children, 1% down on Summer term 2022. There are several reasons why a parent may prefer to access their 30 hour childcare offer in a PVI setting rather than at a school. These include that the child is settled in private daycare and that the private setting may be able to offer greater flexibility on days and hours of attendance which working parents may value. While most parents/carers navigate HMRC's system effectively some can find the termly reconfirmation of eligibility codes a challenge. Failure to reconfirm eligibility can result in parents/carers losing out on a terms worth of childcare funding and this can prove costly.

**Other childcare funding** - Following a concerted drive with daycare providers, there has been a 20% increase in Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) claims with a third more daycare providers claiming the funding on behalf of eligible children in low income households. Claims for Disability Access Fund which is available to families where the child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance have been maintained at expected levels reflecting the relatively small number of children under 4 years in receipt of DLA.

Following participation in a focused pilot to increase Tax Free Childcare (TfC) claims there has been some success. It is worth noting that TfC pays a higher rate of support to working families with a child with additional needs. The numbers of families with open TfC accounts has increased (34% more in 21/22 than in 20/21) as has the number of children with an open TfC account (27.2% more in 21/22 than 20/21). 92% of PVI settings have signed up to Tax Free Childcare and many report high levels of confidence in promoting the scheme to parents (April 2023 Provider survey). Parents of both children under 5 years and over 5 years reported an increased awareness of TfC. It is expected that take up of TfC will increase further within the school aged cohort alongside the expansion of WAC from Sept 2024 (Parent surveys April 2023).

**2024 Expansion of 15 hours of childcare to children from 9 months to 2 years old**

In the Spring Budget Statement 2023, Government announced the expansion of 15 hour childcare, free at the point of access to children from 9 months to 2 years in working families meeting set criteria. The roll out is planned in three phases as described below;

**April 2024** –introduction of 15 hours per week of Government funded childcare to children aged 2 years\*

**September 2024** – expansion of the 15 hours per week Government funded childcare to children from 9 months to 2 years\*

**September 2025** – expansion of the scheme to 30 hours per week of Government funded childcare for children aged 2 to 3 years\*

\*accessible from the term after the child meets the minimum age criteria ie. 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday in January 2024, child is entitled from April 24. 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday in April, child is entitled in September 24. Child turns 9 months in September 24, child is entitled in January 25. See the Childcare Choices website for more information [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

The schemes are intended to offset the costs of childcare for working families of children between the ages of 9 months and 2 years and building upon the current offer to 3 & 4 year old children. This should enable more families to take up employment opportunities. Analysis suggests that there is sufficient childcare to accommodate the expansion of the funding for 2 year olds by April 2024 as it is expected that many of the newly eligible children will already be accessing privately funded childcare in a childcare setting. 116 daycare providers responded to a survey in July 2023; 75% expect to offer more places to children meeting the April 24 criteria, 86% reported having children who met the criteria already occupying private places. Staffing issues and funding rates were the main barriers cited to the expansion of places.

Applications for the new funding go live in January 2024 and this will be monitored to inform planning for potential demand. Data on the potential demand for places for children 9 months to 2 years in September 2024 is less readily available and it is currently more difficult to assess the potential impact upon childcare sufficiency. However, from the same survey, most childcare providers felt they had children who would meet the criteria currently in attendance. Childcare providers reported less confidence in being able to respond to this demand, only 57% reported that they intended to offer free childcare places to children from 9 months.

Strategies are being developed to map potential demand and there will continue to be close collaboration with the sector. Decisions on whether expansion is feasible will be heavily influenced by the 2024/25 funding rates which are expected to be announced before the end of December 2023. In addition, there is significant work to be done to ensure that all ICT systems and processes to support the headcount claim for funding are ready in time for April 2024. The LA is working closely with the Department for Education and will be supported by the DfE's contracted delivery partner (to be announced) from January 2024 as well as working with GM and other LAs on delivery planning.

### **Childcare Sufficiency to meet the Expanded 15 hour Childcare Entitlement from April 2024**

Initial figures from the Department for Education correspond with local assessments of the potential demand for places for 2 year olds from April 2024 on the Governments expanded 15 hour childcare scheme. Wards with higher claims for 30 hour free childcare and Tax Free Childcare applications are likely to see more demand for the expanded 15 hour childcare offer. **Appendix D shows a table of the wards with the most significant levels of claims as described.**

Consultation with the sector reveals that the majority of settings are preparing to respond to demand for the new funded places, but that their ability to do so depends upon successful recruitment of qualified staff and improved Government funding rates. DfE Consultation carried out over the past 6 months both

directly with the childcare sector and with local authorities would suggest that these matters are being given significant consideration. It is expected that the 2024/25 funding rates will be announced in December 2023. Government recently announced a new apprenticeship scheme have made changes to statutory requirements relating to staff qualifications to increase the number of potential staff who can be counted in ratio which if effective should help to address the staffing crisis facing the sector. There is a willingness across the sector to respond to the new 15 hour childcare scheme and the Local Authority is working closely with the sector, the DfE and Greater Manchester LAs to plan for successful implementation.

