

# Childcare

## Sufficiency Assessment

Summary Report for the Bradford district

**2011-14**



# Background

Good quality childcare can significantly improve the life chances of children by providing:

- Free early education for eligible two, three and four year olds.
- Paid-for care for parents who need childcare to enable them to go to work or training.

The free entitlement to early education is funded by the Local Authority. Parents pay for most other childcare. Financial support is available to parents through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and childcare vouchers. Working parents with pre-school age children often use a combination of their child's free early education entitlement and paid-for care to meet their childcare needs. Informal childcare provided by family and friends is also widely used. Childcare settings are expected to operate as self-sustaining businesses. They need to generate sufficient income through a combination of fee income and early education funding to cover overheads.

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to ensure there is sufficient childcare to help parents of children up to the age of 14 (17 with additional needs). This report reviews factors affecting the supply and demand for childcare and early education in the Bradford district and makes recommendations for development priorities in 2011-14.



# Demand for childcare and early education

Bradford's strong birth rate points towards a significant increase in demand for free early education places. This is unlikely to be matched by a similar increase in demand for paid-for childcare in the current economic climate.

Parental awareness and use of free early education remains higher in more affluent communities. Parents, whose children access early education, see numerous benefits: building confidence, speech and language development, socialising with other children, learning how to behave and share with others. Unfortunately, a significant number of vulnerable families do not perceive the benefits of early education.

The Department for Education plans to trial new approaches and begin to rollout extension of free early education for disadvantaged two year olds between April 2011 and September 2012. Funding proposals signal a six-fold increase in provision up to 2014. Over 2,000 places will be required to meet the needs of the district's 25% most disadvantaged children. This will require development of significant new capacity.

Cost remains the main barrier to greater use of paid-for childcare by working parents. Cost pressures on the family budget meant that 39% of the Bradford workforce who were surveyed opted for informal or no childcare compared to 32% in 2007. Neither employers nor working parents highlighted lack of childcare in general as being a problem. However some parents expressed concern about the wide range of ages being catered for in some Holiday Clubs.

Childcare costs have risen by around 4% over the last two years, slightly below the rate of inflation, as competition in the market has intensified. Take up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit has increased in all areas, but most notably in the more affluent communities. Use of childcare vouchers has fallen significantly.

For children and young people absorbing and exciting outdoor play is vital. Successful management of risk is the hallmark of quality provision from a child's perspective. For older children this is more likely to be found outside a traditional childcare setting.



# Supply of childcare

Five daycare providers closed in 2010, while one new nursery opened, bringing the district's provision of daycare down to 105 nurseries providing 4,864 childcare places. Provision is concentrated within the affluent commuter communities and along travel routes.

The number of childminders increased slightly to 553, providing 1,453 places in 2010. There is a natural rate of turnover of childminders joining and leaving the profession of around one fifth each year. Childminders account for around 20% of the district's 0-4 year old provision, allowing for the fact that at any one time approximately 10% of childminders are not actively minding. There is wide variation in childminding provision across the district; Shipley, Keighley and South Bradford have significantly higher numbers of childminders than Bradford East or West.

Combining the figures for daycare and childminders, indicates there are an average of 15.4 childcare places for every 100 children aged 0-4. This average conceals a wide variation in provision by area. Shipley has 26.2 childcare places per 100 children compared to 11.1 places in Bradford East.

There are vacant places in all areas. Overall occupancy of daycare is 68%, compared to 73% in 2007/8. In January 2011, occupancy rates for daycare were running at 65% for the under twos and 69% for over twos. Childminder occupancy rates for the under fives averaged 60% in January 2011. This low occupancy rate for childminders may partly reflect the fact that many childminders chose to run below their registered capacity. Nonetheless the data suggest there is no shortage of 0-4 provision in either daycare or childminding.

95% of the district's primary schools are serviced by formal out-of-school childcare. There are 172 group-based out-of-school clubs operating in term-time. The vast majority of childminders also provide out-of school childcare; many of them provide holiday care as well as term-time care. Occupancy rates for group-based out-of-school provision averaged 81% in January 2011.

Each Parliamentary constituency area has between 30-40 out-of-school clubs, however Shipley and Keighley tend to have larger more sustainable settings. When you factor in differences in child population sizes, there are marked differences in the availability of group-based provision per 100 primary school aged children. Availability ranges from two places per 100 children in East and West to 11 places in Shipley.

# Use of childcare

Approximately 16,000 children were attending some form of private, voluntary or independent sector (PVI) childcare in June 2010. Almost three quarters of children attending childcare were under the age of five, whereas less than one per cent was aged 12+.

There have been several attempts to establish age appropriate childcare for children in secondary schools, as parents of children in school years 6 and 7 have requested this service. In practice there has not been sufficient demand to create viable childcare businesses for this age group. The emphasis for childcare for the over 11's is therefore on after-school and holiday activities.

Children from families living in better-off areas are significantly more likely to use paid-for childcare. Children with a White British heritage account for three quarters of children using childcare. The under-representation of children with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) heritage is most marked in the out-of-school and childminding sectors where White British children account for 86% and 90% of users. Having said this, a level of diversity is apparent insofar as 45 different languages are spoken by children attending childcare settings in the district.

Children attend childcare for an average 17.5 hours a week. Children from more affluent backgrounds tend to travel further to attend childcare but 55% of children travel less than 1km to their childcare.



# Supply and use of early education places

There is a current maximum capacity of 12,496 early education places available for three and four year olds. School-based provision accounts for the majority of places in disadvantaged parts of Bradford East, West and South. Private and voluntary provision accounts for the majority of places in Shipley and some parts of Keighley, where pre-school playgroups have historically dominated village provision and use of daycare is higher.

The number of children eligible for nursery education changes according to the school term. Across the district there are a maximum of 149 places for every 100 children during the autumn term. However, this figure falls to 89 places per 100 children in the summer. The areas of greatest shortage tend to be the areas of greatest disadvantage. Bradford East has a maximum of 76 places per 100 eligible children in the summer term, whereas Shipley has 123 places per 100 children.

Only 78% of children were taking up their entitlement to free early education in the district in spring 2011. Although some children will be accessing their early education in neighbouring local authorities, take up in disadvantaged areas remains worryingly low. Take up rates in the spring term varied from 74% in Bradford West to 86% in Shipley.



# The needs of vulnerable children

## The Needs of Disabled Children

Accessing childcare becomes increasingly difficult as children get older. In particular, parents identify a lack of accessible childcare during school holidays. Feasibility work was carried out at the newly re-organised Special Schools in 2010, where it was found there was insufficient demand to develop new on-site childcare. The focus of work continues to be development of inclusive practice.

Early education and childcare for pre-fives is provided through a combination of specialist provision in children's centres and resourced provision elsewhere. Demand for places continues to rise and more work needs to be carried out to ensure there is sufficient provision.

## The Needs of Looked After Children

Take up of early education by Looked After children is reported to be good. It is vital to ensure Social Workers and Foster Parents are aware of the free entitlement and new developments around two year old places.



# Priority developments 2011–14

- Increase uptake of free early education entitlement in low uptake areas and among vulnerable groups.
- Ensure sufficiency of early education capacity in areas of shortage.
- Expand free two year old provision in line with emerging guidelines.
- Recruit and develop childminders in line with natural turnover.
- Ensure sufficiency of age-appropriate childcare for before and after school.
- Ensure appropriateness of holiday care and play opportunities by age.
- Ensure the needs of disabled children are met through inclusive childcare and sufficiency of resourced provision.
- Improve affordability of childcare for parents through promotion of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and childcare vouchers.
- Promote good business practise among childcare providers.

