

Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023-2024



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INTRODUCTION

The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area. Working with providers from the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors, the local authority aims to create a strong, sustainable and diverse childcare market ensuring there are sufficient places to meet the needs of parents.

The Department for Education published a revised [Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance](#) for local authorities in June 2018 which states that:

local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or for training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should consider what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means. They must consider the local childcare market, work force, quality and capacity of childcare, schools and expansion and sustainability of childcare provision in the local area.

The local authority must report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents.

This report is Sandwell's tenth annual Childcare Sufficiency Report for elected council members and will be made available and accessible to parents and include the information required in the statutory guidance.

Sandwell's ninth annual Childcare Sufficiency Report (CSR) was completed and published in October 2022. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan (CSAP) was developed based on the recommendations of the CSR. The plan is monitored by the Early Years Strategic Group and achievements against the actions are detailed later in the report. The plan has also been monitored by the Director of Children and Education Team on a quarterly basis and this will continue.

Upon completion and approval of this report, a CSAP will be developed, implemented and monitored termly by the Early Years Strategic Group. Any outstanding actions from the previous CSAP will be included.

The Childcare Act (2006) duties around Childcare Sufficiency continue in 2023-24 to be placed within a local and national context.

In the Spring Budget 2023 the Government announced that they would be extending the free childcare entitlement to support more parents returning to work after their parental leave ends. From April 2024 working parents of two year olds will be able to access 15 hours per week of free childcare. From September 2024 this will be extended to working parents with children aged 9 months and upwards. From September 2025 working parents of children aged 9 months and upwards will be entitled to 30 hours free childcare up to the child starting school. These hours will be offered 38 weeks term time or 52 weeks as a stretched offer. These changes are significant and will impact on supply and demand for free childcare places in Sandwell.

Additional Government funding will also be made available to support local authorities to work with schools and childcare providers to increase wraparound childcare.

In this report, the results of the Childcare Provider Survey and the Parent Survey give some indication of the expectations of parents and the concerns of providers. Increased marketing and promotion will take place from Autumn 2023 to help parents understand the extended offer available to them.

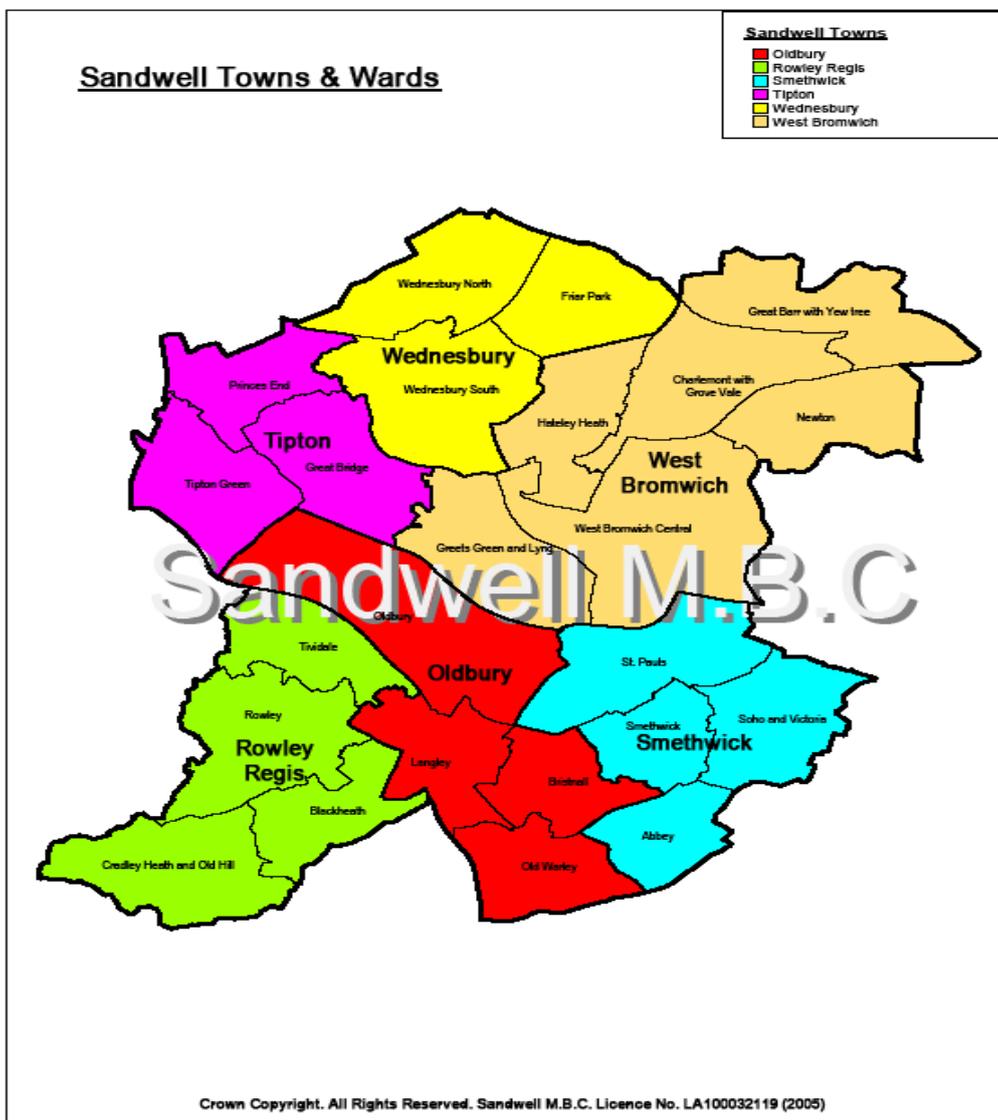
The aim of the report is to present a summary of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell and to consider what the childcare market might look like during 2024-25. The report will consider the ongoing impact and risks to childcare sufficiency. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan will then be developed from the findings of the report. The objectives are to produce a baseline of childcare in Sandwell and report on what the childcare market looks like in the Borough. The report will also show progress on the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours funded places and an update on previous recommendations from the 2022-23 Childcare Sufficiency Report.

The methodology for the report is to collate current data obtained from Sandwell Public Health, Sandwell Education Business Support Team, Sandwell Family Information Service (FIS) and the Quality Early Years and Childcare Team (Early Years) and to analyse this data into a report which shows supply and demand for childcare in Sandwell during 2023-24.

Sandwell Population Data and Ward Map

The Mid-2021 Population Estimates show that Sandwell has 341,729 residents. Under 4's make up 6 % of Sandwell's population (22,005).

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) [Ward-level population estimates \(Experimental Statistics\)](#)



6 Towns	24 Wards
Oldbury	Oldbury, Langley, Bristnall and Old Warley
Rowley Regis	Tividale, Rowley, Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill
Smethwick	St Pauls, Smethwick, Soho and Victoria, Abbey
Tipton	Princes End, Great Bridge, Tipton Green
Wednesbury	Wednesbury North, Wednesbury South, Friar Park
West Bromwich	Greets Green and Lyng, West Bromwich Central, Newton, Hateley Heath, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Barr with Yew Tree

2022 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REPORT ACTION PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

The 2022-23 Action Plan had 8 actions, as follows, all of which have been met.

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.

Early Years continues to provide:

- support visits to childcare settings
- advice and information under the Retained Function Duty - Childcare Act 2006
- pre-Ofsted registration, unannounced funding monitoring and Ofsted feedback visits
- Promotion of Childminding as a career option, this includes Childminder Briefings
- Termly Early Years Network Meetings and 3 Newsletters emailed to all providers, providing local and national updates, sharing good practice and recognising the achievements of the Early Years workforce.

Mandatory and good practice Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses.

- 22 Health and Safety courses delivered to 341 practitioners. Ensuring Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Environmental health and Health and Safety legal requirements are met.
- 6 Single agency basic Safeguarding training courses including FGM awareness delivered to 95 practitioners.
- 2 Baby Room courses delivered to 43 practitioners, to provide appropriate knowledge and raise awareness of care and safety practices for children aged 0 – 2 years, in accordance with EYFS ratio requirements.

Quality Improvement and Narrowing the Gap CPD for all practitioners.

- 27 EYFS courses/ briefings/ events and workshops delivered to 503 delegates. Courses included Meeting the requirements of EYFS, curriculum, quality interactions/ environments, Early Maths, phonics, preparing for Ofsted, School readiness, EYFS moderation and closing the attainment gap.
- 5 Leadership & Management short courses delivered to support 60 new and existing Leaders and Managers to monitor staff performance, develop supervision systems, respond successfully to Ofsted Inspections, support staff development and retention.
- 8 SEND training packages and workshops delivered by ILSEY to 148 SENCO's, Practitioners in a 1:1 support role and Childminders. Courses promoted and raised awareness of early interventions, Aided Language Development, watchful eye processes, communication strategies and referral processes.
- 86 workshops/ courses/ network/ staff meetings provided to schools, nurseries and Children Centres/ Family Hubs within cluster areas and to whole setting staff teams. 473 delegates attended. These focussed on changes to the Early Language Pathway, parent engagement, provided targeted bespoke support for new, Inadequate and RI providers. Subjects included EYFS requirements, curriculum, quality interactions, early language pathway and Ofsted preparation.

Identification, quality first teaching and interventions to improve young children's speech, language and communication development.

- 13 Sandwell's Early Language pathway multi-agency support programmes, including WellComm toolkit, initiatives and projects accessed by 192 delegates from schools, nurseries and childminding.

2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.

Between 1 September 2022 and 25 July 2023, the Quality Early Years Team undertook:

- 139 support visits to requires improvement PVI nurseries, Childminders and Schools
- 65 support visits to inadequate settings

- 10 Focussed Setting Improvement Meetings for Inadequate and RI providers, to coordinate and action plan the support between the Early Years, ILSEY and parent engagement teams.
- 15 Support visits to review safeguarding concerns as a result of LADO/ POT referrals.

Between 1 September 2022 and 25 July 2022

- 3 PVI nurseries gained or retained an outstanding judgement.
- 5 PVI nurseries and 2 Childminders became inadequate
- 6 PVI nurseries and 3 Childminders received a Requires Improvement judgement. 2 of those were first inspections and 2 were upgraded from Inadequate.
- 2 PVI nurseries were upgraded to Outstanding from the previous Good judgement.
- 3 PVI nurseries and 1 Childminder were upgraded to Good from a previous Inadequate grade

There were 68 Ofsted inspections undertaken with all funded provision within PVI nurseries and childminding provision during this period;

- 3 Outstanding
- 49 Good
- 9 Requires Improvement
- 7 Inadequate
- 4 Site visits undertaken to look at potential group early years provision on non-domestic sites in Smethwick, Great Barr, West Bromwich and 1 expansion of an existing nursery site in Tipton. Advice was provided by phone for properties in West Bromwich and Wednesbury.
- 6 ELT registration visits to Childminders.
- Sandwell experienced 2 established nursery closures, 1 in Wednesbury and 1 in Tipton and 3 School 2 year old provision closures at 2 sites in Oldbury and 1 in Cradley Heath.