### **Wrap Around Childcare Programme from September 2024**

A new programme to expand Wrap Around Childcare (also known as before and after school provision) from September 2024 for children of statutory primary school age (Reception to Year 6) has been announced with full DfE guidance expected in November 2023. Government funding will be provided to develop provision which is self-sustaining by September 2026. A survey of families with children aged 5 years and over (April 23) revealed that accessing wrap around childcare and holidaycare can be challenging for parents who need it to maintain employment, and especially so when their child has SEND. Children with SEND often benefit from additional resource or support during the school day but this is not available to support them before or after school or in holidaycare provision. This programme provides an opportunity to work with primary schools, the childcare sector and other partners to develop models of sustainable wrap around childcare in the parts of the city where it is most needed.

The City's Holiday and Activity Food Programme (HAF) has been accessed by more than 15,000 children in the past 12 months with 6.5% of children known to have SEND. The HAF Programme is a welcome and inclusive initiative for school aged children running through the school holiday periods. However, families requiring childcare to work need sessions long enough to cover a full working day and certainty that provision will be available throughout each school holiday period.

In summary, Citywide there are sufficient childcare and early learning places for children entitled to 2 year old FEEE, 3 and 4 year old universal early learning and the extended 30 hour childcare offer. While there are pockets of the city where it may be harder to find childcare to meet specific requirements, high quality childcare for younger children is widely available in private nurseries, preschools, with childminders, in maintained nursery schools and in primary school nursery classes. Access to before and after school and holidaycare provision varies considerably across the City. There is a need to develop additional provision to enable more families to participate in the workforce.

Increased running costs coupled with challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified staff continue to affect the ability of many private nurseries to deliver to their maximum capacity which creates a sufficiency risk for the City. These factors also affect the delivery of Out of School and Holidaycare provision. There appears to be sufficient provision to accommodate the expansion of 15 hours childcare to eligible children aged 2 years from April 2024 but the position for September 2024, when the age of entitlement is reduced to 9 months, is less clear and is heavily dependent upon the resilience and adaptability of the childcare sector. This area will remain a priority focus for the local authority over the next 12 months.

### **Early Education and Childcare for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

Increasing access and engagement in childcare and early learning for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is a priority for the city. Yet, some children do not access an early education place due to factors relating to their special educational needs and disabilities. This may be because a setting does not feel equipped to meet an individual child's needs or because they have children with SEND in their care already and have reached their safe

limit. Workforce instability affects the sector's ability to work to maximum registered numbers and this in turn is affecting the capacity to provide care and education to children who need additional support. As a result, children with additional needs may not always access their early learning entitlements in a timely way.

Assessing childcare sufficiency for children with SEND is a more difficult task than assessing for age groups due to the varied nature of children's individual needs. In recent years the numbers of children with SEND have grown significantly as have requests for assessment and support. Early identification of additional needs has resulted in significantly more children being referred for an Education Health and Care Plan assessment. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact on young children's development.

Steps have been taken to assess the sufficiency of childcare places for children with SEND but this has proved challenging. Consultation with Early Years providers and parents of both preschool and school aged children has been completed. A working group has been established to test an approach recommended by the Local Government Association to quantify the scale of demand and the pool of supply. However, to complete the assessment properly will take more time. Initial assessment suggests that in any age cohort around 3% of children will have SEND. Evidence suggests that many EHCP referrals relate to Social Emotional Mental Health or Speech Language and Communication needs rather than being SEND. Further work is required to carry out a full and thorough assessment of place sufficiency for children with SEND. This is expected to be completed within the next 4 months.

Manchester EYs provision is providing inclusive care and education to many children with SEND in the early years. Every daycare provider has a designated SENCO and all settings have access to specialist training and input from experts in this field such as Rodney House Outreach Service for Early Years.

In terms of care for older children, for example, wrap around care and holidaycare, a major issue for families of school aged children is the absence of support funding which is available for some children to attend school but does not extend to holiday periods or either side of the school day. Private daycare and out of school operators will face the same challenges in caring for a child with SEND who requires some level of additional support during the school holidays as is faced during the school day.

