

West Berkshire Council Early Years Service

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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1. Background to Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report

1. What is a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment?

This childcare sufficiency assessment provides an overview of the childcare provision in West Berkshire.

The Childcare Act (2006) requires local authorities by law to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).

We must ensure that:

- There is sufficient childcare available for working parents and those parents training to enter work.
- There is sufficient childcare for every child to access their entitlement to free early education and care.

The duties of the Childcare Act require local authorities to shape and support the development of childcare in their area to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community. This role is described as a market management function, supporting the needs of parents, children and young people and stakeholders.

Local authorities are required to 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.

2. Relevant Legislation

The Childcare Act (2006) requires local authorities in England to ensure a sufficiency of childcare for working parents, access to education and training, and for children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. Childcare sufficiency covers registered childcare for children aged 0-14, 0 – 18 for a child with EHCP or additional needs.

The Childcare Act (2016) requires local authorities to ensure early years provision is available free of charge to eligible children. The universal entitlement provides funded childcare up to a maximum of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks (570 hours per year) for eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds.

The Childcare Act (2016) became law in March 2016 and introduced the extended 30 hour entitlement of funded childcare for 3 and 4 year olds to eligible families, from September 2017.

More information regarding Childcare provision legislation can be found here [Statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

2. Impact of coronavirus

1. Provider Sustainability

In our 2021 Sufficiency Report we evaluated the impact of Coronavirus on Early Years Provision and its ongoing impact.

Support was offered to providers through an Early Years Sustainability Grant and the provision of financial training.

The Team continues to assess and monitor the market to support sufficient childcare in West Berkshire. Comments regarding the continuing impact of the pandemic will be included in this report.

2. Economy, wellbeing and employment

The rise of home working was a clear result of the pandemic and statistics show that just under a third of workers are able to continue to do this. Although this is positive, prolonged periods of working from home have also taken their toll on wellbeing, with over half of employees expressing concerns of feeling isolated or detached from the workplace. Furthermore, the relative success of home working alongside the cost and emissions savings made as a result of office buildings not being used led many employers to consider their estate needs which in turn will have a knock on impact on our town centres and ultimately where families access their childcare..

The impact on childcare is also being monitored as home working and different workstyles have altered families demand for childcare, in terms of hours and location. Recruitment and retention in the local childcare market is also being monitored. There has been another reduction in Childminders (see 4.1 below) and we are hearing from some Childminders that they are moving into alternative types of work.

A survey of West Berkshire providers by the Early Years Team in summer 2022 showed evidence that some Early Years providers were finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff. In certain cases this has led to temporary or permanent changes in the number of childcare places they are able to offer and at the same time ensure the maintenance of ratios of workers to children.

3. Demand for Early Education and Childcare in West Berkshire

1. Overall Population

As mid-year population data for 2021 is not yet available for publication, we have retained the previous year's information.

The mid-year population estimate for 2020 showed West Berkshire's population as 158,450. The largest urban areas in the district are Newbury, Thatcham and the East Suburban Area where in total 63% of the population lives. The remaining 37% live in the more rural areas of West Berkshire but include smaller towns such as Hungerford and Theale.

2020 Mid-Year population data West Berkshire	
Town/area	Estimated Population, All Ages
Newbury	44,044
Thatcham	25,399
Eastern suburban area (Calcot, Purley, Tilehurst)	31,477
Rural area	57,530
West Berkshire	158,450

Source: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/research>

2. Population of Early Years Children

Age	Number of Children
0	1515
1	1514
2	1631
3	1684
4*	1762

Source: ONS-Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

* most four-year old will have started in a school reception place

3. Population of School Age Children

Age	Number of Children
5	1880
6	1977
7	1983
8	2037
9	2105
10	2167
11	2280
12	2262
13	2273
14	2465

Source: ONS-Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Population of West Berkshire early years and school age children has been declining since 2020. For 2 year olds this has reduced by just over 10% and for 3 year olds this has reduced by almost 11.5 %.

4. Economy, Employment and Wellbeing

Employment rates in West Berkshire are generally high, 85.2% of 16 to 64 year olds are economically active (people that are not retired, a student, a carer or unemployed). This is higher than the South East and Great Britain averages. Increasing employment and supporting people into work are key elements of the UK Government's public health and welfare reform agendas.

West Berkshire enjoys low levels of unemployment compared with other areas of the South East and England. An indicator used to measure unemployment levels is based on the number of residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) which now forms part of the Universal Credit scheme. Unemployment is at 2.6% in West Berkshire.

In 2020, for every resident aged 16-64, there were on average 1.1 jobs in West Berkshire. This is higher than the South East and Great Britain. The density figure represents the ratio of jobs to working population. For example, a job density of 1.0 means there is one job for every resident aged 16-64.