3. To raise awareness of childcare options and entitlements through social media platforms. To continue to promote the Family Information Service Hub. To continue with participation campaign and outreach in the community. To monitor demand through FIS contact with parents.

The [Family Information Service Hub](#) website was refreshed in June 2023 to create a more user friendly digital platform for families. FIS continues to promote free childcare for 2,3 and 4 year olds on the FIS Hub and social media. Outreach officers engage with families to raise awareness of childcare entitlements and options for paying for childcare. FIS continues to promote working in childcare as a business or career opportunity. The Brokerage service continues to support families with finding suitable childcare to meet their needs.

4. To continue to monitor take up of 2,3 and 4 year old funding and 30 hours codes. To increase promotion of free entitlement ELT and 30 hours and create a more nuanced, targeted approach to marketing.

The Local Authority regularly receives Department for Work and Pensions(DWP) lists for 2 year old funding and sends out letters to qualifying families on these lists. This year funding has been delivered in;

- 154 funded settings in Spring Term 2023
- 55 schools funded to deliver 30 hour places as well as the Nursery Education Fund (NEF) in their nursery classes
- 59 childminders funded
- 1263 children accessing an Early Learning for Two's (ELT) place
- 72% of eligible families took up a place
- Promoting 2-year-old offer (ELT) continues. Outreach events continued in 2023.

5. To monitor wraparound childcare to ensure sufficient places are available for families. To continue to work with childcare providers to ensure parents can access affordable holiday childcare throughout the Borough.

Currently there are sufficient places in each ward, although Wraparound and Holiday Playschemes have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. The FIS Parent Survey 2023 indicates parents are not struggling to find holiday childcare, but this may be because they rely on family and friends. SEND Holiday provision remains problematic for parents, with parents having to use annual leave or unpaid leave to cover school holidays. In conjunction with the HAF programme all holiday playschemes have been visited at least once during one of the school holidays.

6. To continue to work with childcare providers to ensure business viability and monitor for any “red flags” where providers are at greater risk of closure. To monitor capacity and childcare places to ensure sufficiency through the borough. To promote childminding as a business opportunity.

There are sufficient childcare places in the Borough. Early Years provides advice and guidance to childcare settings on sustainability. FIS continues to monitor demand for childcare and report on types of enquiries, brokerage cases and any gaps in demand.

7. To increase parental engagement to determine how SEND provision should be delivered. To consult with childcare providers to assess any potential short and medium term gaps for SEND provision, particularly holiday childcare.

Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children (SPDC) regularly consult with parents. They report that there are difficulties for parents looking for childcare during school holidays. This is due to a combination of factors, including the fact that disabilities and children’s needs are complex and individual to each child. Some settings are reluctant to take SEND children and HAF has been very confusing for parents. Parents are relying on family and friends during school holidays or choosing not to work, relying on Carers Allowance instead. SPDC support parents during school holidays but not all families are able to access their activities.

8. To continue to promote the Family Information Service to parents and professionals. To raise awareness of brokerage and online chat facility and engage with families through social media channels.

The Family Information Service continues to support parents providing information, advice and guidance and a brokerage service. The Marketing and Social Media Officer creates content for Social Media platforms and works with Outreach Officers to deliver a targeted approach to the Marketing and Outreach plan.

Quality Early Years and Childcare in Sandwell

Early Years provide information, advice, support and training to the early years and childcare sector. The Early Years Workforce Strategy identifies that Ofsted results and improved outcomes for children are linked to a highly qualified workforce and high quality provision.

Childcare settings must have a well-trained, qualified and professional workforce who understand the needs of all families including the most vulnerable children and families.

The team offer advice and support on:

- career options in the early years and childcare sector
- childcare business start-up and sustainability
- childminder business start-up and Ofsted registration
- short course training programmes
- child protection and safeguarding concerns
- Ofsted registration and inspection

A termly online training programme supports quality of teaching practices and environments, succession planning, awareness of mandatory safeguarding requirements and ongoing development and sustainability of early years and childcare provision.

The training programme is produced in partnership with the Inclusion Learning Support Early Years (ILSEY) Team and is delivered by internal and external local support agencies and professional training providers. All training reflects the local and national changing needs of the Statutory and PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) Early Years and Childcare sector. This enables providers to fulfil their legal duties as detailed in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, Ofsted registration and inspection and local authority requirements.

Childcare providers, schools, children centres, and foster carers can purchase training packages to suit their needs. Child Protection and SEND remain key priorities and are currently provided free of charge via Sandwell Children’s Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) and ILSEY.

Sandwell’s early years recruitment web pages are available for people who are considering accessing childcare careers.

Childminder briefings are delivered online to support delegate access.

Quality Early Years and Childcare in Sandwell

The Early Years team provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to new and established early years and childcare provision including:

- Support visits to settings Ofsted graded inadequate and requires improvement.
- Good and Outstanding termly monitoring and support visits from the local authority area teacher with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- Support from the Funding, Workforce and Development Team.
- New provider support from initial enquiry to Ofsted registration.
- Advisory site visits and workforce recruitment support.
- Support with registering to deliver funded places.
- Audits to oversee and monitor delivery of 2, 3 and 4 year old funding.
- Advice on Local Provider Agreement to deliver funding.
- General Support visits to identify any legal and operational issues.
- Safeguarding monitoring in accordance with LADO, MASH concerns.
- Child development monitoring through supporting settings to make accurate assessments.

DfE/ Provider surveys, birth rate data have been reviewed to assess Sandwell's position in regard to the extension to funded places from April 2024, this will increase working parents access to funded places for children aged 9 months – 4 years.

Between September 2022 and July 2023, the following support was given:

- 134 support visits for new providers awaiting initial Inspection, Pre-Ofsted registration and Ofsted feedback visits.
- Early Years Teams provide termly visits to outstanding and good settings to monitor any leadership changes, safeguarding, early language pathway projects and support with any general operational issues.
- Focussed setting support for requires improvement and inadequate Ofsted rated providers.
- 3 Early Years Newsletters emailed to all providers and 2 Early Years Network PVI meetings delivered to on average 70 Leaders and Managers.
- Respond to duty calls from childcare providers seeking support, advice and guidance under the Retained Function Duty - Childcare Act 2006. Support related to, parent complaints, incidents, risk assessments, workforce issues, sustainability and safeguarding. Providers continue to seek advice regarding workforce recruitment, retention and EY full and relevant qualification checks.
- Workshops/ courses/ network meetings were delivered within cluster areas to practitioners, foster carers, Children Centre/ Family Hubs family support workers, library staff, volunteers and parents/ carers. The workshops included communication, language, Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL), Parent Support and engagement, Early Talk Boost, Tots Talking and Babbling Babies projects. Sessions were delivered in community venues and Schools.

Equality and Inclusion

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards that all early year's providers must meet to ensure equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Early Years engage with childcare settings to promote and embed equality of opportunity into practice, as part of their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. They do this by delivering a range of training programmes, giving one to one support, advice and guidance, holding network meetings and advising on social media and information accessibility.

Grant Funding

The local authority provided funding to settings who need sustainability support. This is limited and based on an assessment process relating to quality and including Ofsted judgements. The funding is an application process which is administered through our Early Years Grant Panel which was established to assess grant applications received from childcare providers.

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory framework is being updated from September 2023, detailing workforce ratio and new Childminder requirements, which all schools and providers will follow from September 2023. Virtual and face to face training sessions are continually delivered breaking down key areas of the EYFS.

Support given to Childminders

Ofsted Registered childminders are supported with visits from Early Years. In the period from September 2022 to July 2023

Number of inadequate support visits – 10

Number of RI/Satisfactory support visits – 12

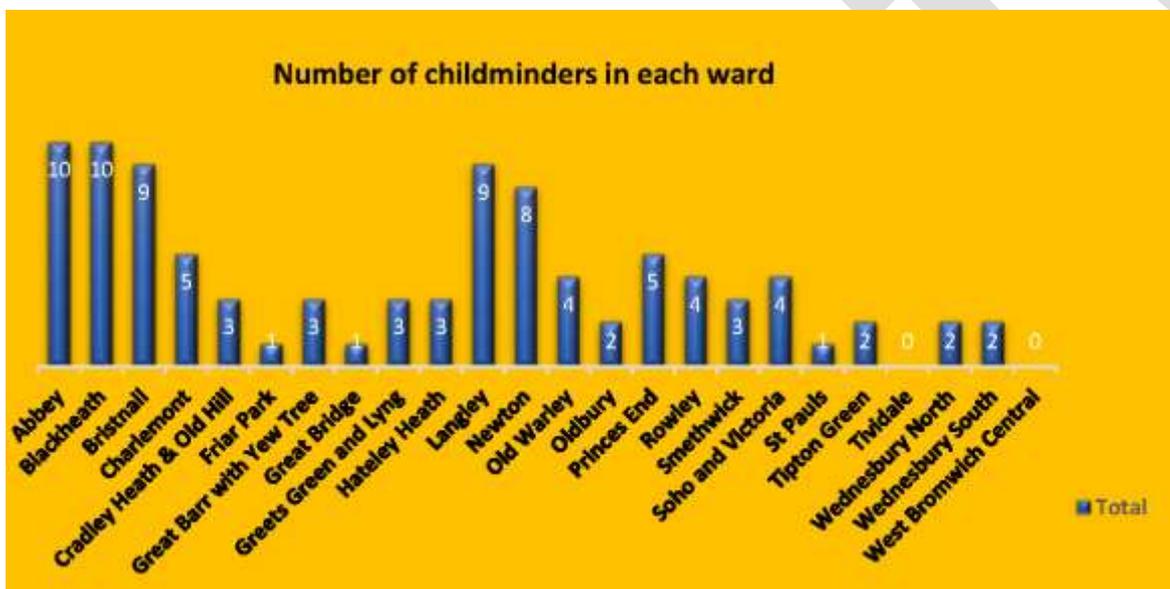
Number of visits to new providers awaiting initial inspection – 54

ELT registration visits - 6

Childminder support has continued by phone, email, text and use of platforms such as Skype, ZOOM and Microsoft Teams. Support provided to childminders includes information on accessing Government grants, business support, marketing, EYFS and Ofsted guidance. Childminders are also given support with their emotional health and wellbeing as well as advice on how to support their families.

Childminders in Sandwell continue to share good practice, which is included in the termly Quality Early Years and Childcare News update sent out to all childcare providers in the borough. Childminders continue to be the most flexible part of the childcare workforce.

2 new childminders were registered in Wednesbury North and Soho and Victoria between January and July 2023.

