

Nottingham City Council

Childcare Sufficiency Summary Report Card

Autumn 2021

Introduction

Childcare Sufficiency: Local Authority responsibility

Sufficient, accessible and high quality childcare is an essential factor to promoting school readiness; widening access to employment and study for parents; as well as maximising opportunities for families to benefit from the economic, social and health benefits of employment.

The Childcare Act 2006 (updated 2016) places a duty on all Local Authorities to secure free provision for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year-olds and ensure that there is sufficient childcare for working parents. Whilst the Local Authority is not responsible for providing childcare itself, it is responsible for managing the market to ensure that these duties are met.

Monitoring Childcare Sufficiency

Nottingham City Council publishes a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) report on a three yearly cycle, considering demand, supply and accessibility in order to identify any gaps in sufficiency. This is followed by bi annual refreshes of the data. The full CSA is an in-depth ward level review that includes a survey of both parents and providers.

Ongoing childcare monitoring data is available from the Early Years Profile on Nottingham Insight. This is a set of ward level profiles refreshed bi-annually to reflect current eligibility, places and participation in full-time childcare by age group. The profile also includes population and health data to provide a more complete view of the Early Years age group.

Methodology

As this is a summary report, only childcare providers and schools in Nottingham were consulted as part of the autumn term 2021 CSA using online surveys. The views and feedback from parents and employers were collated and reported on in the autumn term 2020 CSA. Ofsted statistics and local intelligence, including Early Years Headcount data, form the content of this report and help draw conclusions on childcare sufficiency.

Please Note: Information contained within this report relates to data collated during the autumn term 2021. The impact of the pandemic on childcare in general continues to emerge and will do so for many months to come. Situations can change rapidly therefore we acknowledge that some of the information within this report may already have changed and be outdated. The Local Authority will be aware of such changes and will ensure that current data is used at all times when planning sufficiency intervention.

Key Findings and Executive Summary

Childcare Sufficiency: current context

Sufficient, accessible and high quality childcare is significant in promoting school readiness; widening access to employment and study for parents; as well as maximising opportunities for families to benefit from the economic, social and health benefits of employment.

The Local Authority's statutory duty around childcare sufficiency, as detailed in The Childcare Act (2006) remains unchanged. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the childcare sector and it has never been more important to assess sufficiency. The pandemic has made supply and demand of the childcare market difficult to predict. It continues to be an ever changing picture for the sector as restrictions lift and the full effect of the past 2 years start to emerge.

What are the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments telling us?

The quality of childcare remains high in Nottingham with 99% of Day Nurseries and Pre-schools and 95% of Childminders in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Based upon the current return, there are sufficient childcare places across all age groups. This is based on the number of vacancies which currently exist. The sufficiency of out of school provision remains a concern, but is improving and we are currently actively managing such a concern in the Basford area. Otherwise, no further sufficiency concerns have been identified.

There has been a small increase in the overall number of childcare places in the City compared to Summer Term 2021. Overall, vacancy rates have decreased from 36% in the Summer Term 2021 to 25% this term.

The uptake of childcare places for children 0 to 2 years has increased slightly compared to Summer Term 2021, as has the uptake of funded places for 2 year olds, although the increase is small and recovery is slow. The uptake of both childcare places, and funded places, for 3 and 4 year olds has decreased in almost all wards. This decrease is concerning and current participation is around 40% lower than pre-pandemic levels. Our immediate priorities are, therefore, to support the recovery of early years funded provision back to pre-pandemic level and above and also support to address the early years staffing crisis which we know is limiting recovery and expansion across the sectors, both at local and national level.

We continue to closely monitor and support early years and childcare provision during these challenging times. Despite pandemic restrictions lifting, recovery will take time and it is essential to maintain our focus on childcare sufficiency which is key to the City's economic recovery. The [Strategic Council Plan for 2021-23](#) sets out what Nottingham City Council aims to deliver for residents over the next two years. There are eleven high level outcomes, two of which are particularly relevant for our sector:

Outcome 2 (Keeping Nottingham Working) – sufficient, accessible childcare services are essential for enabling parents to work or access training to work.