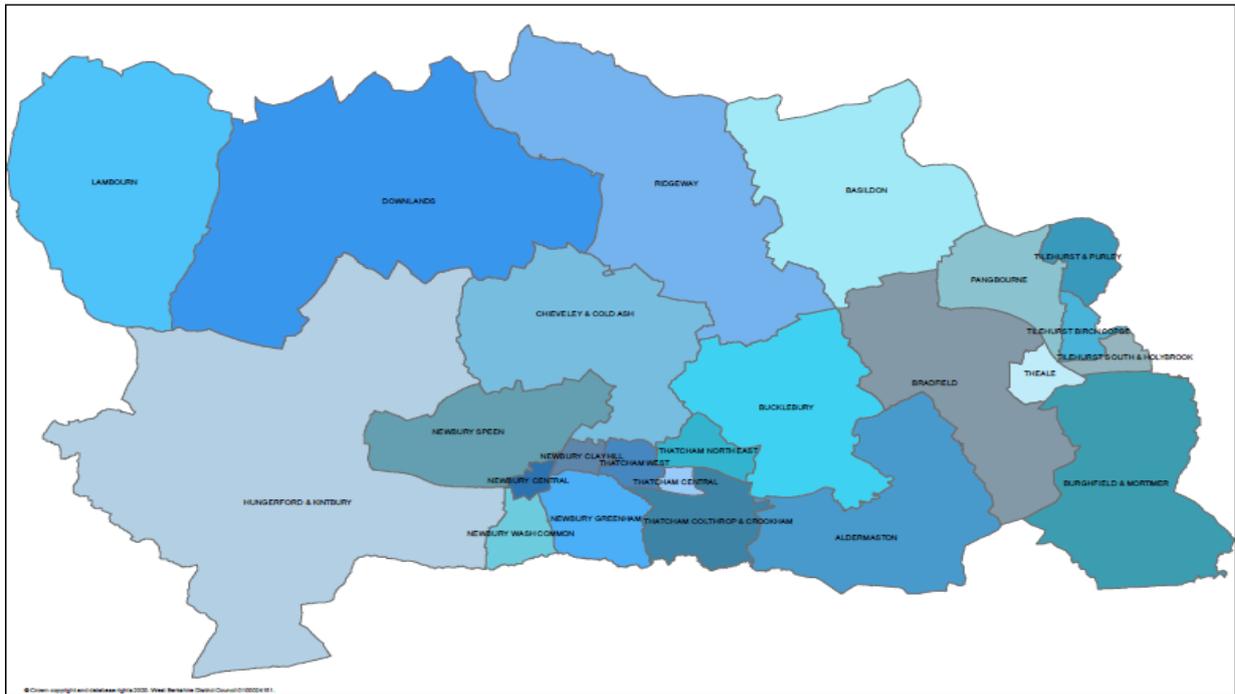
5. Ethnicity

Table showing Ethnicity of the West Berkshire Population as per 2021 Census

Ethnicity	West Berkshire Population 2021 Census	%
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	138,253	85.6
White: Other White	8,379	5.2
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Indian	3,087	1.9
White: Irish	1,404	0.9
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	1,274	0.8
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African	1,095	0.7
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	1,054	0.7
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Other Asian	1,046	0.6
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1,028	0.6
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	907	0.6
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Chinese	801	0.5
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani	658	0.4
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Caribbean	627	0.4
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	501	0.3
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi	398	0.2
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Other Black	308	0.2
Other ethnic group: Arab	279	0.2
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	190	0.1
White: Roma	158	0
Total Population	161,447	100

6. Wards

Map showing names and locations of West Berkshire Wards



7. Deprivation and Family Hubs

Overall, West Berkshire ranks as the 39th least deprived district in England (out of 326): placing the district in the 89th percentile in terms of deprivation across England. There are however pockets of deprivation across the district, and the table below shows the 10 most deprived areas in West Berkshire.

Table Showing most deprived Lower Layer Super Output Area in West Berkshire

Order	WARD	LSOA
1	Greenham	The Nightingales, Equine Way
2	Thatcham N	Park Avenue, The Henrys
3	Tilehurst Birch Copse	Royal Avenue
4	Tilehurst S & Holybrook	Underwood Road
5	Clay Hill	London Road, Faraday Road, Hambridge Road
6	Aldermaston	Aldermaston Village, Soke
7	Clay Hill	Walton Way, Curling Way
8	Downlands	Brightwalton, Chaddleworth, Catmore, West Ilsley, Farnborough, Fawley
9	Lambourn	Newbury Road, Mill Lane, Bockhampton Road, Lambourn
10	Hungerford	Priory Road, Hungerford Common

West Berkshire has 3 Family Hubs which replaced the Children Centres in 2016. The West Family Hub is located in Victoria Ward, Newbury and there is a satellite Hub in

Hungerford. The Central Family Hub is in Thatcham North Ward and the East Family Hub, Calcot,

The Hubs are located in areas with recognised raised levels of deprivation to be able to target families from these areas. They work directly with children 0 to 5 years old and signpost services for families with 5 to 19 year olds. (0 to 24 for children with special educational needs and disabilities).

Families with children under 5 can access the following:

- 1-1 support from a Family Support Worker, families can self-refer or be referred by a professional
- A variety of groups running in the Hubs and local community, enabling children and their parents/carers to take part in range of play-based activities to support early learning, development, and building friendships
- Family learning courses such as Boost, Parenting in the Early Years, Healthy Eating and Lifestyles
- Antenatal, postnatal, breastfeeding support and baby massage
- Support with finding suitable provision and applying for free childcare for 2-year-olds and 30 hours free childcare
- Friendly, qualified staff who will provide a listening ear to support your child's learning & development and parent/carer wellbeing
- Signposting for information about employment, training, and childcare

4. Supply of Early Years and Childcare in West Berkshire

1. Types of Provision

In spring 2022 West Berkshire had a total of 209 Early Years providers. This comprised 126 registered childminders, 57 of whom were registered to offer the free entitlement funding to families. There were 22 Day Nurseries, 32 Pre-Schools, 8 Private School Nurseries, 19 Maintained Schools with nursery classes and 2 Maintained Nursery Schools. The overall number of places being offered was 4879.