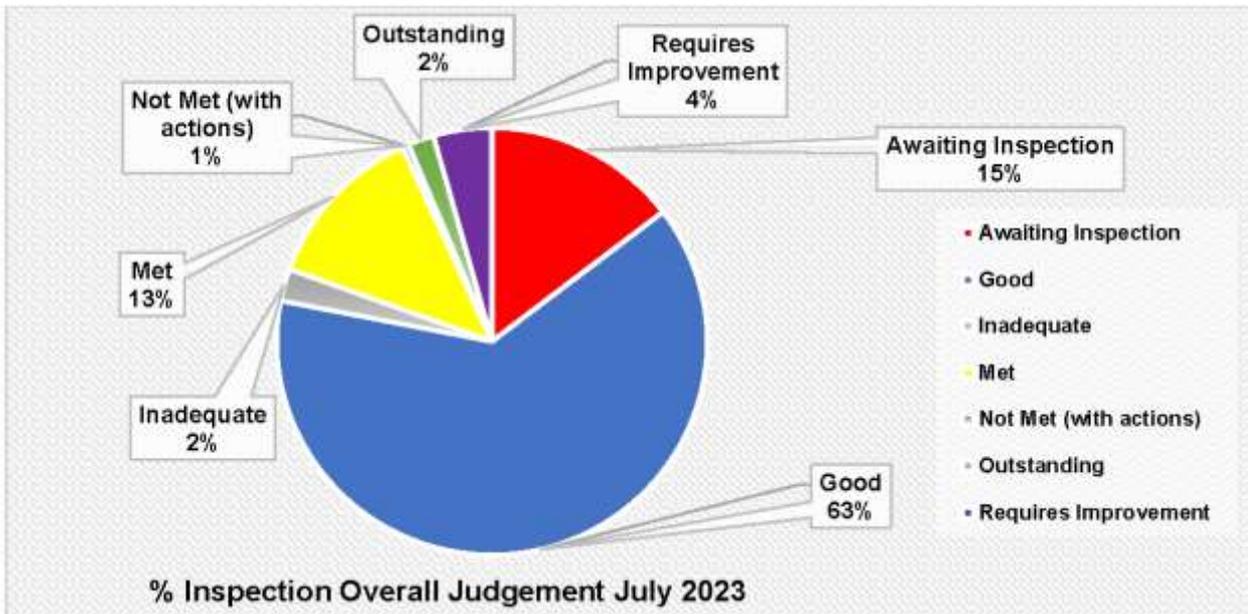


No childminders in Tividale and West Bromwich Central wards. 1 childminder in Friar Park, Great Bridge and St Pauls wards. Marketing and recruitment required in these wards.

Ofsted Inspections

Ofsted carried out 48 inspections between October 2022 and June 2023. 15% of providers have no grade as they are awaiting their first inspection within 30 months of opening.

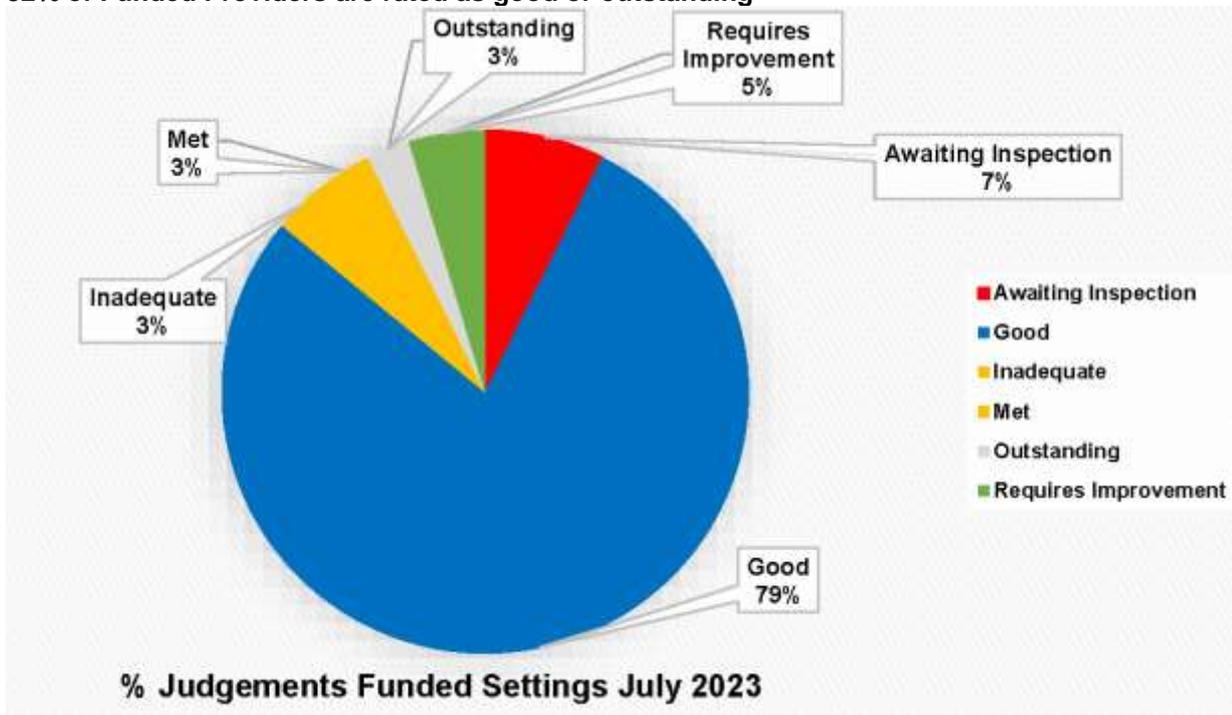
65% of Ofsted Early Years Register providers are rated good or outstanding.



Funded Providers Inspection

39 providers offering 3 & 4 year old funding were inspected between October 2022 and June 2023.

82% of Funded Providers are rated as good or outstanding



Number and % of Ofsted Early Years Inspections at 31 March 2023

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Number of providers					
	EYR providers	Total number inspected	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	49,084	38,855	5,427	31,952	969	507
West Midlands	4,019	3,250	437	2,649	107	57
Birmingham	723	564	53	468	30	13
Dudley	182	146	22	114	6	4
Sandwell	201	153	4	138	10	1
Walsall	128	107	10	90	4	3
Wolverhampton	130	97	5	84	6	2

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Percentage of inspected providers			
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	14	82	2	1
West Midlands	13	82	3	2
Birmingham	9	83	5	2
Dudley	15	78	4	3
Sandwell	3	90	7	1
Walsall	9	84	4	3
Wolverhampton	5	87	6	2

Pie Charts on page 10 use Ofsted data received by the Family Information Service in their daily feed between October 2022 and June 2023. 2 data sets on Pages 10 and 11 are sourced differently and therefore should be examined separately.

Childcare in Sandwell July 2023

In 2023 Sandwell had sufficient childcare for 0-11 year olds.

Tables 1 and 2 show the number of childcare settings and total childcare places for 0-8 year olds.

Table 3 shows the ratio of children to early years places; the ratio is 2 children to 1 place for 0-4 year olds in Sandwell.

Table 4 shows wraparound and pre-school provision in primary schools in Sandwell; there is sufficient provision for 3-11 year olds.

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Settings
Abbey	10	4	1	1	1	0	17
Blackheath	10	3	0	1	1	1	16
Bristnall	9	5	0	3	3	2	22
Charlemont	5	2	2	2	2	2	15
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	3	2	2	1	2	1	11
Friar Park	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
Great Barr	3	5	1	4	5	5	23
Great Bridge	1	4	0	3	4	2	14
Greets Green and Lyng	3	4	0	0	2	0	9
Hateley Heath	3	3	0	1	2	2	11
Langley	9	2	0	1	2	2	16
Newton	8	1	0	1	2	2	14
Old Warley	5	1	4	0	0	0	10
Oldbury	2	4	1	3	5	3	18
Princes End	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
Rowley	4	2	0	1	1	0	8
Smethwick	3	4	3	2	2	1	15
Soho and Victoria	4	7	2	4	5	4	26
St Pauls	1	2	2	0	1	2	8
Tipton Green	2	3	1	1	1	2	10
Tividale	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Wednesbury North	2	2	0	1	3	1	9
Wednesbury South	2	3	1	0	0	0	6
West Bromwich Central	0	7	0	0	2	2	11
Total	96	77	21	30	46	34	304

Source: FIS Database July 2023

Table 2 Childcare Places (0-8 years) July 2023

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Places
Abbey	138	297	0	50	100	0	585
Blackheath	110	198	0	10	20	50	388
Bristnall	108	462	0	178	250	129	1127
Charlemont	50	192	32	66	132	12	484
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	24	200	0	32	220	60	536
Friar Park	12	119	24	0	0	0	155
Great Barr	58	494	0	147	308	177	1184
Great Bridge	12	365	0	158	224	36	795
Greets Green and Lyng	24	248	0	0	29	0	301
Hateley Heath	36	266	0	30	98	49	479
Langley	98	272	0	63	126	63	622
Newton	96	104	0	40	140	70	450
Old Warley	60	148	32	0	0	0	240
Oldbury	36	574	0	148	364	165	1287
Princes End	36	168	0	0	0	0	204
Rowley	36	298	0	112	224	0	670
Smethwick	36	248	30	70	168	44	596
Soho and Victoria	56	684	44	162	324	178	1448
St Pauls	24	141	70	0	89	53	377
Tipton Green	24	368	0	56	38	56	542
Tividale	12	216	0	0	0	0	228
Wednesbury North	12	354	0	74	414	74	928
Wednesbury South	18	376	0	0	0	0	394
West Bromwich Central	0	816	0	0	79	150	1045
Total	1116	7608	232	1396	3347	1366	15065

Source: FIS Database July 2023

Table 3 Ratio of children to early years places July 2023

Ward	Estimated CHDMD Places	Estimated DN places	Estimated PG Places	Estimated MSN Places	Estimated Places 0-4 years	Birth 0-4 *	Ratio of Children to Estimated 0-4 Place	Ratio of Children to 1 estimated 0-4 place in Sandwell (Sandwell benchmark 2:1)
Abbey	69	165	0	180	414	849	2.1:1	2
Blackheath	54	154	0	120	328	781	2.4:1	2
Bristnall	54	274	0	270	598	758	1.3:1	1
Charlemont with Grove Vale	25	96	32	240	393	809	2.1:1	2
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	12	100	0	210	322	931	2.9:1	3
Friar Park	6	87	24	240	357	899	2.5:1	2
Great Barr with Yew Tree	30	247	0	180	457	872	1.9:1	2
Great Bridge	6	261	0	330	597	942	1.6:1	2
Greets Green and Lyng	12	144	0	240	396	1,038	2.6:1	3
Hateley Heath	18	214	0	210	442	975	2.2:1	2
Langley	49	136	0	180	365	983	2.7:1	3
Newton	48	52	0	150	250	713	2.9:1	3
Old Warley	30	74	32	180	316	723	2.3:1	2
Oldbury	18	287	0	270	575	1,214	2.1:1	2
Princes End	18	102	0	180	300	1,052	3.5:1	3
Rowley	18	186	0	180	384	832	2.2:1	2
Smethwick	18	180	30	270	498	1,068	2.1:1	2
Soho and Victoria	28	362	44	420	854	1,563	1.8:1	2
St Pauls	12	141	70	180	403	1,260	3.1:1	3
Tipton Green	12	184	0	180	376	1,053	2.8:1	3
Tividale	6	108	0	150	264	922	3.5:1	3
Wednesbury North	0	177	0	240	417	889	2.1:1	2
Wednesbury South	6	188	0	90	284	781	2.8:1	3
West Bromwich Central	0	408	0	150	558	1,031	1.8:1	2
Totals	549	4327	232	5040	10148	22938	2.3:1	2