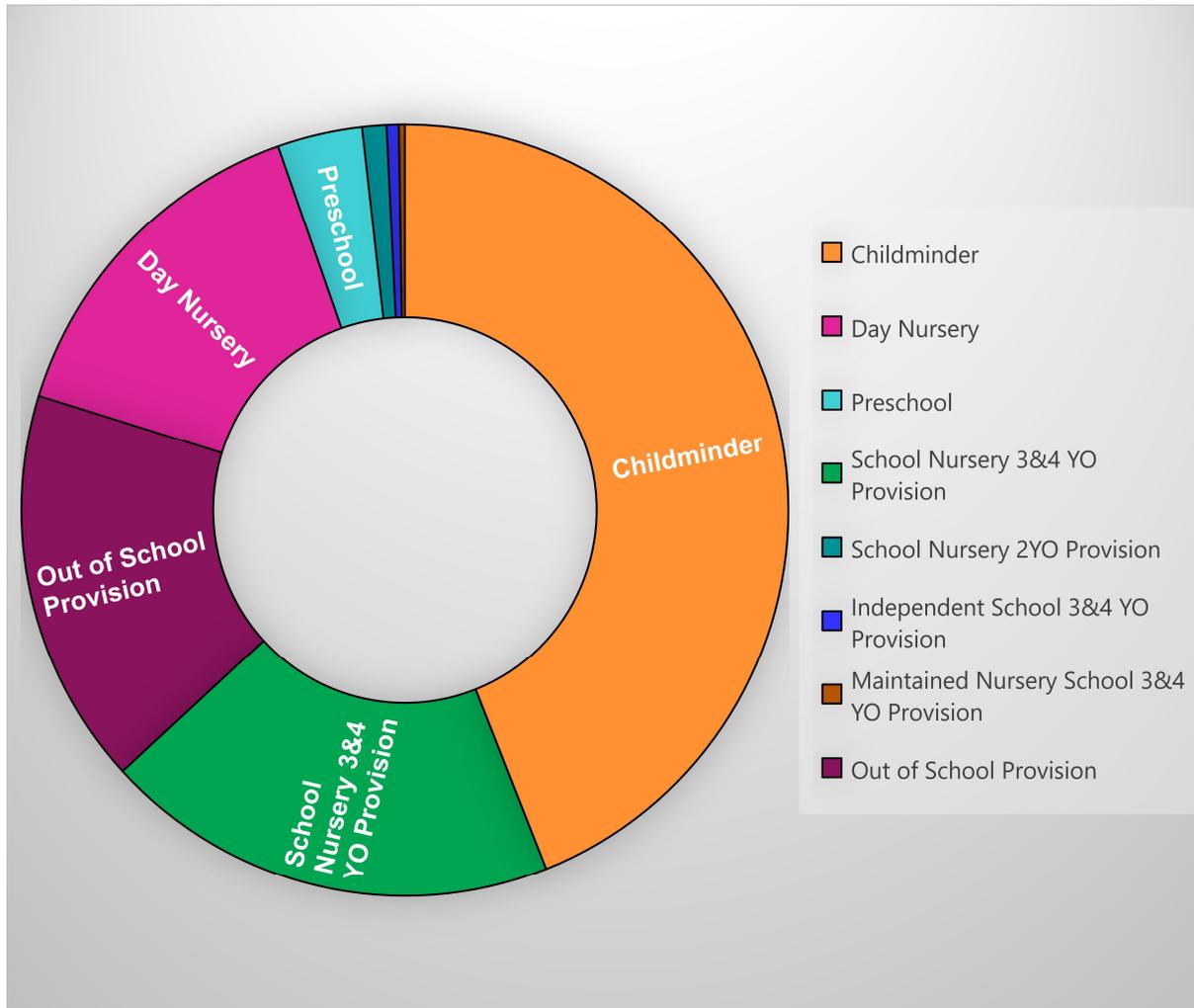
Outcome 5 (Child Friendly Nottingham) – participation of funded childcare for 2 year olds is sited as a key activity of this outcome.

Childcare Sufficiency Report

The following Report is the autumn term 2021 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which covers an overview of quality of provision, supply, participation and vacancy information broken down into age groups.

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Overview of childcare services in Nottingham



In Nottingham there are a total of 391 registered early years and childcare providers. This includes childminders, day nurseries, preschools and school nurseries. This data is based on information held within the Council's [ASKLiON](#) website, which is maintained by the FIS Team ([Families Information Service](#))

Out of 391 registered providers and primary schools in Nottingham, a total of 244 (62%) responded to the Early Years Provider Survey. Much of the data within this report is based upon this survey. We must therefore exercise a degree of caution when scrutinising the data within this report due to missing data from the childminder sector, schools and full daycare.