Table Showing Types of provision and places in West Berkshire

Type of Provision	Number of Providers		Number of Places	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
Childminders	137	126	777	683
Day Nurseries	23	22	1729	1856
Pre-Schools	34	32	1017	1013
Private Schools	10	8	324	272
Maintained Nursery Schools	2	2	280	300
School with Nurseries	18	19	696	755
Total	224	209	4823	4879

West Berkshire continues to offer a good mix of childcare provision to all families including working parents. The overall number of places, which includes both funded and unfunded, remains similar to last year. The maintained sector shows an overall increase in places on offer.

Comments made earlier about the continued impact of Coronavirus on the supply of childcare is somewhat shown in the provider and place numbers in the sector. The numbers of childminders and places has reduced and there were some setting closures due in part by the pandemic and pre-schools being unable to fundraise to support their early education offer.

The number of Ofsted registered Childminders reduced by 11 (8%). Day Nurseries by 1 (4.3%) and Pre-schools by 2 (5.8%) in 2021-22.

Ofsted also reported that nationally the ongoing decline in the number of childcare providers has continued. Most of this overall decrease in provider numbers is due again to a fall in the number of childminders.

Table Showing Spring Term 2022 relevant child population, funded children and available places.

Ward	Number of 2-3 year olds	Number of 3-4 year olds	Number of funded 2 year olds	Number of funded 3-4 year olds	Total Vacancies per Ward	Total Places per Ward	Ratio of Places
Aldermaston	51	40	1	36	86	475	5.22
Basildon	29	34		33	0	105	1.67
Bradfield	45	47	14	93	13	52	0.57
Bucklebury	31	29	2	23	11	63	1.05
Burghfield & Mortimer	95	102	13	118	29	254	1.29
Chieveley & Cold Ash	50	70	7	106	39	295	2.46
Downlands	36	24	4	55	26	143	2.38
Hungerford & Kintbury	106	110	14	126	47	235	1.09
Lambourn	31	47	10	42		52	0.67
Newbury Central	85	77	9	92	3	230	1.42
Newbury Clay Hill	84	99	14	129	9	101	0.55
Newbury Greenham	158	150	23	209	45	512	1.66
Newbury Speen	82	79	19	124	78	236	1.47
Newbury Wash Common	83	100	6	121	23	147	0.80
Pangbourne	33	45	0	29	25	114	1.46
Ridgeway	32	34	5	32	6	54	0.82
Thatcham Central	81	95	23	141	92	217	1.23
Thatcham Colthrop & Crookham	27	32	5	29	0	39	0.66
Thatcham North East	96	85	20	107	12	137	0.76
Thatcham West	98	84	15	101	36	168	0.92
Theale	31	26	4	43	12	326	5.72
Tilehurst & Purley	98	111	7	115	45	268	1.28
Tilehurst Birch Copse	78	82	3	85	39	180	1.13
Tilehurst South & Holybrook	91	82	8	91	13	100	0.58
Out of District			25	292			N.A.
Total	1631	1684	251	2372	689	4503	1.36

2. Sufficiency

The table indicates that there are sufficient funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds in West Berkshire. There is a surplus of places compared to population. The table above shows that there are Wards where there are insufficient places compared to demand and local population and supply could be increased to future proof childcare provision.

Parent mobility should also be taken into account when looking at the table. Parents have traditionally chosen childcare near or on their way to their place of work rather than near to their home. However, with the continued increase in home working following the pandemic and how many hours parents are accessing, we are aware that this changing aspect of demand would benefit from further analysis.

Areas whose sufficiency levels are being closely monitored include: Lambourn and Thatcham where sufficiency is tight with either few or no surplus places.