Source: FIS Database July 2023

Table 4 School Wraparound and Pre-School Provision (3-11 yrs.) by ward July 2023													
Ward	Total Primary Schools	Total Schools registered for 30 Hours	Total Schools registered to receive 3 and 4 year old funding?	Total Schools with On Site Pre-School	Total School Site Breakfast Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site After School Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site Holiday Playschemes (run by school)	Total School Site After School Activities (run by school)	Total External Breakfast Clubs	Total External After School Clubs	Total External Holiday Playschemes	Sufficient Childcare Pick-ups for Schools	Sufficient Wraparound for Schools
Abbey	4	2	3	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Blackheath	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Bristnall	5	2	4	0	5	2	0	2	2	2	2	Yes	Yes
Charlemont with Grove Vale	4	3	3	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	Yes	Yes
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	5	3	5	2	4	0	0	3	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Friar Park	4	1	4	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Great Barr with Yew Tree	4	2	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	3	2	Yes	Yes
Great Bridge	6	3	6	0	2	1	1	4	4	4	0	Yes	Yes
Greets Green and Lyng	4	2	4	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Hateley Heath	4	3	4	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Langley	3	3	3	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes

Ward	Total Primary Schools	Total Schools registered for 30 Hours	Total Schools registered to receive 3 and 4 year old funding?	Total Schools with On Site Pre-School	Total School Site Breakfast Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site After School Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site Holiday Playschemes (run by school)	Total School Site After School Activities (run by school)	Total External Breakfast Clubs	Total External After School Clubs	Total External Holiday Playschemes	Sufficient Childcare Pick-ups for Schools	Sufficient Wraparound for Schools
Newton	3	2	2	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Old Warley	3	1	1	3	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Oldbury	5	4	5	1	3	1	0	1	4	4	3	Yes	Yes
Princes End	4	2	3	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Rowley	3	1	2	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Smethwick	4	3	4	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Soho and Victoria	6	3	6	0	6	4	0	5	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
St Pauls	3	1	3	0	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	Yes	Yes
Tipton Green	4	2	3	1	3	2	0	2	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Tividale	3	3	3	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury North	6	4	4	0	6	4	0	1	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury South	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
West Bromwich Central	3	2	3	0	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	Yes	Yes

Childcare Costs in Sandwell

Tables 5 and 6 Coram Family and Childcare Costs [Survey 2022-23](#), which was carried out in December 2022. It shows the average cost of childcare in Sandwell and the West Midlands.

Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time = 50hrs
Childminders = under 2's	£114	£228
Childminders = over 2's	£75	£150
Day nurseries= under 2's	£116	£232
Day nurseries= over 2's	£103.50	£207
Out of school care		£70
Childminder after school		£68.55
Holiday Playscheme		£142

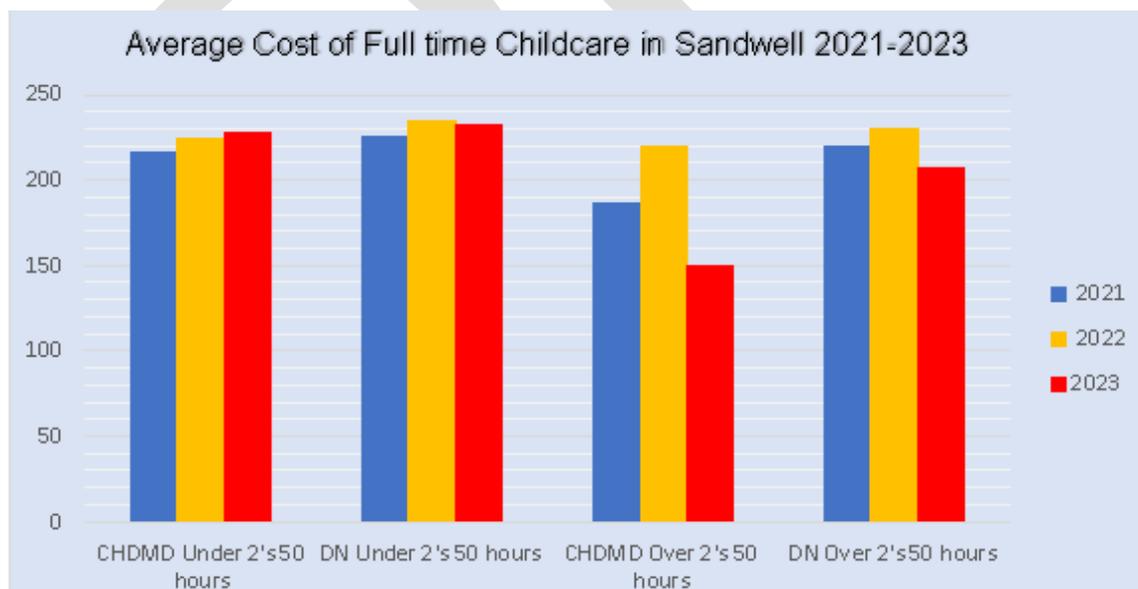
Source: [Coram Family & Childcare Survey 2023](#)

Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time
Childminders = under 2's	£121.88	£234.71
Childminders = over 2's	£119.18	£229.45
Day nurseries= under 2's	£137.93	£285.24
Day nurseries= over 2's	£143.55	£275.45
Out of school care		£79.60
Childminder after school		£71.81
Holiday Playscheme		N/A

Source: [Coram Family & Childcare Costs Survey, 2023](#)

In England, a part time nursery place (25 hours) for a child under two costs 5.6% more than it did a year ago at £148.63.00 per week, or over £7,000 per year. For a child aged two, it now costs 6% more. (Coram Family and Childcare Costs Survey 2023).

In Sandwell, the average cost of a full-time place in a day nursery for a baby or toddler before universal entitlement at 3 years has not increased significantly.



Sandwell Family Information Service Childcare Provider Survey 2023

In August 2023, childcare providers completed an online survey about their childcare business during the past 6 months. Providers were also asked about their planning for the expansion of free entitlement and wraparound childcare in 2024 and 2025.



Findings from Provider Survey

- 90% of providers are confident they will continue in 2024
- 51% say their parents want more flexibility with childcare
- 67% will increase their hourly rate by 1-5% next year
- 63% have had problems recruiting staff at times
- 55% of childminders say families want less hours or only school pick ups
- 90% of families find out about a childminder by word of mouth
- 79% of wraparound providers will not expand in 2024
- 77% say increased running costs are a barrier to expansion
- 28% of providers who plan to expand will offer holiday childcare
- 70% say increased numbers of children with SEND is a significant barrier to offering SEND places
- 76% of childcare providers are concerned about increased running costs in the next 6 months

Survey Analysis

Childcare providers were asked questions about their business and their plans for the next 12 months in line with the new funding entitlements.

Figure 1 shows how many providers are currently looking at childcare place forecasting for the next 12 months. 66% are already thinking about how they will deliver the new funding entitlements in 2024 and 2025.

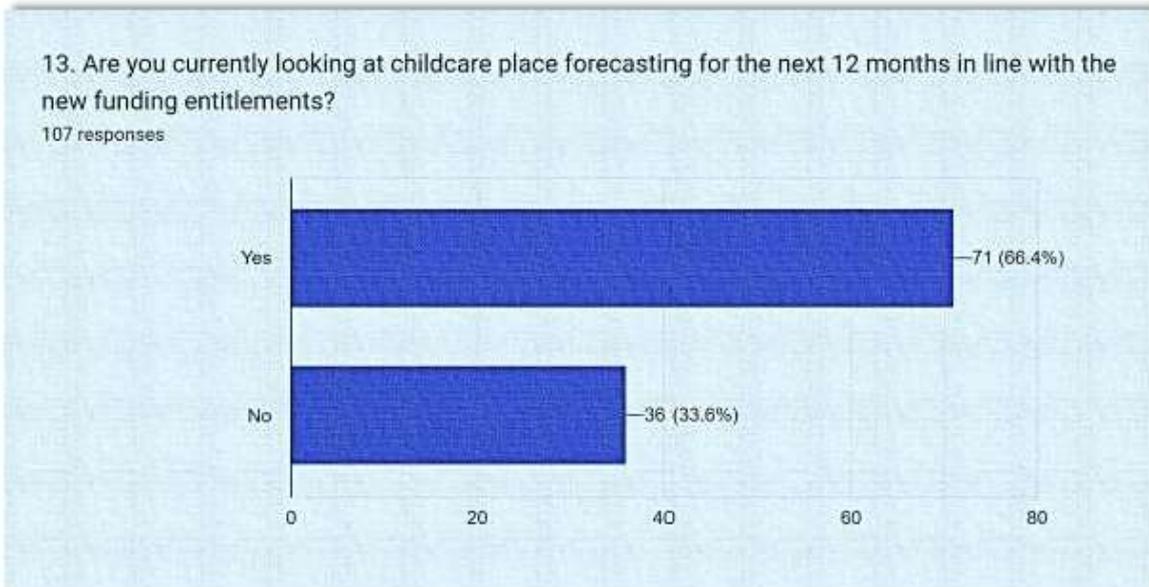


Figure 1 Childcare Providers currently looking at place forecasting for next 12 months

Figure 2 shows childcare providers plan to offer 15 hours funded places to all working parents from April 2024. 26% of providers have not yet planned for the changes to the entitlements.

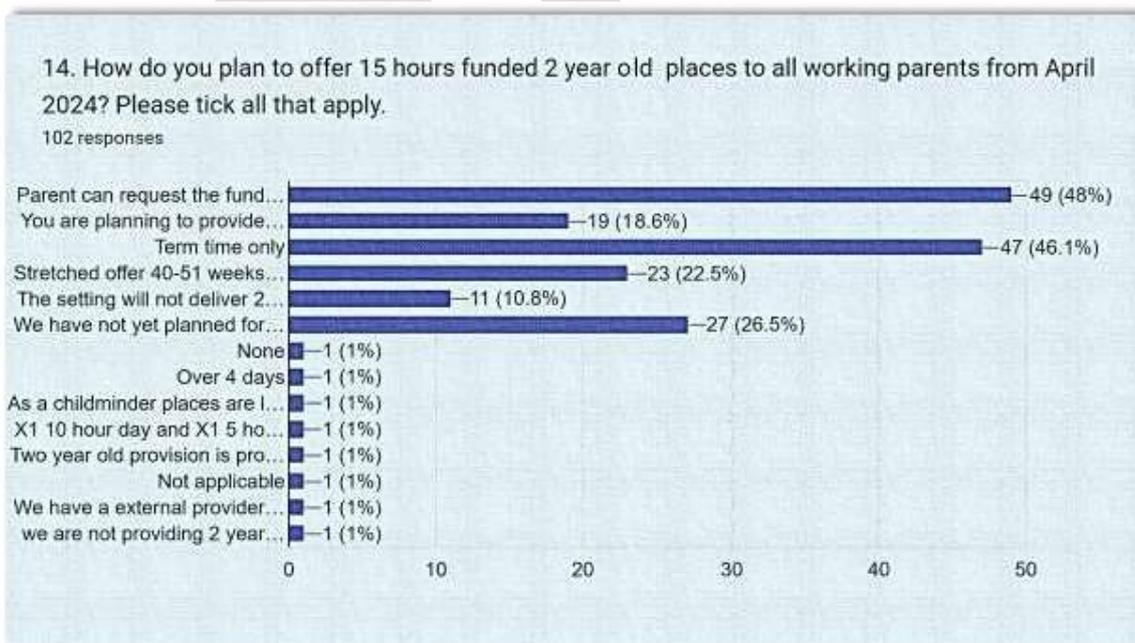


Figure 2 How providers intend to offer funded 2 year old places from April 2024

Figure 3 shows how providers plan to offer funded places for all working parents aged 9 months up to 3 years old introduced in phases from September 2024 (15 hours) and September 2025 (30 hours) across the 3 funded age groups. Only 25% of providers intend to deliver the entitlement as a stretched offer.