Childminders	172
Day Nurseries	58
Preschools	14
School Nurseries 3&4 YO Provision	75
School Nurseries 2 YO Provision	4
Independent Schools 3&4 YO Provision	2
Maintained Nursery School 3&4 YO Provision	1
Out of school provision	65

Ofsted inspection and quality of childcare *(sourced from local Ofsted data and Childminder Agency data)*

Ofsted inspection grades as of 27.07.2021	Outstanding	Good	Met	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Not Met	Newly Registered	Total	Proportion Good/Outstanding/New
Childminder	5	95	27	3	0	5	28	163	95%
Day Nursery/Preschool	3	57	0	0	1	0	12	73	99%
School	10	56	0	6	1	0	2	75	91%

98% of funded 2 year-olds accessed early years provision in settings graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted (Provision for children under 5 years of age in England: January 2021) . 91% of 3 and 4 year-olds accessed early years provision in settings graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted (Provision for children under 5 years of age in England: January 2021)

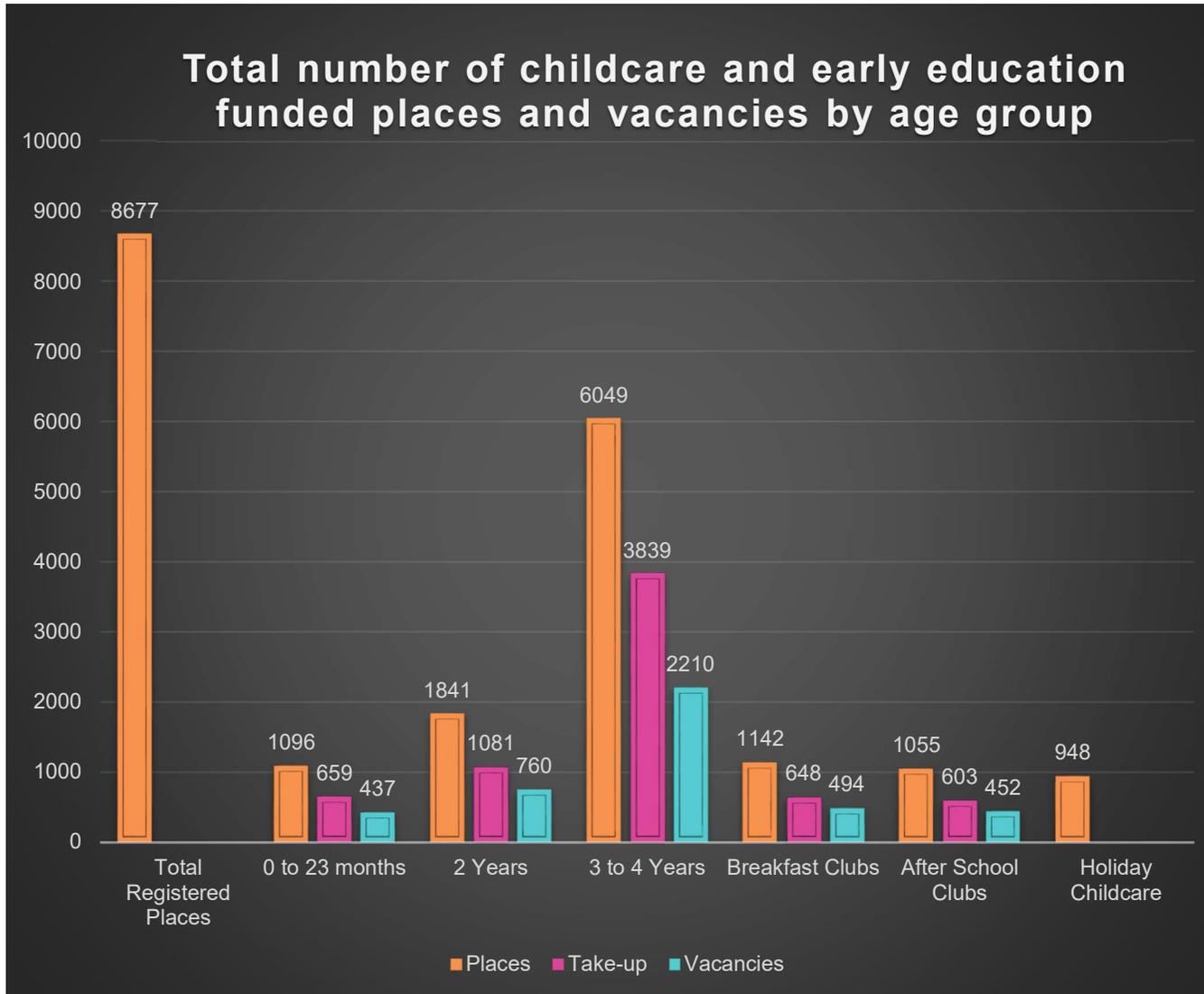
Current context: Ofsted and EYFS Reforms