### **What is being done to make childcare and early education more accessible to children with special educational needs and disabilities in Manchester?**

Manchester City Council launched the Dingley's Promise Inclusive Practice Training programme for the early years workforce in March 2023. Since then, more than 530 people have registered for the training, the highest level of engagement of any of the 30 LAs involved in the project. As well as targeting PVI settings and schools, parents, LA officers, RHOSEY, Health and other partners have been invited to register for the training. Four early years providers (2 schools, 1 day nursery and 1 childminder) have achieved the Dingley's Promise Mark of Achievement, a coveted kitemark to demonstrate their commitment to inclusive practice. Learners are progressing through the first 5 modules available; An Introduction to Inclusive Practice, EYs SEND Transitions, Dealing with Behaviours that Challenge, Having difficult conversations, The Voice of the Child. By improving the skills and knowledge of the early years workforce, it is hoped that more children with additional needs will be able to access their funded early learning entitlements. Feedback on individual training modules from the sector and beyond has been very positive so far.

**The Ordinarily Available Provision** (OAP) document 2020/21 continues to be a key resource for families and the sector alike. It explains the services available to families of children with additional needs; those which are specialised and those which are available to all. The OAP is regularly updated and helps families to navigate the services that may benefit their child. [The Manchester Ordinarily Available Provision for Early Years Document | Help & Support Manchester](#)

**Manchester's Local Offer** - The Local Offer is for children and young people with SEND from 0-25 years, their parents and carers and for practitioners and professionals. It is published as part of the SEND reforms included in the Government's Children and Families Bill (2013). It

- provides information about education, health and care services
- provides information about leisure activities and support groups
- aims to be clear, comprehensive and accessible
- aims to make service provision more responsive to local needs

The Local Offer bring everything into one place and has been developed with parents/carers, children and young people. It helps to identify appropriate services by giving clear information about who can access (eligibility criteria) and how to access services. It also enables service users to provide feedback about what is needed, raise concerns or make a complaint. **See the Local Offer poster at Appendix G.**

**Short Breaks** - The Short-Breaks programme is for any disabled child or young person aged up to 18.

As a result of Manchester's ongoing investment in universal services, many families' short-break needs can be met through using the wide-ranging services available locally, such as youth clubs, play schemes and leisure centres for example. Where further support is needed, Additional Support can be offered. This usually involves a small payment to access the Universal or Community Offer. For children who need a lot of support, highly specialised or bespoke services are available for children and young people and their carers. Some families choose to use a Direct Payment to buy their own services, as agreed in a support plan. Various levels of breaks are available for families and children with different levels of need.

The table shows the numbers of children and young people accessing targeted, specialist and universal short break provision between 2020/21 and 2022/23.

|                           | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Targeted                  | 964     | 1025    | 1066    |
| Specialist                | 248     | 260     | 273     |
| Universal/Community Offer | 1883    | 2954    | 3300    |

**Promoting high quality early years provision in Manchester** High quality early education and childcare contributes to improving outcomes for children, preparing them well for future achievement and lifelong learning. High quality early years and childcare provision is of immense importance to families and plays a significant role in improving children's outcomes. Manchester's Early Years Quality Assurance team provide valuable support and guidance to the sector through a variety of strategies.



The Manchester Early Years Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) supports settings and the Local Authority to communicate a shared vision for quality, supporting Early Years settings who aspire to provide high quality services. The QAF consists of six sections: Leadership and management, Care and welfare, Learning and development, Inclusion - supporting children with additional needs, Partnerships with parents, agencies and the wider community and Communication and Language. Together with their Quality Assurance officer, settings assess the quality of their provision against each of the six areas and set out a plan for improvement. An overall quality assessment is made of the setting; they are either Emerging (meeting minimum standards and beginning to put in place more effective practices to support children's early learning), Enabling (above minimum standards and securing improvements) or Enhancing (exceeding minimum standards and highly effective in enhancing provision and ensuring a cycle of continuous improvement). Gold and Silver awards are given to setting which have successfully completed the QAF process. Parents are encouraged to look out for this award when searching for childcare and settings often use the QAF as a symbol of their commitment to quality.

The Quality Assurance team also provides pre-registration briefings for settings and childminders, pre-registration visits for new settings and courses for childminders, termly provider forums allowing professionals to network and receive local/national updates. Workshops are held on areas of early years practice, training, mentoring and coaching to settings in need of development. Intensive support is provided to providers graded as 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' and Peer support visits are established to share good and outstanding practice of some settings with others that are on an improvement journey. The team also disseminates Early Years and Childcare updates to ensure legal requirements are met. Ready for inspection workshops are targeted at providers who need extra support or who haven't been inspected by Ofsted for a long time. This is to increase the skills, knowledge and confidence of early years professionals to meet the Early Years Foundations Stage requirements and offer services that meet the high expectations of the current workforce.

