



Report for Leader Decision (Education and Children's Services portfolio)

Decision Date:	16 December 2021
Reference number:	EC03.21
Title:	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020/2021
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services
Contact officer:	Richard Nash
Ward(s) affected:	None specific
Recommendations:	For the Leader to agree the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for Buckinghamshire 2021 and to note the contents of the report and identified priorities prior to publication on the Buckinghamshire Council Website
Reason for decision:	Report summarises key findings from the Early Years Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2021

1. Background

- 1.1 This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) summarises and analyses the local childcare market in Buckinghamshire. In view of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the childcare market any findings, as at the 31st March 2021 are likely to change over the coming year, as the market responds to changes in demand, take up and parental preferences.

2. Key Highlights

- 2.1 Parental demand for childcare and early education provision has fluctuated this year due to Covid-19. However, there are no significant gaps in provision within the county

and places have been sourced for every child of a working parent who required one. Where parents reported initial difficulties in finding places, support has been available through the Early Years Brokerage Service to secure suitable childcare.

- 2.2 Quality of provision is high with over 96% of early years provision judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- 2.3 Take up of all early education funded offers has decreased. This mirrors the national trend. In part, this has been due to the restrictions placed on providers as the Government responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. Data evidences that during this period parents have made different choices about when and where they access provision.
- 2.4 The sector most impacted by the pandemic has been out of school care provision for children of statutory school age. Privately run out of school care provision was prevented from operating for much of the year, until government guidance relaxed for the sector on 21st January 2021. In addition, changes to parental working patterns has meant the need to use formal childcare has been reduced in line with their home to office commuting time.

Childcare Market:

- 2.5 There are 27,341 childcare places as of 31st March 2021 available in Buckinghamshire, which is less than a 1% drop compared with 2020.
- 2.6 There has been a loss of 92 providers (across all sectors), a reduction in the previous years' decrease in provider numbers.
- 2.7 The out of school care sector has seen the most significant impact as a result of the government measures put in place to manage the pandemic, and changes in parental demand. Overall, there has been a loss of 10 providers between 2020 – 21.
- 2.8 Place losses have also been significant amongst childminders and home child carers, reflecting changes in parental demand and government guidance over access to provision during the pandemic.

Funded Entitlement:

- 2.9 Across the year 214 new places have been developed to deliver funded entitlement for 2, 3 & 4 year olds.
- 2.10 Take up of 2-year-old funded entitlement (2FE) has dropped below national levels for the first time. We anticipate that this will be improved in the next reporting period.
- 2.11 Take up of the universal funded entitlement (UFE) has dropped in line with national data.
- 2.12 Across Buckinghamshire, data indicates there are sufficient 2FE, UFE and extended

funded entitlement (EFE) places to meet parental demand.

Quality of Provision:

- 2.13 Our data shows that the overall Ofsted judgement of the quality of provision on non-domestic premises (NDP) in Buckinghamshire is 98.5% good or better.
- 2.14 The Ofsted judgement of the quality of provision on non-domestic premises for Buckinghamshire is higher than both our statistical neighbours and nationally. These stand at 97.3% and 97.6% respectively.
- 2.15 The Ofsted judgement of quality of childminders in Buckinghamshire has increased from 95.1 to 96.5% good or better.
- 2.16 The Ofsted judgement of quality of childminders for Buckinghamshire is lower than our statistical neighbours at 97.1% but is now higher than the national figures of 95.7%.

3. Next steps

Identified priorities for Buckinghamshire Council for 2021 - 2022:

- 3.1 To maintain sufficiency of provision from within the existing provider base.
- 3.2 To extend the existing Early Years Audit to gather data on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on providers in all sectors.
- 3.3 To carry out further in-depth research into post Covid-19 parental childcare needs and preferences going forward.
- 3.4 To offer high quality advice and financial planning to existing providers to adapt to the new marketplace.
- 3.5 To provide robust advice to new providers to ensure timely completion of planned place development, which meets the needs of their community.
- 3.6 To actively support new place development where there is strong evidence of need.
- 3.7 To continually monitor the availability and demand for early education places and childcare at a local level.
- 3.8 To promote vacant places within all sectors to working parents and support sector stability.

4. Other options considered

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Legal and financial implications

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Corporate implications

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Communication, engagement & further consultation

8.1 Not applicable.

9. Next steps and review

9.1 The progress made against the priorities identified within the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will be track and monitored regularly. The outcomes achieved as a result of the action taken will be formally reported in next year's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

10. Background papers

10.1 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020/21

11. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

11.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