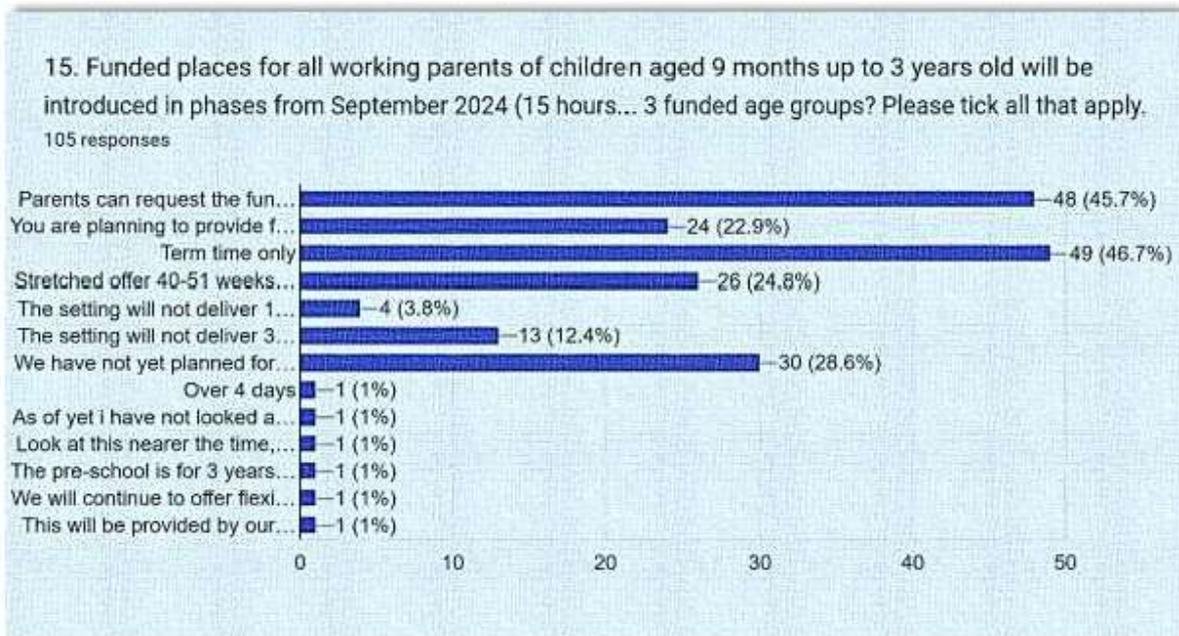


Figure 3 How providers intend to offer funded places in 2024 and 2025

Figure 4 shows how many providers are planning to expand and offer further wraparound provision in accordance with Government proposals from September 2024. 80% do not intend expanding their wraparound provision.

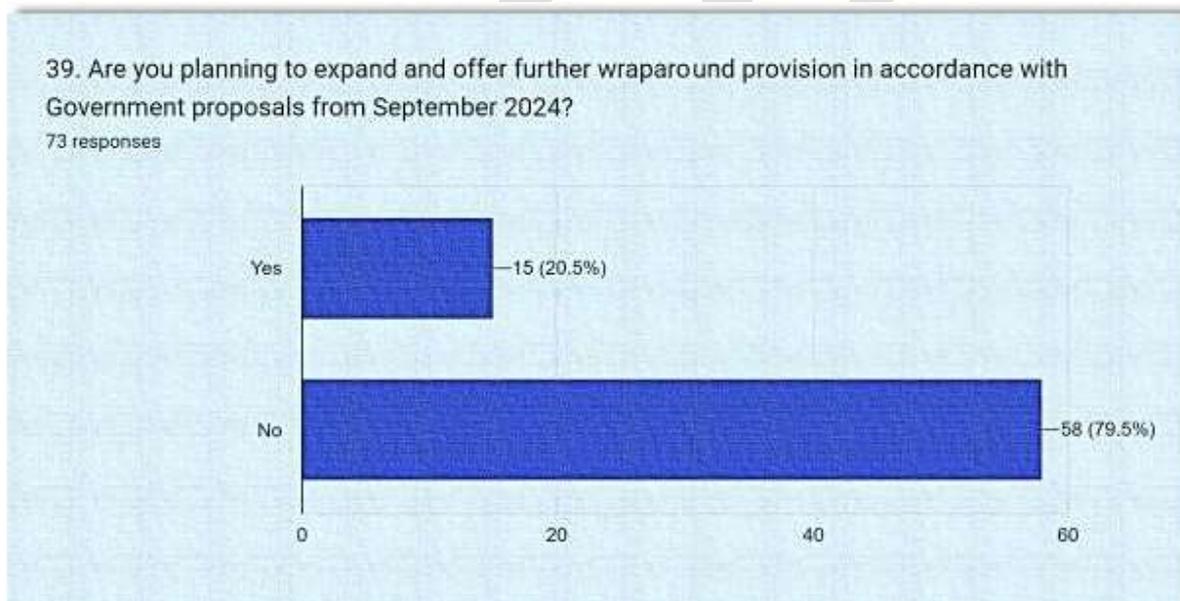


Figure 4 Providers planning to expand wraparound provision in 2024

Figure 5 shows what providers consider to be the barriers to expanding wraparound provision in the next 12 months. Increased running costs are the biggest barrier to expansion. 37% say lack of funding for SEND is a barrier to offering SEND wraparound places.

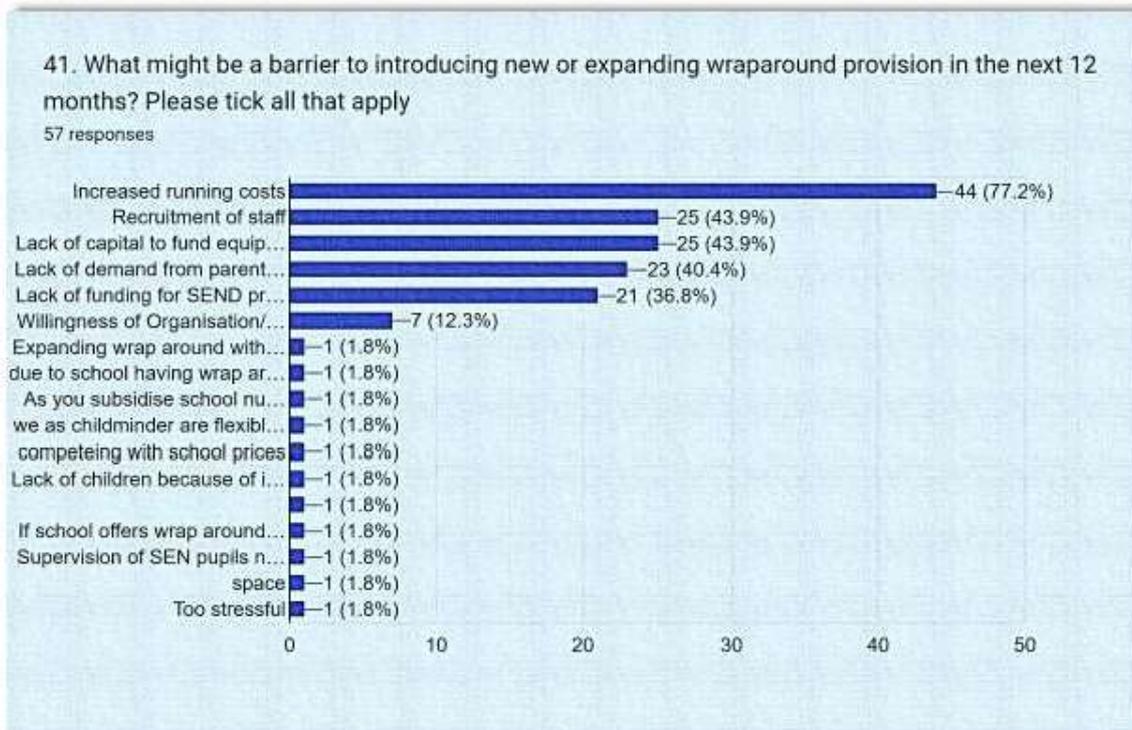


Figure 5 Barriers to expanding wraparound provision in next 12 months

Figure 6 shows which school holidays childcare providers offer holiday provision. The majority of holiday childcare provision caters for 4-7 year olds. Children with SEND are disproportionately disadvantaged during school holidays.

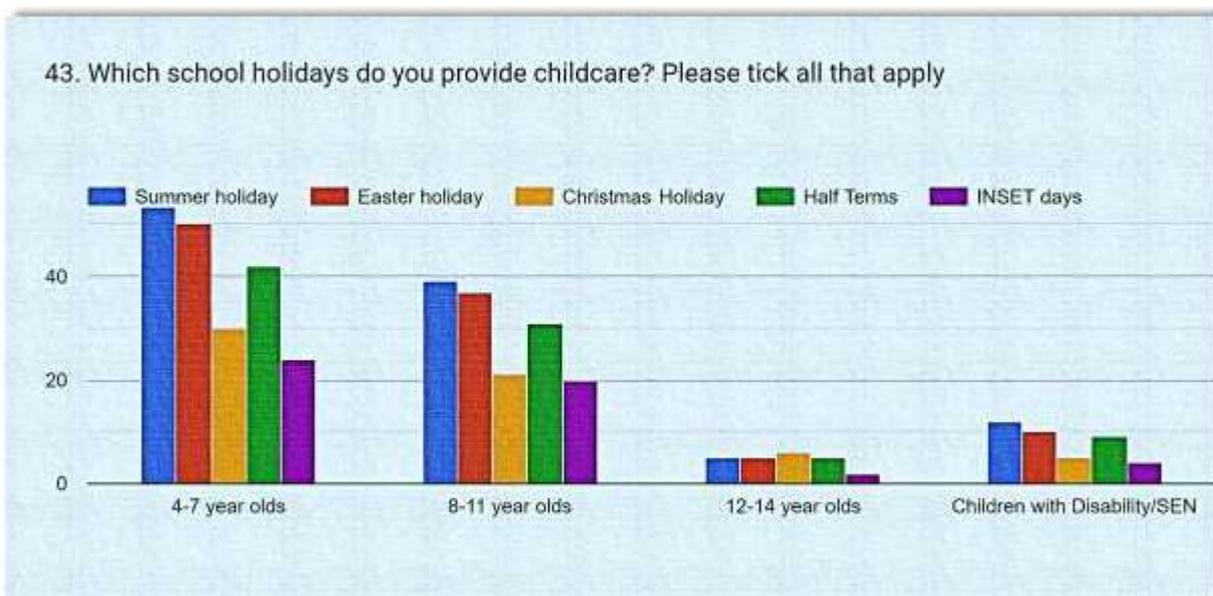


Figure 6 Which school holiday providers run school holiday provision

Figure 7 shows when providers offer SEND provision. Only 19% of providers offer before and after school provision. 12% of providers offer holiday provision for more than 3 sessions per week. 7% offer less than 3 sessions per week.