In addition, daycare provider and childminder support visits are prioritised according to Ofsted judgment with settings judged Inadequate receiving monthly visits and settings judged Requires Improvement receiving bimonthly visits. Settings awaiting their first inspection, due an inspection within 12 months, where there is a new or inexperienced manager and Manchester City Council tendered daycare receive termly visits. All Manchester settings will receive at least an annual visit and those settings subject to a complaint or concerns raised will be visited as required. The Early Years Safeguarding Lead provides support to the sector through safeguarding audits. The team also facilitates a number of Department of Education Early Years recovery projects such as Expert and Mentors and the early years professional development programme, works closely with the Northwest Early Years Stronger Practice Hub and Greater Manchester Combined Authority to ensure Manchester early years professionals can access quality continuous professional development opportunities that are evidenced based and improve the early years curriculum on offer for children.

## **Affordability of childcare**

The average cost of childcare in Manchester is around £258 per week which is £7 per week more expensive than the North West (NW) average of £251 per week. Although weekly average fees have increased, the gap between Manchester and the NW has reduced by £3 since last year. (**Appendix F, Coram 2023**). Childcare fees in the City are on average almost £32 lower per week with a childminder than in group daycare settings. Fees vary between types of childcare provision and in different parts of the City, with the north of the City having some of the most affordable childcare.

Meeting childcare costs remains a major concern for families, both locally and nationally and has influenced the Government's expansion of 15 hours childcare from April 2024. In order to maintain a high quality judgement by OfSTED, daycare providers must invest regularly in their provision while meeting the rising costs of staffing, goods and services. In response to clear evidence of the sustainability challenges facing the sector, the Government has increased the funding rates for 2, 3 & 4 year old free entitlement from September 2023 through the provision of a top up grant. It remains to be seen whether the rates for 2024/25 will be sufficient to address the continued financial pressures affecting the sector. The increasing numbers of children with additional needs identified in the early years is also impacting upon sustainability with some nurseries reluctantly applying limits to admission numbers to ensure that they can operate safely and within ratio.

## **Support with the cost of childcare**

Most families can access some financial support with their childcare costs but consultation with families reveals that this often doesn't go far enough to alleviate the financial burden. Parents/carers are encouraged to visit the Government's Childcare Choices website for information on support with the cost of childcare [www.childcarechoices.org.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.org.uk) . An example of the range of childcare funding available is listed below;

**Tax Free Childcare** – For every £8 a parent pays into a childcare tax-free savings account, the government will contribute an extra £2. The government will top up the account with 20% of childcare costs up to a total of £10,000 - the equivalent of up to £2,000 support per child per year (or £4,000 for disabled children). For more information please see [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

**Universal Credit** - funds 85% of childcare costs up to a maximum of £175/week for one child or £300/week for two or more children.

**Early Years funded entitlement for 2, 3 & 4 year olds** – Children can access 570 free hours per year, equivalent to 15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year. While 3 & 4 year old funding is universally accessible and therefore not dependent upon any criteria, 2 year olds must meet the 2 year old funding criteria to qualify. The funded entitlement hours commence the term following the child's second or third birthday until they are in a reception class place in school. Parents can access their child's funded entitlement hours alongside childcare that they choose to pay for. Nearly every group daycare provider in the City along with the majority of childminders is registered to claim this funding on behalf of eligible families. All primary schools provide 15 hours free early learning for 3 & 4 year olds and the majority provide a full time place to qualifying children.

**30 hour childcare** - Working parents of three & four year olds can apply to HMRC for a further 570 hours of funded provision. The vast majority of daycare providers are registered to accept this funding. For more information on any of these early learning and childcare funding streams please visit; [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

**New Government funded childcare for working families with children aged 9 months to 2 years** - being rolled out between April 2024 and September 2025. (as described above). For more information please visit [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

There are also funding streams to support parents who are studying and more details can be found on the Government websites; [Help paying for childcare: Help with childcare while you study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Daycare providers can access additional funding to improve the experience for young children in their care by submitting a claim to the local authority on behalf of eligible children for **Early Years Pupil Premium, Disability Access Fund or SEND inclusion funding**.

### **Parent satisfaction – Summary of parent survey findings**

**Families with children under 5 years of age** were surveyed between March and April 2023. 611 responses (424 fully completed, 187 partially completed) were compared to the data collected in 2021. There was a 4% increase in satisfaction for information available about childcare in the city and a 13% increase in awareness of TfC but only a 1.4% increase in those accessing it. 9% more responders were accessing childcare with the vast majority (78%) choosing childcare close to their home address. When looking for childcare, the majority reported quality of provision or their impressions upon viewing a setting as their top deciding factors. 5% fewer respondents claimed that childcare cost influenced their decision although 40% reported experiencing difficulties covering childcare costs. Three quarters of respondents rated provider flexibility as high and the ease of accessing childcare was also rated highly. The main factors affecting decisions not to access childcare were cost, followed by waiting for suitable childcare or waiting for their child to become eligible for FEEE.