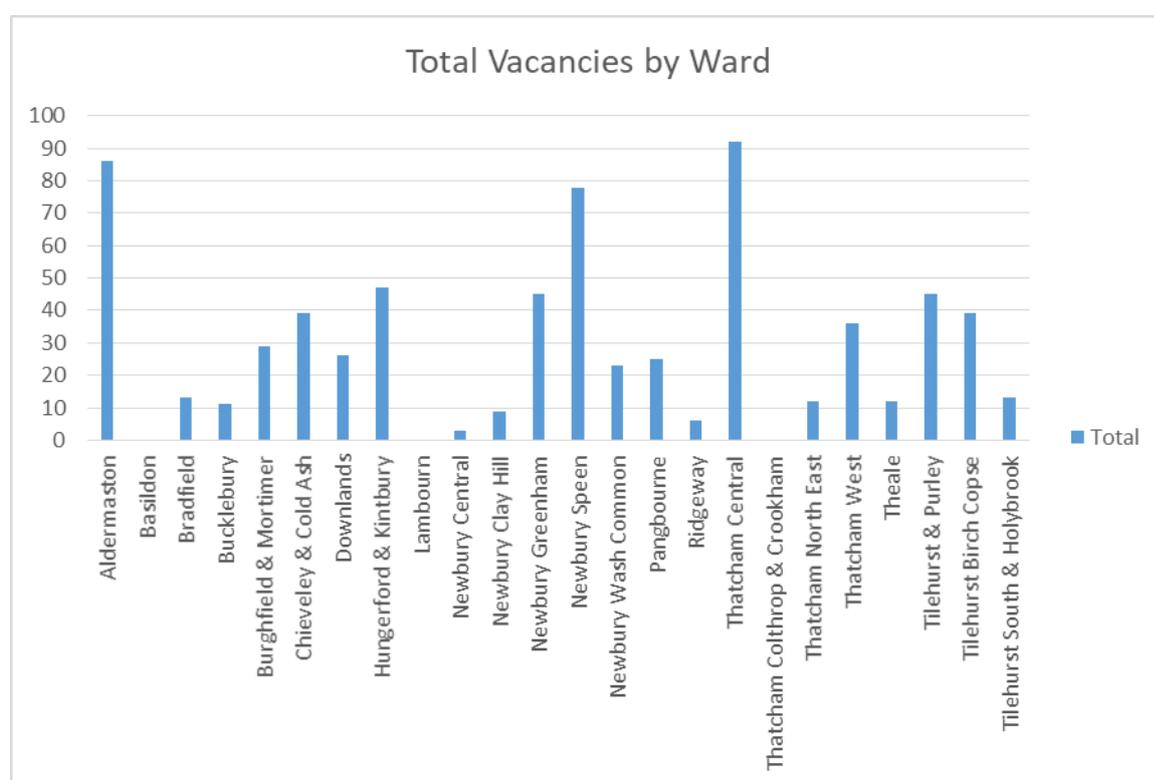
Recruitment and retention of early years staff has had an impact on sufficiency. Many providers have reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in the sector. Some of the reasons given for this is the ability of staff to find higher paid work in other employment sectors. Providers have also commented on the low levels of the free entitlement funding and increasing employment costs e.g. Minimum Wage increases.

This has been shown in either short or longer-term reductions in places within West Berkshire. As mentioned previously, childminders are also leaving the sector which is impacting both day care and wraparound provision for families.

3. Vacancies

Vacancy rates provide a snapshot and often change rapidly especially from spring term into summer term. In spring 2022 the overall vacancy rate was 15%. This figure is down 5% on the previous year. Vacancies are greater in autumn term and become fewer during the spring and summer as more children become eligible for the free entitlement funding.

Table showing childcare vacancies at spring 2022



Looking at early education places, current take up and vacancies; West Berkshire has sufficient childcare places to meet demand.

4. Breakfast and Afterschool Clubs and Holiday Clubs

West Berkshire has a number of out of school clubs that operate across the Authority. Spaces in these clubs vary on a termly basis.

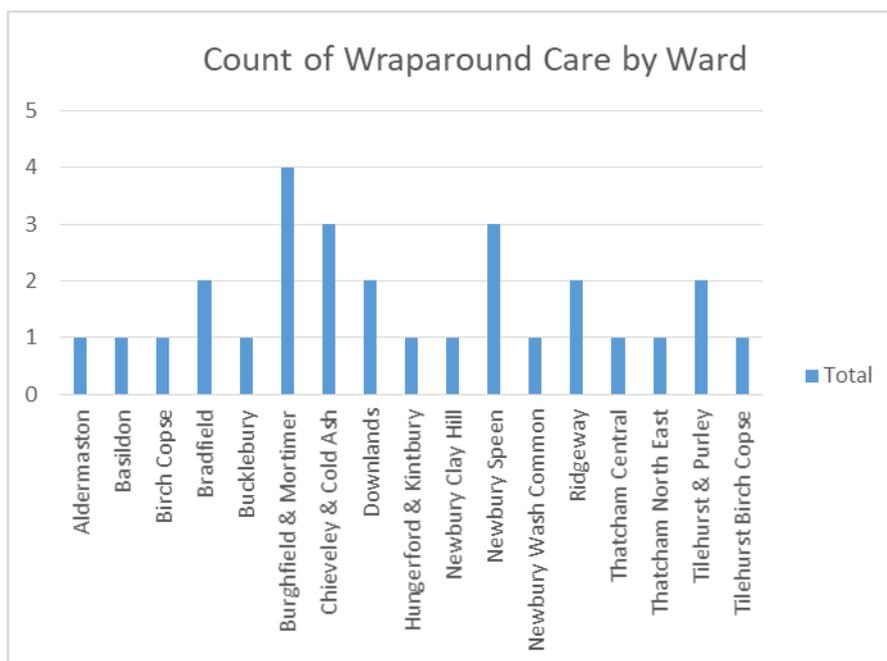
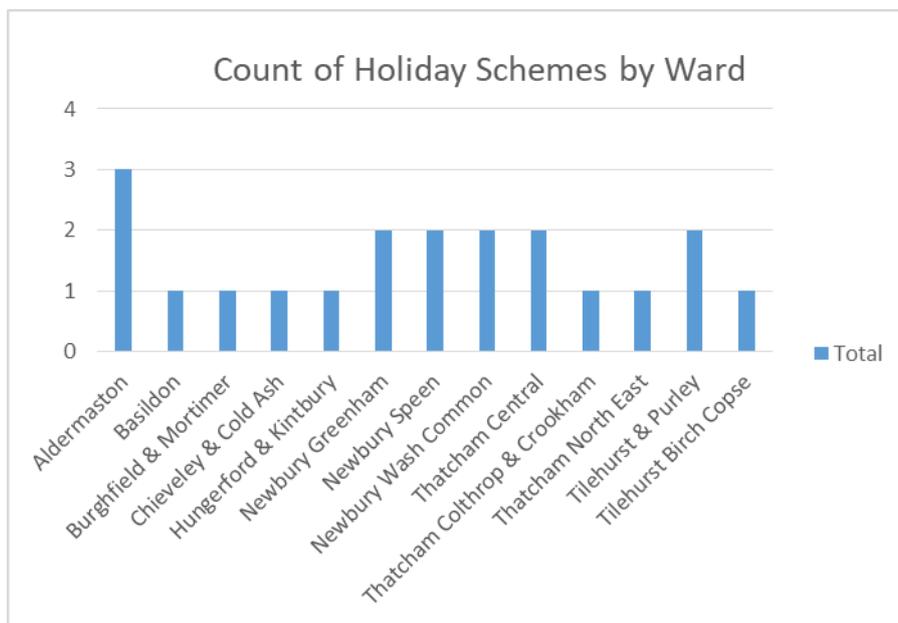
These clubs provide breakfast and afterschool care, some are based on the school premises, privately run or run by the school, and some are at other locations, sometimes a nursery or a standalone club, who will deliver and collect children from schools.