Ofsted resumed graded inspections of registered early years and childcare providers on the 4th May 2021.

The new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) came into force September 2021. The DfE consulted on the proposed framework at the end of 2019 and published their response to the consultation in July 2020. Some schools chose to be early adopters from September 2020 prior to full implementation. This gave a year for preparation. The Early Years team offered a comprehensive package of support to early years and childcare settings and schools which included briefing and training sessions, a series of vodcasts and a dedicated [webpage](#). The new EYFS framework has now entered a years transition where early years and childcare providers have the opportunity to test out new ways of working, curriculum and assessment methods. The Early Years team have assembled two Working parties (one for schools, one for childcare settings) with an aim to facilitate peer support, share good practice and enable solution focused discussion on emerging issues and challenges.

To date, seven childcare providers in Nottingham have been inspected by Ofsted under the new EYFS framework. The outcome of these inspections are as yet not in the public domain however, anecdotally, we are aware that on the whole, inspections have been a positive experience for leaders and early years practitioners.

Supply of childcare places (taken from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider Survey autumn 2021)



SUMMARY

Citywide:

- On average 1 childcare place for every 6 children
- 25% of childcare places are currently vacant (this figure does not include holiday care provision).
- According to data provided by schools via the CSA provider survey - 72% of schools are not currently offering breakfast club provision.

According to data accessed through ASKLION (parent facing information) 92% of schools have some breakfast provision provided either by themselves or a third party provider.

Clarity is therefore required from schools on their breakfast club provision.

Families Information Service

The Families Information Service (FIS) is a LA parent facing service which provides advice to families on services for children in Nottingham, including childcare and the funded entitlements. This function is carried out through a dedicated Freephone telephone line and online through [ASKLiON](#). The number and nature of calls and the number of visits to ASKLiON pages are monitored by FIS each month. This has enabled tracking of childcare enquiries and eligibility check applications for funded provision for 2 year olds.