**Families with children over 5 years of age** - 606 (360 full responses, 246 partial) 57% rated the information available about childcare in the city as between fair and very good, 5% lower than 2021 and there was a 4% increase in families rating childcare information as poor or very poor. 14% more respondents were aware of TfC but only 5% were accessing it. One third of respondents were using some form of childcare with before and after school care being the most popular type. There was an increase in the numbers using before and after school and holidaycare but more than double claimed to be using informal childcare than in 2021. In 2023, the majority of respondents identified cost as the most important factor when choosing childcare followed by pick up and drop off convenience, followed by provision being close to home and flexible provision. In 2021, the most important factor was close to home and pick up/drop off, with cost a lesser issue. Almost a third claimed to be accessing Tax Free Childcare or Universal Credit to help with their childcare costs and more families reported finding it fair to very easy to meet childcare costs. Two thirds of respondents felt it was easy to arrange childcare for their school aged child. However, affordability remains the main reason why parents/carers of children under 11 years are not accessing childcare.

**Families with pre school aged children with SEND** were consulted in June 23. The survey only received 25 responses. Most respondents had one child with SEND, 60% accessed a PVI nursery, 16% accessed a childminder, 16% accessed a school nursery class, 1 child attended specialist provision, 1 stated other. 72% reported that they were accessing their first choice of childcare. The majority (56%) waited around 1 month to access childcare, 24% waited up to 3 months, the remaining respondents waited longer with one family reporting that they were still waiting to access childcare after 1 year. Although the majority of respondents reported high levels of satisfaction, 20% reported some dissatisfaction. Many had very positive things to say about daycare providers and childminders and it was clear from the feedback that most parents/carers valued the support provided and that children were well cared for and happy. Unfortunately, this experience wasn't shared by all families, and some felt strongly that their children had missed out on valuable early learning opportunities.

**Families with school aged children with SEND** were consulted between September and October 2023 and 48 survey responses were received. Of these, 65% were working parents yet just 15% were accessing any childcare to support them to work. The types of childcare that these limited number of families were accessing was after school clubs and sports clubs but it's notable that most families (41 respondents) were not accessing any childcare. Rating the ease of accessing before and after care and holidaycare, families felt it was almost impossible to find provision suitable for their child. Parents/carers gave many examples of the barriers they experienced in accessing childcare. These ranged from their child requiring 1-1 support for which there is no funding outside the school day, provision lacking expertise in dealing with their child's needs, to receiving home to school transport which is linked to the school day. Positive experiences of childcare included examples of schools providing excellent holiday club provision, school staff being prepared to provide childcare, the Space Group offering free sessions and praise for grandparents who provide valuable support to some families. 27% of respondents were aware of Tax Free Childcare and only 2 families were claiming it to support with childcare costs. When looking for childcare many respondents looked for information on the Local Offer (31%) or asked at their child's school (27%) or asked someone else such as a RHOSEY outreach worker, a friend or family member. Some families reported contacting childcare providers directly or calling the SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice, Support) service. Many claimed to have taken all of these steps in order to find childcare which met their child's needs, although few found suitable provision.

## **Appendix A – Glossary of Childcare Terms**

**Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC)** is available to families with young children until they start their statutory education which, in England, is the September term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. This can be delivered by a range of different types of childcare provision as follows:

A **childminder** is an individual who provides OfSTED registered early childhood education and care on domestic premises which is not the home of any of the children being cared for (Guide to registration 2012).

**Nursery/Daycare settings** are OfSTED registered providers of early childhood education and care on premises that are not someone's home. These premises can range from converted houses to purpose-built nurseries and are usually known as day nurseries, private nursery schools, pre-schools (Guide to registration 2012). This provision is often delivered by the Private, Voluntary and Independent sectors (hereafter PVI), but increasingly is also delivered by primary schools for children aged from 2 years old.

**Holiday and Out of School provision** is offered to families with children aged from 3 years upwards, and often referred to as 'wrap around care', it provides learning and leisure activities after the school day finishes, also enabling parents to take up employment or training opportunities.

**Holiday care** is offered during the school holidays to families with children aged three upwards. Some holiday clubs are registered with Ofsted and meet national standards. They are mainly delivered by the PVI sectors, including childminders, who also provide ECEC. However, most holiday care is open access, and beyond the scope of this assessment.