Childminders also provide childcare for school age children, this gives parents choice, and flexible childcare.

Holiday clubs are also available in some schools and also privately run to provide all year round childcare for working parents.

Parents of children from Reception age up to the end of Year 9 have the right to ask their child’s school to establish wraparound and/ or holiday childcare and childcare providers have the right to request to use school facilities for these purposes. We are not aware of any new provision being created through this process currently. [Wraparound and holiday childcare. Parent and childcare provider 'rights to request'](#)

Current listings by ward are in the tables below.



Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

West Berkshire has continued to successfully deliver the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. These are free holiday club places available for children and young people eligible for free school meals. The aim of the HAF programme is to support children to eat more healthily, be more active over the school holidays and have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition, as well as being more engaged with school and other local services.

Children are able to access sessions throughout the holidays, at no cost. The sessions include a variety of fun and enriching physical activities, including sports, music, arts and other exciting opportunities to learn and develop skills, alongside a nutritious meal each day. Nutritional resources are also made available to children attending the sessions. The holiday club places are available for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week, and six weeks per year.

In West Berkshire HAF has been delivered through local schools, voluntary and community organisations and childcare providers.

In addition to this programme, families who are eligible for Universal Credit may be able to claim back up to 85 per cent of their childcare costs, dependent on the club attended.

5. Quality of Provision

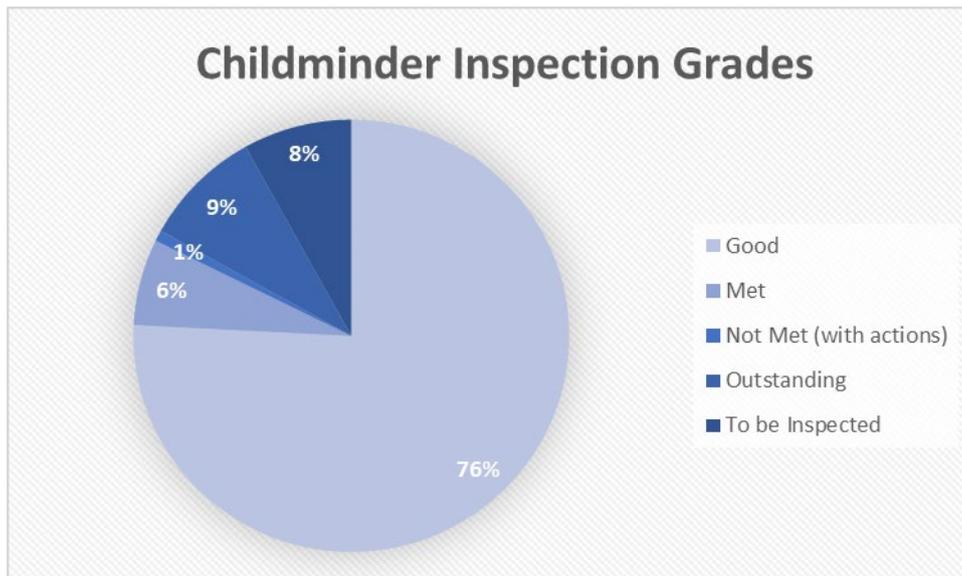
Early Years providers are routinely inspected by Ofsted. Ofsted inspections restarted in August 2021 after being halted during the pandemic.

The data below reflects this in the number of providers that are categorised as 'To be Inspected'. These include new provision waiting for their first inspection after registration with Ofsted.

'Met' and Not Met (with actions) relate to pre-registration inspections for new childminders where no children were present on inspection day.