Table 1

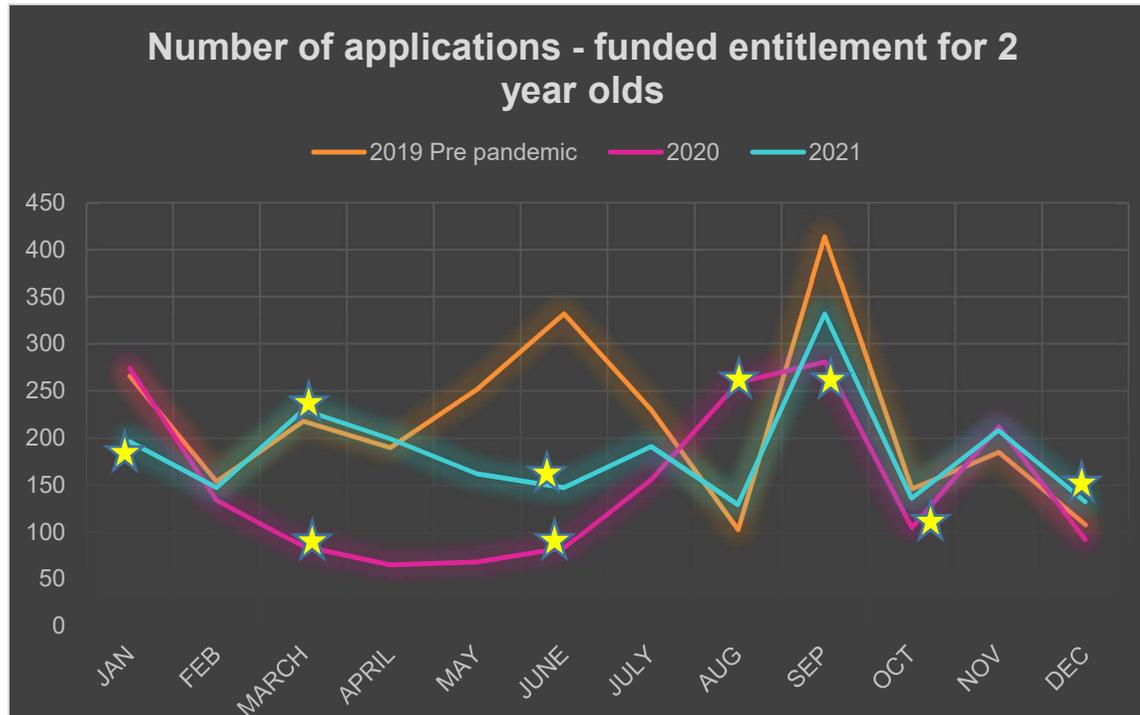


Table 1 demonstrates the number of applications (eligibility checks for the funded entitlement for 2 year olds) made through the Families Information Service during 2019 (pre-pandemic), 2020 and 2021.

It is important to note that there are anticipated peaks and troughs throughout the year. September, typically, has a high number of applications and December is typically low.

The stars relate to key points in the pandemic timeline (Table 2). It is noted that there is a direct correlation between lockdown restrictions and dips in applications as well as a rise in applications made when restrictions lifted. It is hoped this trajectory will continue as all restrictions lift and confidence returns.

Table 2

March 2020	June 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct/Nov 2020	Jan 2021	March 2021	June 2021	Dec 2021
1 st Lockdown	Phased re-opening of schools	Lockdown restrictions ease	New restrictions announced	2 nd Lockdown	3 rd Lockdown	Schools reopen	Delay to stage 4 of the Roadmap	Plan B and spread of Omicron

Birth to two year old places and uptake (sourced from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider Survey autumn 2021)

		A	B	B / A x 100	Summer 2021 comparison	
	Number of children in ward (0 to 2 yrs.)	Number of registered childcare places	Uptake of childcare places	Uptake Rate		
Aspley	731	49	28	57%	40%	
Basford	492	101	75	74%	66%	
Berridge	538	32	17	53%	25%	
Bestwood	592	17	4	24%	56%	
Bilborough	471	26	10	38%	38%	
Bulwell	562	34	15	44%	48%	
Bulwell Forest	345	43	23	53%	55%	
Castle	128	36	29	81%	75%	
Clifton East	430	40	22	55%	59%	
Clifton West	277	13	3	23%	43%	
Dales	612	30	22	73%	77%	
Hyson Green & Arboretum	566	70	36	51%	48%	
Leen Valley	215	41	11	27%	57%	
Lenton & Wollaton East	300	100	66	66%	85%	
Mapperley	391	60	30	50%	40%	
Meadows	270	12	2	17%	17%	
Radford	272	134	97	72%	47%	
Sherwood	406	120	89	74%	73%	
St Ann's	539	47	25	53%	24%	
Wollaton West	387	91	55	60%	48%	
Nottingham	8,524	1096	659	60%	59%	

Two year old places and uptake *(sourced from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider Survey autumn 2021)*

Places and uptake for children aged two years (funded and non-funded provision)

		A	B	B / A x 100	Summer 2021 comparison	
	Number of children in ward (2 yrs.)	Number of registered childcare places	Uptake of childcare places	Uptake Rate		
Aspley	405	84	39	46%	54%	↓
Basford	253	166	108	65%	64%	↑
Berridge	257	79	40	51%	48%	↑
Bestwood	285	62	34	55%	51%	↑
Bilborough	234	58	38	66%	64%	↑
Bulwell	225	81	50	62%	83%	↓
Bulwell Forest	167	129	74	57%	50%	↑
Castle	43	36	24	67%	70%	↓
Clifton East	203	65	51	78%	73%	↑
Clifton West	132	24	14	58%	82%	↓
Dales	314	82	57	70%	75%	↓
Hyson Green & Arboretum	271	124	59	48%	48%	↔
Leen Valley	100	60	33	55%	55%	↔
Lenton & Wollaton East	161	83	48	58%	80%	↓
Mapperley	193	59	43	73%	67%	↑
Meadows	150	20	6	30%	65%	↓
Radford	133	258	131	51%	56%	↓
Sherwood	201	139	83	60%	81%	↓
St Ann's	265	131	72	55%	54%	↑
Wollaton West	200	101	77	76%	56%	↑
Nottingham	4,192	1841	1081	59%	63%	↓