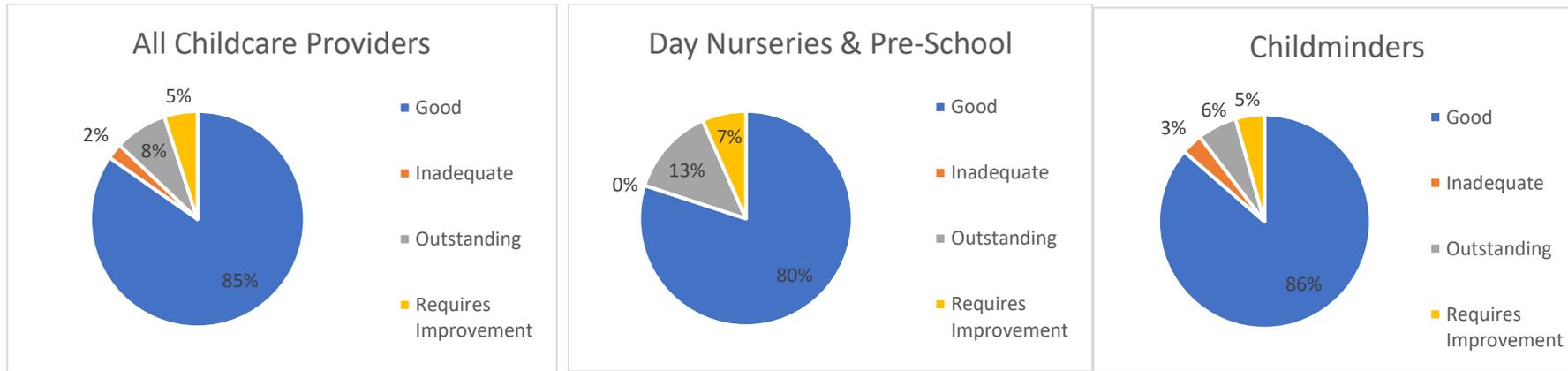
**Out of School provision** is sessional care for children aged three years and upwards - usually before and after school hours. Providers often offer holiday care too. The clubs are not open access so the children must be registered with the group and be collected by parents/carers. Out of school clubs are required to register with Ofsted to meet the National Standards. This type of provision is delivered by the PVI, including childminders, and schools. There are many open access Out of School clubs (eg Madrasas, supplementary schools etc) but these are beyond the scope of this assessment.

The [Childcare Register](#) has two parts:

Compulsory – for providers who care for children from the first September after the child’s fifth birthday up until their eighth birthday.

Voluntary – for providers looking to deliver childcare to children aged 8 years and over. Also, where some providers such as nannies can register voluntarily.

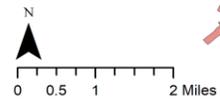
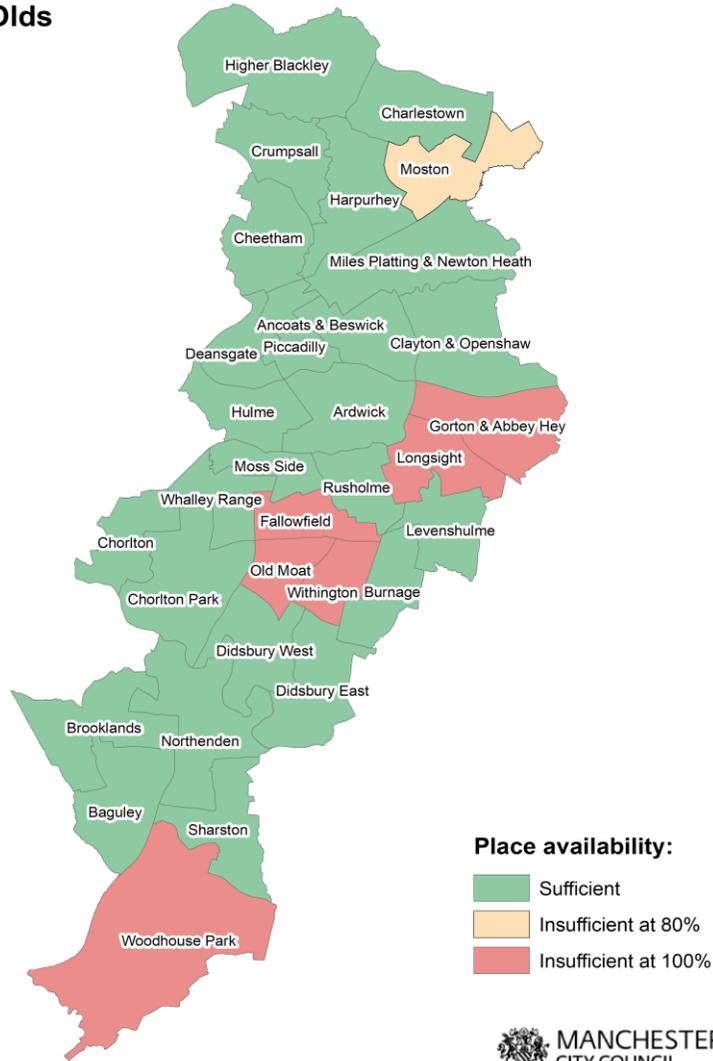
### Appendix B - Ofsted judgements across all Manchester childcare provision (October 2023)