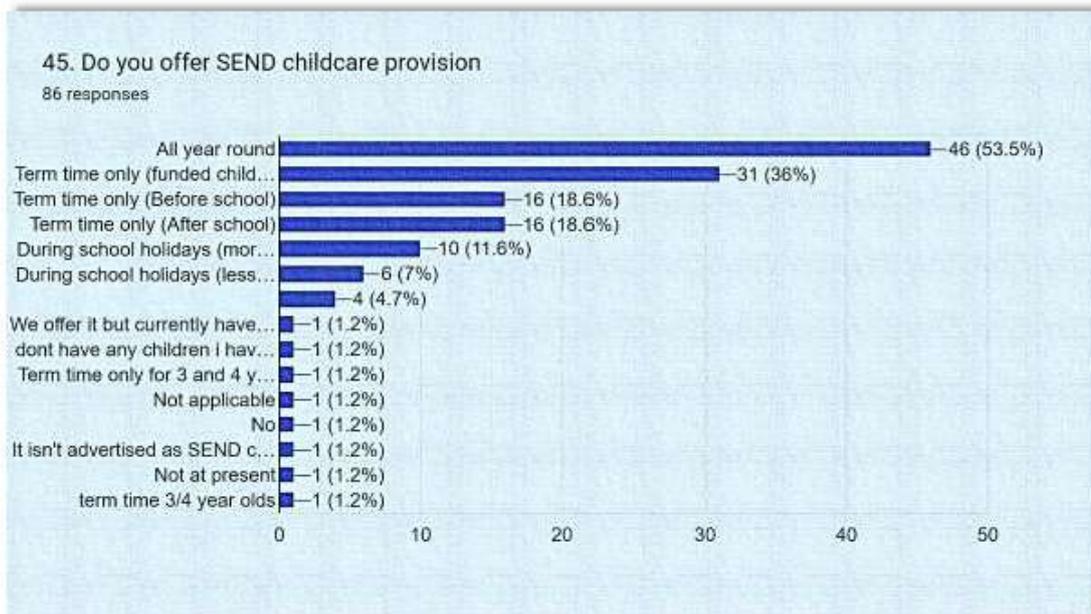


Figure 7 When providers offer SEND provision

Figure 8 indicates the barriers providers faced in the past 6 months in offering SEND provision. 70% of providers say the biggest barrier in the past 6 months has been the increased numbers of children with SEN/Disabilities. Lack of funding and recruiting suitable staff are also barriers.

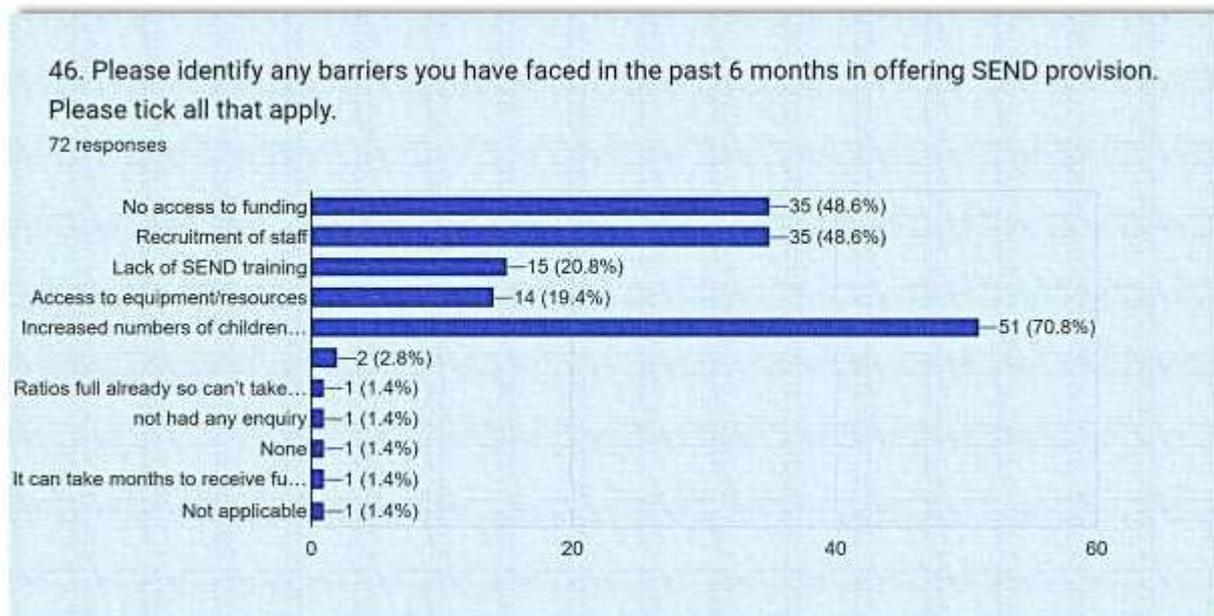


Figure 8 Barriers to offering SEND provision

Figure 9 indicates what childcare providers are most concerned about in the next 6 months. 76% of providers are concerned about increased costs of running their business. 57% of providers are concerned about the new entitlements in 2024 and 2025.

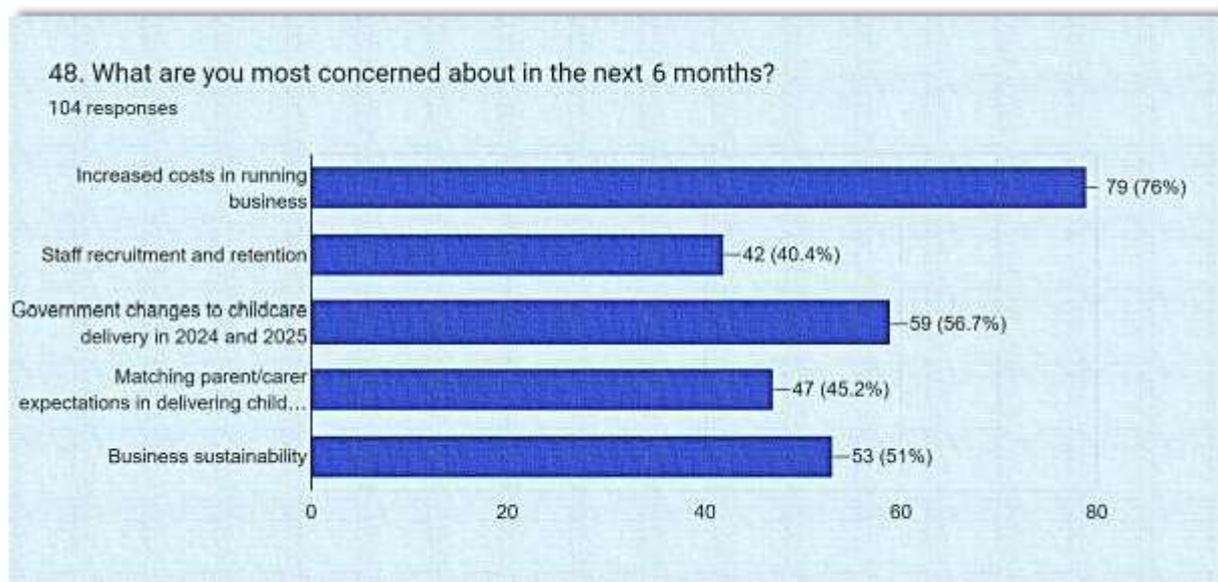


Figure 9 Childcare Providers concerns in next 6 months

Draft

Support given by Family Information Service (FIS)

The Family Information Service continued to support parents providing information, advice and guidance and a brokerage service. The FIS Hub website was refreshed in June 2023 to make it more accessible to families.

The [FIS Hub website](#) continues to provide families and early years professionals with up to date information. The FIS also supported Sandwell Holiday Activities and Food Programme, promoting HAF22 on the FIS Hub. Pages continue to be added to support Sandwell Keeps Talking, a speech and language toolkit for professionals and parents. The Marketing and Social Media Officer creates content and develops campaigns to boost social media and website hits for the service.



Increase in people using FIS Hub website in 2023



[FIS Hub](#) Home Page

Early Years Funding for 2,3 and 4 Year Olds

In 2023 there were 10,148 funded childcare and early years places being offered by 243 early years and childcare providers (including 55 schools offering 30 hours). This compares with 2022 figures of 9783 funded places offered by 258 providers.

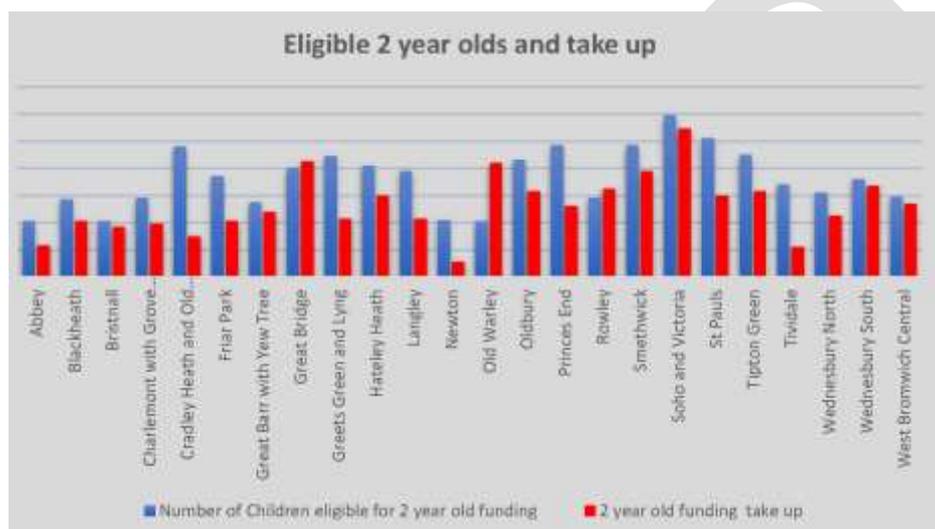
Take Up Spring 2023	Schools	PVI's	Childminders	Total
2 year olds places	67	1156	40	1263
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Universal)	3089	2447	135	5671
3 and 4 year olds (30hrs Extended)	561	1101	81	1743
Total	3717	4704	256	8677

Free funding for 2 year olds

The Department for Education (DfE) in conjunction with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) provides a list of eligible families with 2 year olds every 6-8 weeks for the academic year 2022/23.