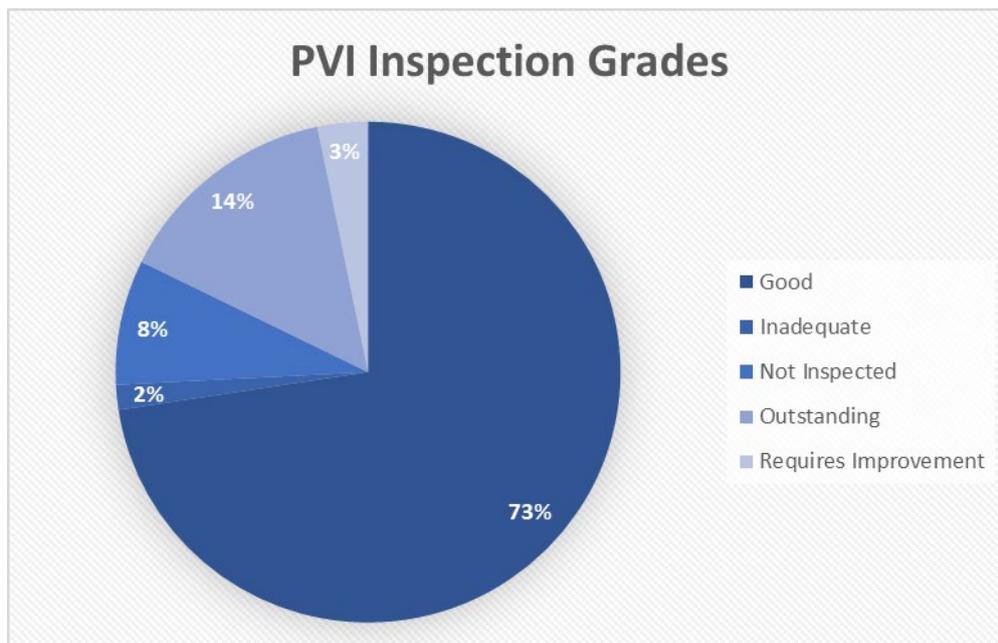
Childminders

85% of the Childminders are rated good or outstanding. 10% have yet to receive an Ofsted rating, 6% were inspected when no children were present (Met) and 1 Childminder had their first inspection without children and required to carry out improvements (Not met with actions)



Pre-schools, Day Nurseries and Private Nursery Schools

87% of providers in these categories were rated good or outstanding.



6. Free Entitlement /Funded Early Education

Funded two year olds

A 2-year-old can get free childcare if they live in England and get one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- child tax credits, and your household income is £16,190 a year or less before tax
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

2-year-olds can also get free childcare if they:

- are looked after by a local authority
- have a statement of [special education needs \(SEN\)](#) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- get [Disability Living Allowance](#)
- have left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order

For a non-EEA citizen who cannot claim benefits

A 2-year-old may get free childcare if parents are getting [support under the Immigration and Asylum Act](#) and have either:

- [claimed asylum](#) in the UK and are waiting for a decision (known as 'part 6')
- been refused asylum in the UK (known as 'section 4')

A 2-year-old may also get free childcare if the household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, and they have any of the following:

- leave to remain with 'no recourse to public funds' on [family or private life grounds](#)
- support from their local council because they have 'a child in need', for example they have a disability or a child protection plan
- the right to live in the UK because they are the main carer of a British citizen (known as a ['Zambrano Carer'](#))

2 year olds from families meeting these criteria are currently eligible for 15 hours a week of funded early education and childcare for 38 weeks of the year (or 570 hours across the year). The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) produces a list of potentially eligible children. These lists are used to contact families and invite them to access the funded hours and also shared with Family Hubs and used to encourage families to apply for the funding.

Good early years provision will have a life-long positive impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore places must be taken up with a provider that is rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

The table below shows that the level of take-up of the 2 year old funding has fluctuated over time but has risen almost 30% in the last year. Increasing this percentage has been a target for the service. We believe the increased take-up since in spring 2021 was partly as a result of parental confidence returning after the pandemic and the desire for families to give their children the ability to socialise again.

Term	Funded 2 Year Olds	Number of potentially eligible 2 Year Olds	% 2YO take up
Spring Term 2022	249	270	92.0%
Autumn Term 2021	256	319	80.3%
Summer Term 2021	225	352	63.9%
Spring Term 2021	202	335	60.3%
Autumn Term 2020	237	346	68.5%
Summer Term 2020	213	330	64.5%

Free Entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

All children are entitled to 15 hours per week of Free Entitlement funding starting the term following their 3rd Birthday. Parents can choose any nursery, preschool setting or childminder offering funding. The offer can be taken for 15 hours per week over 38 weeks or stretched over a full year if the provider offers this.

Extended Hours for 3 and 4 Year olds.

From September 2017 working parents of 3 and 4 year olds have been able to access 30 hours per week of Free Entitlement if they meet the nationally specific criteria. The extended hours have to be taken with providers that are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' with Ofsted.

From the table below we can see that demand for places is not at pre-pandemic levels but this has to be viewed in conjunction with the reduction in population.

Table Showing 3 and 4 year old take up of Free Entitlement funding in West Berkshire

Term	3 and 4 Year Olds	
	Universal Entitlement	Extended Entitlement
Spring Term 2022	2290	1128
Autumn Term 2021	1799	834
Summer Term 2021	2756	1327
Spring Term 2021	2592	1106
Autumn Term 2020	1830	808
Summer Term 2020	2843	1308

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

The [Early Years Pupil Premium \(EYPP\)](#) is additional funding for early years settings to improve the education they provide for eligible 3 and 4 year-olds.

Children must be receiving funded Early Education from the provider to attract EYPP funding. They do not have to take up the full 570 hours of early education they are entitled to in order to get EYPP.

EYPP funding was introduced in 2015 and West Berkshire has seen an increase year on year of eligible families claiming EYPP.

3 and 4 year olds in funded early education will attract EYPP funding if their parents/carers meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and an annual income of no more than £16,190).
- Working Tax Credit run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
- Or if children are currently being looked after by a local authority in England or Wales, or they have left care in England or Wales through an adoption or a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order.