Three and four year old places and uptake – All providers (sourced from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider survey autumn 2021)

Places and uptake for children aged three and four years old (funded and non-funded provision)

	Number of children in ward (3 and 4 yrs.)	A	B	B / A x 100	Summer 2021 comparison	
		Number of registered childcare places	Uptake of childcare places	Uptake Rate		
Aspley	790	157	58	40%	68%	↓
Basford	484	520	366	70%	82%	↓
Berridge	481	242	150	62%	65%	↓
Bestwood	580	295	237	80%	60%	↑
Bilborough	516	403	239	59%	64%	↓
Bulwell	515	447	298	67%	70%	↓
Bulwell Forest	326	376	261	69%	46%	↑
Castle	64	56	38	68%	71%	↓
Clifton East	480	449	310	69%	79%	↓
Clifton West	268	71	38	54%	87%	↓
Dales	542	380	222	58%	65%	↓
Hyson Green & Arboretum	536	358	205	57%	69%	↓
Leen Valley	191	212	73	34%	53%	↓
Lenton & Wollaton East	328	275	183	67%	72%	↓
Mapperley	380	185	127	69%	68%	↑
Meadows	260	114	83	73%	92%	↓
Radford	240	440	339	77%	64%	↑
Sherwood	421	352	195	55%	87%	↓
St Ann's	563	428	225	53%	75%	↓
Wollaton West	427	289	192	66%	74%	↓
Nottingham	8,392	6049	3839	63%	70%	↓

Out of school places and uptake (sourced from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider Survey autumn 2021)

	Number of children in ward (4-11)	Holiday Scheme Places	Breakfast Club Places	Breakfast Club % Uptake	After School Club Places	After School Club % Uptake
Aspley	3,171	25	45	↓ 31%	45	↓ 47%
Basford	1,934	61	67	↑ 70%	44	↑ 57%
Berridge	1,815	60	39	↑ 72%	44	↑ 59%
Bestwood	2,049	62	107	↑ 53%	77	↓ 52%
Bilborough	2,059	34	21	↑ 43%	26	↑ 65%
Bulwell	2,035	57	83	↓ 30%	79	→ 46%
Bulwell Forest	1,328	75	87	↓ 40%	99	↓ 55%
Castle	211	0	0	→ 0	0	→ 0
Clifton East	1,788	89	124	↑ 65%	75	↑ 68%
Clifton West	959	20	18	↑ 78%	31	↓ 58%
Dales	2,037	15	75	↑ 77%	15	↓ 66%
Hyson Green & Arboretum	2,014	8	21	↑ 90%	36	↓ 53%
Leen Valley	791	15	15	↓ 33%	15	↑ 87%
Lenton & Wollaton East	1,072	68	24	↓ 42%	32	↑ 84%
Mapperley	1,415	45	54	↑ 69%	46	↑ 72%
Meadows	1,010	17	13	↓ 31%	23	↑ 65%
Radford	853	124	54	↑ 83%	49	↑ 61%
Sherwood	1,508	38	45	↑ 80%	33	↑ 97%
St Ann's	1,757	53	142	↓ 63%	178	↓ 29%
Wollaton West	1,718	82	108	↑ 45%	108	↑ 77%
Nottingham	31,524	948	1142	↑ 57%	1055	↑ 57%

Early Years FUNDED provision - two year old uptake (sourced from the autumn term 2021 Early Years Headcount, measured against the associated DWP data of potentially eligible children)