- 72% of eligible children were accessing 2 year old funding in Spring Term 2023.
- Take up in the past 5 years has averaged 65%.
- 154 Providers currently offer 2 year old funded places.

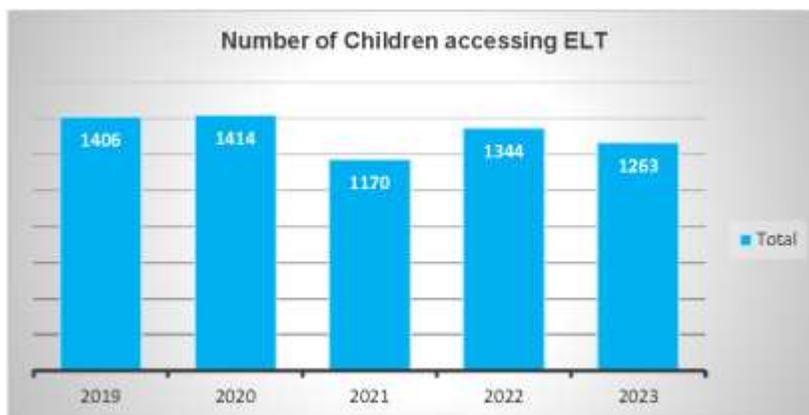
Overall there were sufficient places for children accessing 2 year old funding



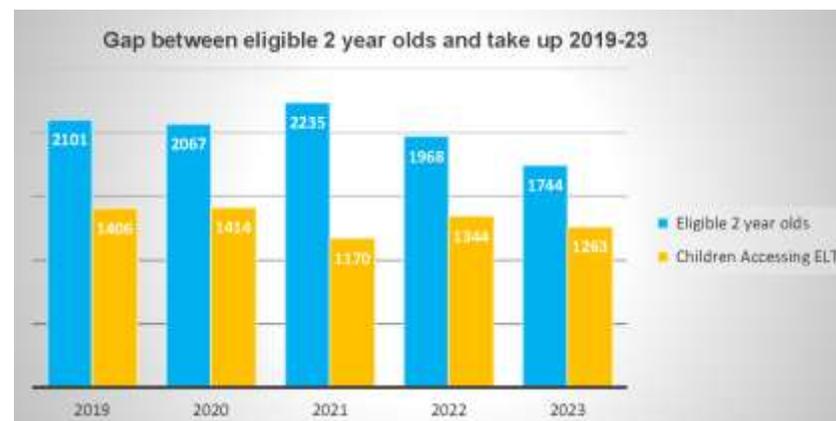
Low take up in Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Greets Green and Lyng, Princes End, St Pauls and Tividale wards. More marketing required in these wards.



Great Bridge, Old Warley and Tipton Green wards have little capacity.



2 year old funding take up in Sandwell 2019-2023



Gap between eligible 2 year olds and take up 2019-2023

		England			Sandwell		
		2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
Extended entitlement	Number of three year olds benefiting	234,996	249,388	260,586	1,162	1,198	1,177
	Number of four year olds benefiting	93,666	98,738	102,396	451	484	479
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	328,662	348,126	362,982	1,613	1,682	1,656
Funded entitlement	Number of three year olds benefiting	574,845	582,295	576,871	4,032	4,029	4,034
	Number of four year olds benefiting	225,278	227,224	223,258	1,513	1,492	1,481
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	800,123	809,519	800,129	5,545	5,521	5,515
	Number of two year olds benefiting	124,542	135,407	124,208	1,171	1,335	1,261

Table showing 'Children registered by age and provider type (2021 - 2023)' from 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age' in England and Sandwell between 2020 and 2022. Source [DfE Data](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-collections/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age) (Gov.UK)

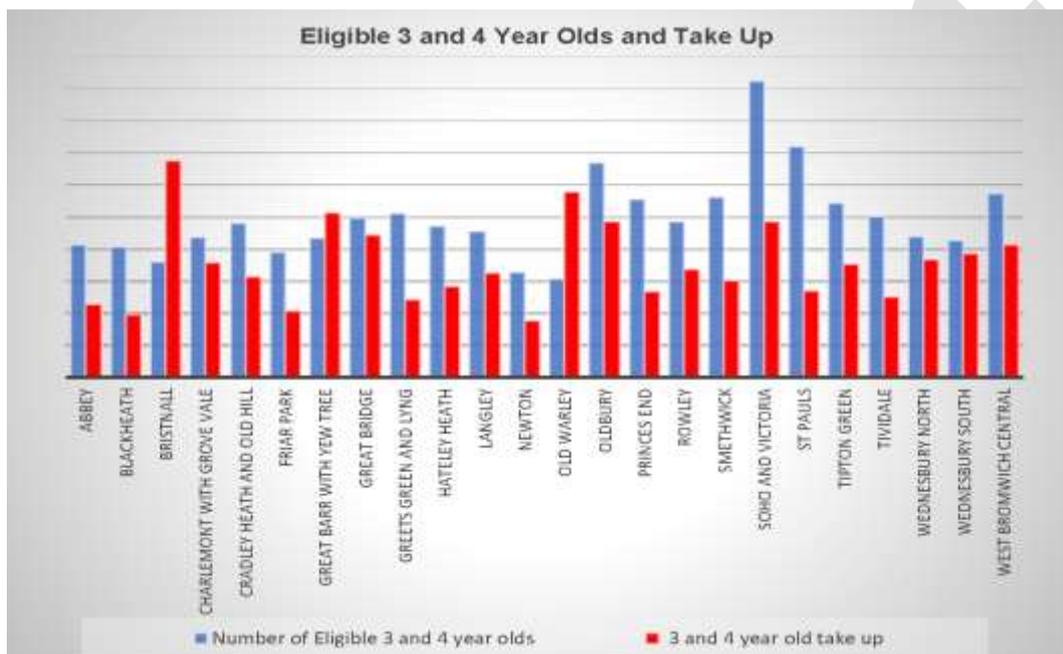
3 and 4 Year Olds Universal Entitlement (15 hours free funding)

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of free funding from the term following their third birthday until they start in reception class in the September following their 4th birthday. Therefore, some children will access up to 5 terms of early education.

In the Spring term 2023 there were:

- 5,939 children eligible for the Universal Entitlement (based on available birth data)
- 5,671 children accessing the funding
- 95% Take Up in Spring 2023
- Some eligible children may access a nursery place in neighbouring boroughs.

Overall there were sufficient places for 3 and 4 year olds for Universal Entitlement



Marketing and promotion may be required in Smethwick, Soho and Victoria and St Pauls wards.



Great Barr with Yew Tree, Langley, Newton, Tividale and Wednesbury South wards have very little capacity. There is capacity in neighbouring wards.

3 and 4 year olds Extended Offer (30 hours free funding)

The 30 hours free funding came into effect in September 2017 and is aimed at working families. Families who are eligible for free 30 hours are issued with a code from HMRC.

In the Spring term 2023 there were:

- 1743 children accessing 30 hours
- 159 PVI and Maintained Providers offering 30 hours
- 55 schools offering 30 hours places

Overall there were sufficient places for 30 hours

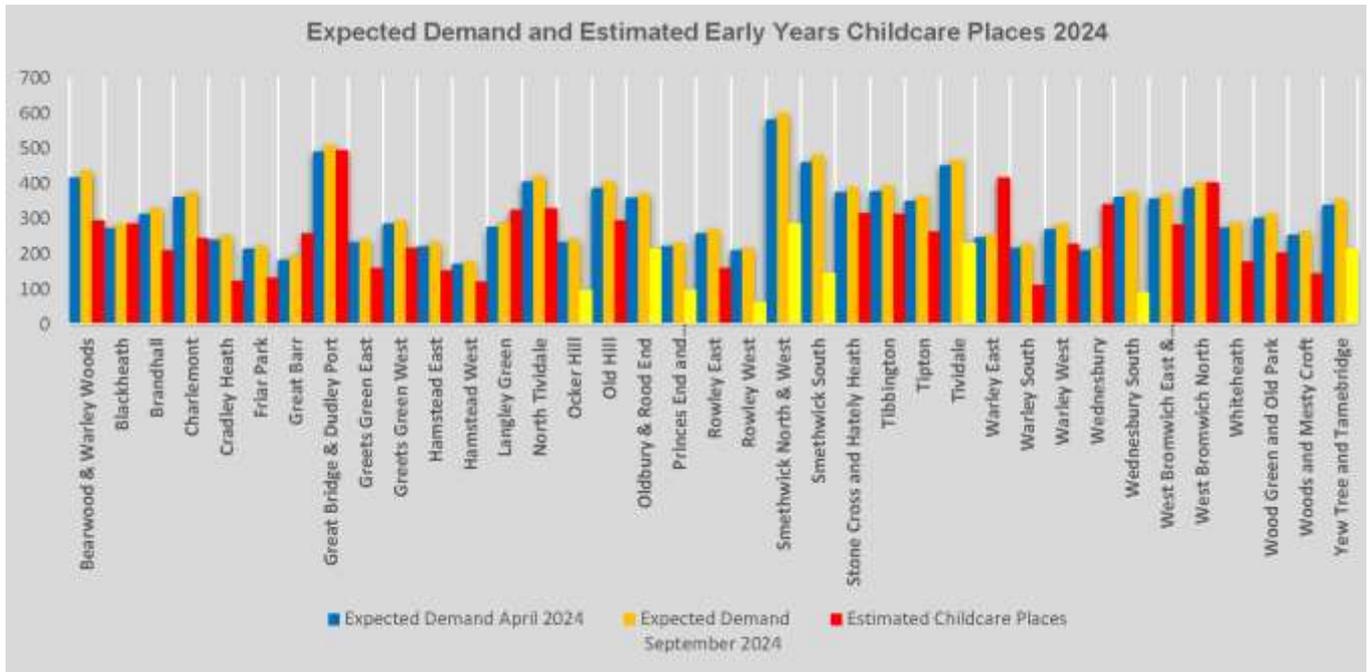


Highest take up of 30 hours places in Bristnall, Old Warley, and Great Barr with Yew Tree wards. Lowest take up in Blackheath, Friar Park and St Pauls wards. Marketing and promotion may be required in these wards.