Table showing Number of West Berkshire children claiming EYPP funding

Year	Children Eligible for EYPP
Spring Term 2020	206
Spring Term 2019	190
Autumn Term 2019	103
Autumn Term 2018	95
Autumn Term 2017	83

The Disability Access Fund (DAF)

DAF is available to providers to support children with disabilities or SEN. The DAF helps access to early year places by, for example, supporting providers in making reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or purchasing specialist equipment.

Children aged 3 – 4 years old will be eligible for DAF if they meet the following criteria:

- The child is in receipt of child disability living allowance (DLA) and;
- The child attends an early years provider for the funded entitlement.

Providers taking eligible 3 & 4 year olds are be entitled to a one-off payment of £615 per year. DAF is not based on an hourly rate and is an additional entitlement.

West Berkshire Council had 25 eligible DAF applications for the financial year 2022/23 compared to 21 the previous year 2021/22.

7. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

A national childcare survey found that 46% of parents with children with a SEND used formal childcare and 40% of parents with a child with an illness or disability agreed that their childcare provider catered for their child's needs. Nationally it is recognised that parents of children with SEND can face more challenges in finding good quality, affordable childcare to meet their needs.

The introduction of the national Disability Access Funding (DAF) for 3 and 4 year olds taking free early education also provides additional financial support to providers and will also be monitored to assess its impact in improving access to childcare for children with SEND.

Table showing the number of West Berkshire children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) by age and year.

Year	Aged 0-4	Aged 5-10	Aged 11-15	Aged 16-25
2021 (20/01/2022)	35	355	469	339
2020 (21/01/2021)	26	345	415	288
2019 (16/01/2020)	29	330	401	274
2018 (17/01/2019)	24	285	389	273
2017 (18/01/2018)	25	274	379	260

Each local authority publishes a Local Offer. This makes available in one place information about all of the provision available in the area, this includes education, health and social care for children and young people in West Berkshire who have SEN or a disability regardless of whether they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The Local Offer provides advice and support to all: young people, families and professionals supporting families.

[Local Offer | West Berkshire Directory](#)

8. Other Help with Childcare Costs

Tax Free Childcare

Tax Free Childcare (TFC) is a government initiative designed to help working families afford childcare. The scheme was launched in 2017 and offers eligible families 20% support towards childcare costs. Operated through an online account, parent pay money towards qualifying childcare costs and the government will

automatically make “top up” payments of 20p for every 80p that families pay in. Tax free childcare replaces the use of childcare vouchers and makes it easier for more families to access financial support. This can be claimed in addition to 30 hour funding and is available for families aged 0-12 and up to 17 if the child is disabled. Details can be found here: [Tax Free Childcare](#)

9. Planning Developments and Early Years Provision

As outline planning was approved for Sandford Park, the opening of a nursery class in Highwood Copse School to the south of Newbury is still expected.

There are further developments that are in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which supports West Berkshire’s Local Plan up to 2037 and others that are not on the IDP. Examples of wards where developments that are part of the IDP have started or have planning approval include Greenham, Speen, Theale and Tilehurst. Early Years places are currently sufficient in these wards.

In the Thatcham and North East Ward there is an IDP site with around 1500 houses proposed although no application has been submitted. This scheme has reduced the number of dwellings by 1000.

The building of some developments not in the IDP have already started or have planning approved but current provision has capacity of places to accommodate the additional Early Years children. Wards include, Birch Copse, Cold Ash and Theale.

Other maintained schools are considering nursery provision but discussions are at an early stage currently.

5. Key Findings

The Family Information Service offers a brokerage service designed to support parents, carers, and professionals working with families to source childcare when they are unable to find suitable childcare to meet their requirements.

The number of brokerage cases rose during the year but most have resulted in finding suitable childcare for the family, carer or professional.

The impact of childminder resignations and recruitment and retention issues in the wider early years education offer have also contributed to the increase in enquiries to the Family Information Service.

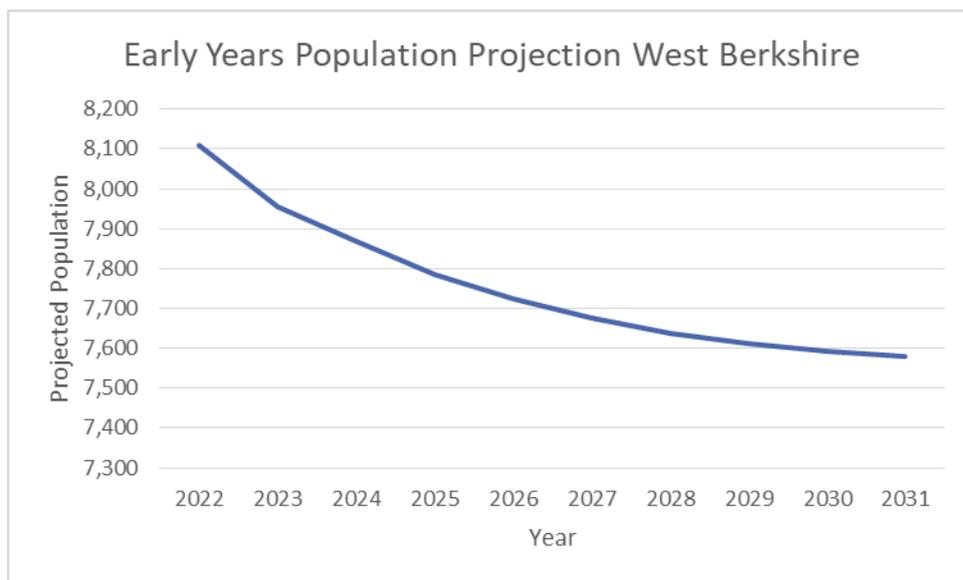
An increased number of early years providers have reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in the sector. Some of the reasons given for this is the ability of staff to find higher paid work in other sectors, the rates of entitlement funding and increased employment costs for early years provision.