**AFGI** – Awaiting first graded (Ofsted) inspection, **Outstanding/Good/Requires Improvement/Inadequate** – the four possible outcomes of an OfSTED inspection, **NCOR (Met)** – No children on roll (all Ofsted requirements met), **NCOR (Not Met)** – No children on roll (all Ofsted requirements not met)

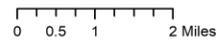
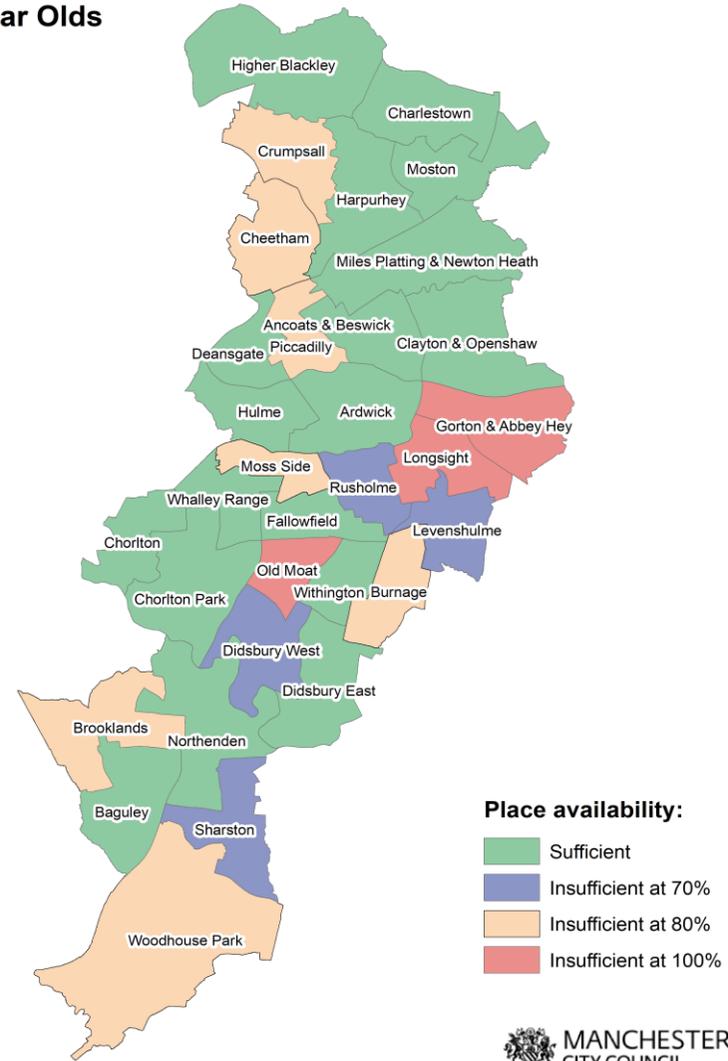
Appendix C - Maps showing sufficiency of childcare (Early Childhood Education and Care) for children aged 2 – 3 years and 3 – 4 years Summer 2023

**Childcare Sufficiency:  
2 Year Olds**



Data source: MCC Early Years. PRI: Place, 2023  
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**Childcare Sufficiency:  
3 - 4 Year Olds**



Data source: MCC Early Years. PRI: Place, 2023  
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**Appendix D – Wards where expansion of 15 hour childcare is likely to create demand.**

| Table showing 12 wards with highest level of demand for 30 hours and Tax Free Childcare  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 30 hour claims (Summer 23)   | Tax Free Childcare (Dec 22) |
| Burnage  | Burnage                     |
| Chorlton   | Chorlton                    |
| Chorlton Park*   | Chorlton Park               |
| Didsbury East  | Didsbury East               |
| Didsbury West  | Didsbury West               |
| Northenden   | Northenden                  |
| Levenshulme  | Levenshulme                 |
| Whalley Range  | Whalley Range               |
|  | Brooklands*                 |
| Gorton & Abbey Hey   |                             |
| Sharston   |                             |
| Clayton & Openshaw   |                             |
| <p>*denotes highest number of claims/applications in the city in this ward<br/>           8 wards that have high levels of TfC applications and 30 hour claims<br/>           3 wards which have high levels of 30 hour claims<br/>           1 ward which has the highest level of TfC in the City.</p> |                             |