Source: FIS Database and Early Years data

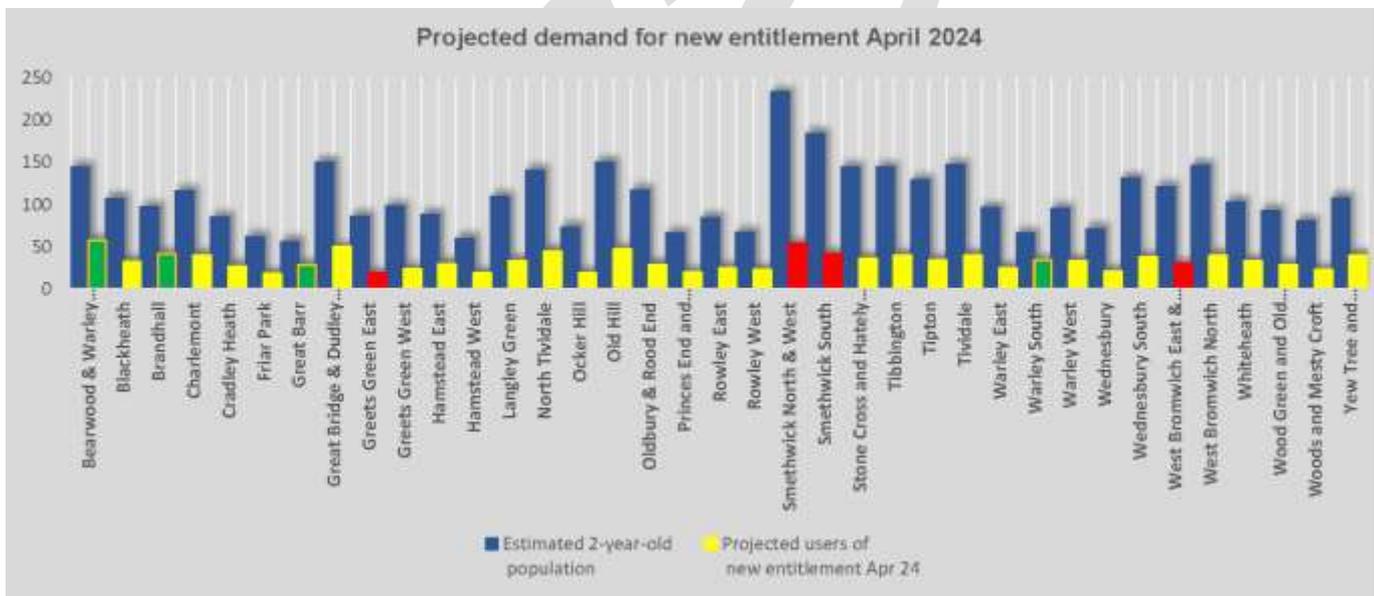
Expansion of the free early education entitlement offer.

In March 2023, the Chancellor announced a significant expansion of the free early education entitlement offer to support working parents of children aged 9 months and over. The Government will provide additional funding to increase the hourly funding rates for early years providers from September 2023. Local Authorities will also be given additional funding to work with schools and private and voluntary providers to increase the supply of wraparound childcare, so parents of school-aged children can access childcare between 8am and 6pm. In June 2023 the Department for Education sent out a self-assessment tool to support local authorities with developing plans to ensure sufficiency for the entitlements and for wraparound care. They also provided early analysis on supply and demand for early years childcare places and the number of schools currently supplying wraparound childcare on school sites. This early analysis is supplied at **Middle Super Output Area (MSOA)** rather than ward. It is intended to be used as a starting point for understanding what might happen in the next 2 years to the local childcare market. Further local analysis will be required in addition to this preliminary data.



Source: Department for Education Local Authority Childcare Expansion Readiness Assessment - June 2023

Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA) highlighted in yellow, Ocker Hill, Oldbury & Rood End, Princes End and Willingsworth, Rowley West, Smethwick North & West, Smethwick South, Tividale, Wednesbury South and Yew Tree and Tamebridge, indicate may not have sufficient early years childcare places to meet demand in April and September 2024. More analysis will be required to assess if neighbouring MSOAs have capacity.



Source: Department for Education Local Authority Childcare Expansion Readiness Assessment - June 2023

Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA) highlighted in green, Bearwood & Warley Woods, Brandhall, Great Barr and Warley South, are expected to have highest demand for new entitlement. Areas highlighted in red, Greets Green East, Smethwick North & West, Smethwick South and West Bromwich East & Kenrick Park have lowest projected demand. Marketing and promotion may be needed in those areas.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision

91% of childcare providers indicate that they would care for children with SEND.



All wards have providers that would care for children with SEND

The Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Service works with providers to support children to integrate into childcare and early settings. They also administer the Inclusion Support Grant and the High Needs Block Funding which enables children with SEND to have one to one support in a setting depending on the child's level of need.

There are also 19 short break services for children with a diagnosis / Education Health Care Plan who can access these services. The Local Offer is available on the Family Information Service Hub, giving families and professionals information on one website.

Sandwell Parent Survey 2023.

The Family Information Service carried out an online Parent Survey during June and July 2023. Parents were asked questions about how they use childcare and what has changed over the past year. They were also asked questions about the cost of childcare and the cost of living crisis. 11% of parents who responded have children with an EHC Plan and 6% are waiting for an assessment.



Findings from Parent Survey

- 67% of parents say they rely on family and friends for childcare
- 56% sometimes struggle to find suitable childcare
- 88% say childcare is too expensive
- 45% don't know about free childcare for 2,3 and 4 year olds
- 66% want to use 30 hours free childcare in the next 12 months
- 93% say school holidays are expensive
- 80% of parents are worried about cost of living and paying for childcare
- 60% of parents find childcare through Social Media
- 47% of parents with SEND child say childcare doesn't meet their needs
- 5% of families with SEND child use Short Breaks in school holidays

The findings of Sandwell Parent Survey support the findings of the Childcare Survey 2023 undertaken by Coram Family and Childcare.

“The cost of childcare continues to rise steadily. This is a pattern that we have observed since the inception of our survey in 2001. The average cost of a part time (25 hours a week) childcare place for a child under two in a nursery in Great Britain is now £148.63 (£7,134 per year¹), and £144.01 for a two year old (£6,912 per year).”

“This year, the average price of an after school club for a week is £67.42 across Great Britain, or £2,629 a year during term time (39 weeks a year). The average price of a childminder to 6pm for a week is £72.36 across Great Britain, or £2,822 a year during term time.”

[Coram Family and Childcare Childcare Survey 2023](#)

Findings and Recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023-24

Findings

- There is sufficient childcare in Sandwell based on current data.
- No significant change to number of 2,3 and 4 year old funded places .
- All wards have providers who would care for children with SEND.
- Average cost of childcare in Sandwell is below West Midland's average.
- Expansion of free entitlement in 2024 and 2025 will significantly impact supply and demand
- Increased numbers of SEND children is having an impact on demand for childcare places.
- There are fewer wraparound and holiday playscheme places for over 8's and SEND children.
- Childcare providers are not willing to expand wraparound provision in the next 2 years.
- Recruitment and retention of staff remains a barrier to expansion and growth.

Recommendations

To ensure the Local Authority meets the Statutory Duty to secure sufficient childcare, *so far as is reasonably practicable*, a detailed and comprehensive action plan will be developed to address the following **6 recommendations**. There are no further budgetary implications for these actions, but they give a clear focus for the work of the Early Years and Child Care team and the Family Information Service.

Delivering childcare in the borough

Sandwell Early Years supports childcare providers by providing information, advice and guidance and monitoring childcare in the borough.

Recommendation 1 - To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.

Ofsted Judgements

Sandwell Early Years continues to support settings judged by Ofsted as inadequate and requires improvement.

Recommendation 2 - To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.

Demand for childcare

FIS will continue to promote the options available to families to pay for childcare. Early Years will undertake a participation campaign to boost take up of 3 and 4 year old entitlement.

Recommendation 3 –To raise awareness of childcare options and entitlements through social media platforms. To continue to promote the Family Information Service Hub. To continue with participation campaign and outreach in the community. To monitor demand through FIS contact with parents.

Free entitlement expansion

From April 2024, working parent will be able to access 15 hour per week of free childcare and from September 2024 this will be extended to parents with children aged 9 months and upwards. Preliminary data from Department for Education indicates that the expansion will have a significant impact on supply and demand for childcare places.

Recommendation 4 – More data collection and analysis needed to ensure sufficient childcare for the expansion in 2024 and 2025. Increased promotion of new entitlements to working parents. Childcare Providers are given adequate business support to ensure sustainability and also that they are able to provide a flexible affordable offer to families. Childcare Providers are supported with recruitment and retention of staff as this remains a barrier to expansion for them.

Wraparound and Holiday childcare

Families report that after school and holiday childcare is expensive and more families are relying on family and friends rather than paid childcare. Childcare providers are indicating that they are not likely to expand wraparound places in 2024 and 2025. SEND families report that they cannot find holiday childcare to meet their needs. The number of holiday childcare places has fallen by 41% since 2019.

Recommendation 5 –To monitor wraparound childcare to ensure sufficient places are available for families. To continue to work with childcare providers to ensure parents can access affordable holiday childcare throughout the Borough.

SEND Childcare

Childcare for SEND children and families is sufficient. However, families report difficulty finding suitable childcare for school holidays.

Recommendation 6 – To increase parental and stakeholder engagement to determine how SEND provision should be delivered. To consult with childcare providers to assess any potential short and medium term gaps for SEND provision, particularly holiday childcare. To provide more support for providers to ensure SEND families can access childcare to meet their needs



Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023 Recommendations Summary

Recommendation 1

To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.

Recommendation 2

To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.

Recommendation 3

To raise awareness of childcare options and entitlements through social media platforms. To continue to promote the Family Information Service Hub. To continue with participation campaign and outreach in the community. To monitor demand through FIS contact with parents.

Recommendation 4

More data collection and analysis needed to ensure sufficient childcare for the expansion in 2024 and 2025. Increased promotion of new entitlements to working parents. Childcare Providers are given adequate business support to ensure sustainability. Childcare Providers are supported with recruitment and retention of staff as this remains a barrier to expansion for them.

Recommendation 5

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Recommendation 6

To increase parental and stakeholder engagement to determine how SEND provision should be delivered. To consult with childcare providers to assess any potential short and medium term gaps for SEND provision, particularly holiday childcare. To provide more support for providers to ensure SEND families can access childcare to meet their needs

Conclusion

The childcare sector in Sandwell has remained stable in the past 12 months. However, expansion of the free entitlement in 2024 and 2025 will have a huge impact on supply and demand for childcare places. Parents remain concerned about the cost of childcare, particularly during school holidays. SEND children and over 8's are not as well served as under 8's for wraparound and holiday childcare. Parents with SEND children report that childcare does not meet their needs.

Childcare providers are increasingly worried about the cost of providing childcare and there is little appetite for expansion and growth within the sector. Providers are also still struggling with recruitment and retention of staff post pandemic. The Government expansion of free entitlement comes at a time when childcare businesses are at their most risk -averse.

Managing parental expectations will be crucial and getting information to families through the Family Information Service will be pivotal in the next 12 months.

Childcare supply and demand must continue to be monitored, to ensure there is sufficient quality childcare in the borough.