This has been reflected in either short or longer-term reductions in the number of places being offered by providers within West Berkshire. As mentioned previously, childminders are also leaving the sector which is impacting both day care and wraparound provision for families.

However, the table in 4.1 showing population and a ratio of places by ward is an indicator that there is a sufficiency of places in West Berkshire. Areas whose sufficiency levels are being closely monitored include: Lambourn and Thatcham where sufficiency is tight with either few or no surplus places. Bradfield and Bucklebury are geographically close and also have a ratio of less than 1. We have not had enquiries about provision in these areas.

All areas of Thatcham are also showing some pressure for places. However most of these areas were also reporting vacancies at the time of this report so any sufficiency concerns are somewhat mitigated by these.

As noted earlier the population of Early Years children has been declining and estimates for West Berkshire indicate a decline over the next 10 years at least. This again helps to confirm that our sufficiency duty will be met.



Source: nomisweb.co.uk

Over the year we saw the number of childminders reduce by 11 and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) provision reduce by 4 settings.

Out of School and Holiday schemes are still under-reported. Many schools who do not need an additional Ofsted registration to run, for example, breakfast and after school clubs are not always registering their offer on the Family Information Service Directory.

6. Conclusion

The data used to produce this report is a snapshot in time and indicates that currently we are meeting our sufficiency duty. Demand is being met and there is currently good quality provision in West Berkshire and this gives parents/carers both flexibility and choice.

The analysis also shows that there are wards where the number of places are at risk of not meeting local population demand. However, as has also been shown in the report, parents do travel for their childcare and this is an area that needs to be monitored as parental working patterns and styles have changed since the pandemic.

Quality of provision remains high with 85% of childminders and 87% of day nurseries and pre-schools and independent provision being rated by Ofsted as outstanding or good.

The increase in the take-up of 2 year old funded places for disadvantaged families is positive for the service. Initiatives are continuing to encourage the continuation of this high number.

7. Next Steps

1. Childcare Reforms

These were announced in the 2023 Budget and are set to increase availability, reduce costs and increase the number of parents accessing childcare so that they can return to work.

The following measures were announced:

Entitlements: Eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks a year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school. Hourly rates for providers will also increase.

Wraparound: The government will invest £289m over two academic years, from Sept 2024, to enable schools and local areas to set up wraparound childcare provision

Market reforms: including more choice for childminders and changes to EYFS requirements, to improve flexibility for providers and support the workforce.

Childminder Grants: to attract people to childminding with £1200 for those who register with a childminder agency and £600 for those who register with Ofsted.

Changing staff: child ratios: from 1:4 to 1:5 for two-year-olds in England to align with Scotland and provide greater flexibility for providers

Universal Credit reforms: will pay childcare support up-front when parents move into work or increase their hours and increase the monthly re-imburement caps

These will be rolled out in stages, to ensure enough supply in the system as follows:

Autumn 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childminder grants become available • Invest £204m into 3/4yo and 2yo funding rate • Staff:child 2yo ratio change
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15hrs for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds introduced • Invest £288m into 3/4 yo and 2yo funding rates
Sept 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National wraparound support begins • 15hrs for eligible working parents of children 9 months plus introduced
Sept 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30hrs for eligible working parents of children from 9 months to primary school age introduced
Sept 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools able to offer 8am-6pm wraparound on their own or in partnership

These announcements will of course impact on our West Berkshire provision. Providers will need to revise their offer to accommodate 30 hours for the working parents of 2 year olds and then the lowering of the offer to 9 months up.

2. Sufficiency Reporting Support

The Department for Education (DfE) recently awarded a contract to Hempsalls to support Local Authorities with their sufficiency duties ensuring there are enough available childcare places and to meet the demand for school-aged children. This contract supports the delivery of the current early years entitlements.

The support is being offered now to support change, sufficiency and sustainability and to respond to the continuing effects of the pandemic and the annual sufficiency reporting duty for LAs.

The contract includes proactive (preventative and improvement) advice and support to LAs identified as in need of some support to facilitate the maintenance of, or improvement in, their local childcare sufficiency picture, including wraparound provision for school-aged children. LAs can also self-refer.

3. Vulnerable Groups and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Our next report will have more focus more on reporting on vulnerable groups and SEND in particular. The team plans to develop the information about early years provision in these areas and provide more data on demand and sufficiency in West Berkshire.

Sources

GP Population Data 2021/22

Family Information Service (FIS) data spring 2022

2011 & 2021 Census Data

Ofsted data

West Berkshire Council Population Data

www.nomisweb.co.uk population and employment data

Further reading

[Statements of SEN and EHC Plan in England 2021](#)

[Childcare and early years survey of parents: 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Main findings: childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

If you require this information in an alternative format or translation,
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