**Appendix E – Table showing 2 year old free entitlement to early learning table by ward across three terms (Autumn 22, Spring 23, Summer 23)**

| <b>Ward</b>                   | <b>Autumn 22 % take up</b> | <b>Spring 23 % take up</b> | <b>Summer 23 % take up</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ancoats & Beswick             | 84%                        | 91%                        | 80%                        |
| Ardwick                       | 77%                        | 66%                        | 51%                        |
| Baguley                       | 69%                        | 68%                        | 60%                        |
| Brooklands                    | 91%                        | 78%                        | 80%                        |
| Burnage                       | 81%                        | 78%                        | 66%                        |
| Charlestown                   | 84%                        | 68%                        | 65%                        |
| Cheetham                      | 68%                        | 58%                        | 60%                        |
| Chorlton                      | 64%                        | 42%                        | 53%                        |
| Chorlton Park                 | 78%                        | 76%                        | 73%                        |
| Clayton & Openshaw            | 67%                        | 74%                        | 66%                        |
| Crumpsall                     | 51%                        | 45%                        | 46%                        |
| Deansgate                     | 56%                        | 100%                       | 50%                        |
| Didsbury East                 | 40%                        | 50%                        | 70%                        |
| Didsbury West                 | 60%                        | 67%                        | 133%                       |
| Fallowfield                   | 47%                        | 42%                        | 30%                        |
| Gorton & Abbey Hey            | 73%                        | 72%                        | 81%                        |
| Harpurhey                     | 75%                        | 79%                        | 78%                        |
| Higher Blackley               | 79%                        | 89%                        | 84%                        |
| Hulme                         | 65%                        | 56%                        | 59%                        |
| Levenshulme                   | 60%                        | 56%                        | 50%                        |
| Longsight                     | 68%                        | 62%                        | 58%                        |
| Miles Platting & Newton Heath | 70%                        | 65%                        | 61%                        |
| Moss Side                     | 73%                        | 69%                        | 71%                        |
| Moston                        | 86%                        | 87%                        | 83%                        |
| Northenden                    | 84%                        | 75%                        | 71%                        |
| Old Moat                      | 70%                        | 75%                        | 48%                        |
| Piccadilly                    | 25%                        | 22%                        | 13%                        |
| Rusholme                      | 67%                        | 68%                        | 61%                        |
| Sharston                      | 79%                        | 74%                        | 70%                        |
| Whalley Range                 | 69%                        | 77%                        | 74%                        |
| Withington                    | 81%                        | 59%                        | 55%                        |
| Woodhouse Park                | 70%                        | 70%                        | 61%                        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>            | <b>71%</b>                 | <b>69%</b>                 | <b>65%</b>                 |
| All 2 year olds*              | 76%                        | 73%                        | 69%                        |

\*Includes 2 year old children not resident in a Manchester ward.

## Appendix F - Average cost of childcare in Manchester 2023

### Average cost of childcare 2023

| Provider Type          | Hourly | Weekly  |
|------------------------|--------|---------|
| Day Nursery/Playgroups | £6.39  | £258.00 |
| Childminders           | £5.45  | £226.28 |

| Provider Type             | Daily       | Weekly        |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Before/After School Clubs | £4.70/£9.60 | £23.50/£48.33 |
| Holiday Clubs             | £28.00      | £139.00       |

Weekly cost = 50 hrs per week

92% of PVI providers responded to the survey

highest weekly cost = £426.50 (south district provider)

Lowest weekly cost = £192.50 (north district provider)

Coram reports average weekly cost = £251 (Northwest rates 2023)

## Appendix G – Manchester’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Local Offer poster

### LOCAL OFFER WEB PAGES

[www.manchester.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer)

More than just an online directory, the web pages bring everything together in one place, such as details of services available, who they're for (eligibility criteria) and how to access them. Working with parents and carers, we've improved how the web pages look and made them easier to find what you're looking for.



## MANCHESTER'S SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) LOCAL OFFER

The Local Offer is all the activities, services, advice and support offered by numerous organisations across the city, for children and young people (0-25 years) who have special educational needs or disabilities. It includes things to do, places to go, rights, health, money, childcare, education, support groups, Short Breaks and independent living. There are lots of ways to find out about Manchester's Local Offer.



### SOCIAL MEDIA

Information is shared on Facebook via the Manchester Parent Champions ([facebook.com/groups/manchesterparentchampions](https://www.facebook.com/groups/manchesterparentchampions)) and Manchester Parent Carer Forum ([www.facebook.com/mpcinfo/](https://www.facebook.com/mpcinfo/)) and on Twitter via the Local Offer Twitter account ([twitter.com/MCRLocalOffer](https://twitter.com/MCRLocalOffer)). The Facebook group also provides peer-to-peer support for parents and carers. Parent Champions are provided with training on the Local Offer and social media.

### CONTACT THE LOCAL OFFER TEAM DIRECTLY

If you prefer to chat, you can call us on 0161 234 1946. You can also email [localoffer@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:localoffer@manchester.gov.uk)

### EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Over thirty newsletters sent; 3,172 parent-carers, practitioners and voluntary-sector providers are subscribed to receive the updates from the team.



### DROP-IN SESSIONS

No need to book, just pop in to one of the regular sessions to speak to a range of organisations. (Currently delivered virtually.)