	Number of potentially eligible children in ward	Take-up PVI	Take-up schools	Take-up %	Summer 2021 comparison	
Aspley	194	137	3	72%	74%	↓
Basford	113	68	3	63%	53%	↑
Berridge	122	56	12	56%	53%	↑
Bestwood	130	84	1	65%	55%	↑
Bilborough	112	76	0	68%	63%	↑
Bulwell	151	101	1	68%	74%	↓
Bulwell Forest	86	41	15	65%	60%	↑
Castle	7	9	0	129%	80%	↑
Clifton East	105	44	14	55%	63%	↓
Clifton West	35	25	4	83%	80%	↑
Dales	107	72	1	68%	59%	↑
Hyson Green & Arboretum	148	73	1	50%	53%	↓
Leen Valley	52	21	1	42%	51%	↓
Lenton & Wollaton East	56	36	2	68%	68%	→
Mapperley	79	36	7	54%	53%	↑
Meadows	67	32	4	54%	65%	↓
Radford	59	55	2	97%	64%	↑
Sherwood	59	38	0	64%	58%	↑
St Ann's	122	64	20	69%	54%	↑
Wollaton West	21	22	1	110%	75%	↑
Nottingham	1825	1090	92	65%	62%	↑

Early Years UNIVERSAL FUNDED provision - three and four year old uptake *(sourced from the autumn term 2021 Early Years Headcount and measured against data sourced from <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-provision-children-under-5>)*

	A	B	C	B+C/A x 100	Summer 2021 comparison	
	Number of children in ward (3 and 4 yrs.)	Uptake in Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers	Uptake in Schools	Uptake Rate		
Aspley	612	128	158	47%	62%	↓
Basford	382	67	127	51%	58%	↓
Berridge	451	84	164	55%	66%	↓
Bestwood	460	72	296	80%	64%	↑
Bilborough	445	93	161	57%	70%	↓
Bulwell	455	86	170	56%	81%	↓
Bulwell Forest	272	30	154	68%	67%	↑
Castle	113	23	23	41%	59%	↓
Clifton East	367	37	149	51%	58%	↓
Clifton West	200	20	57	39%	41%	↓
Dales	453	67	150	48%	54%	↓
Hyson Green & Arboretum	467	91	150	52%	60%	↓
Leen Valley	223	62	81	64%	89%	↓
Lenton & Wollaton East	252	53	68	48%	58%	↓
Mapperley	336	58	112	51%	58%	↓
Meadows	182	24	61	47%	63%	↓
Radford	231	57	50	46%	70%	↓
Sherwood	350	73	83	45%	50%	↓
St Ann's	442	68	192	59%	66%	↓
Wollaton West	343	94	102	57%	67%	↓
Nottingham	7036	1287	2508	54%	63%	↓

Early Years EXTENDED FUNDED provision (30 hours) - three and four year old uptake *(sourced from the autumn term 2021 Early Years Headcount)*

	Take-up PVI	Take-up schools	Total	Summer term 2021 comparison	
Aspley	37	19	56	83	↓
Basford	33	40	73	97	↓
Berridge	34	17	51	82	↓
Bestwood	22	75	97	105	↓
Bilborough	47	17	64	99	↓
Bulwell	33	31	64	100	↓
Bulwell Forest	14	33	47	73	↓
Castle	6	0	6	8	↓
Clifton East	17	36	53	95	↓
Clifton West	10	8	18	32	↓
Dales	14	15	29	48	↓
Hyson Green & Arboretum	14	6	20	42	↓
Leen Valley	33	3	36	37	↓
Lenton Abbey & Wollaton East	18	5	23	35	↓
Mapperley	32	10	42	60	↓
Meadows	8	6	14	31	↓
Radford	5	2	7	19	↓
Sherwood	47	17	64	90	↓
St Ann's	20	22	42	56	↓
Wollaton West	62	22	84	131	↓
Nottingham	506	152	890	1323	↓

Registered childcare provision: openings and closures *(sourced from local Ofsted data and Childminder Agency data)*



Context

- Overall Nottingham has seen a 1.5% decrease in the number of registered childcare providers since June 2021, there is currently no national comparison for this period.
- Childminding remains the most transient type of provision in the City and the closures represent some natural churn (moving out of the area). Ofsted data has shown that nationally the number of Ofsted registered childminders has been steadily decreasing for several years, they have fallen by 27 per cent since August 2015.
- The LA host briefing sessions for those planning to register as a childminder. Since July 2021 there have been 2 childminder briefing sessions delivered to 9 prospective childminders working towards Ofsted registration.
- The pandemic, combined with a national early years staffing crisis and proposed local reductions to council buildings (some rented by childcare providers), are placing some childcare businesses at risk. A number of providers are operating at reduced capacity as they are currently unable to recruit suitable early years staff.

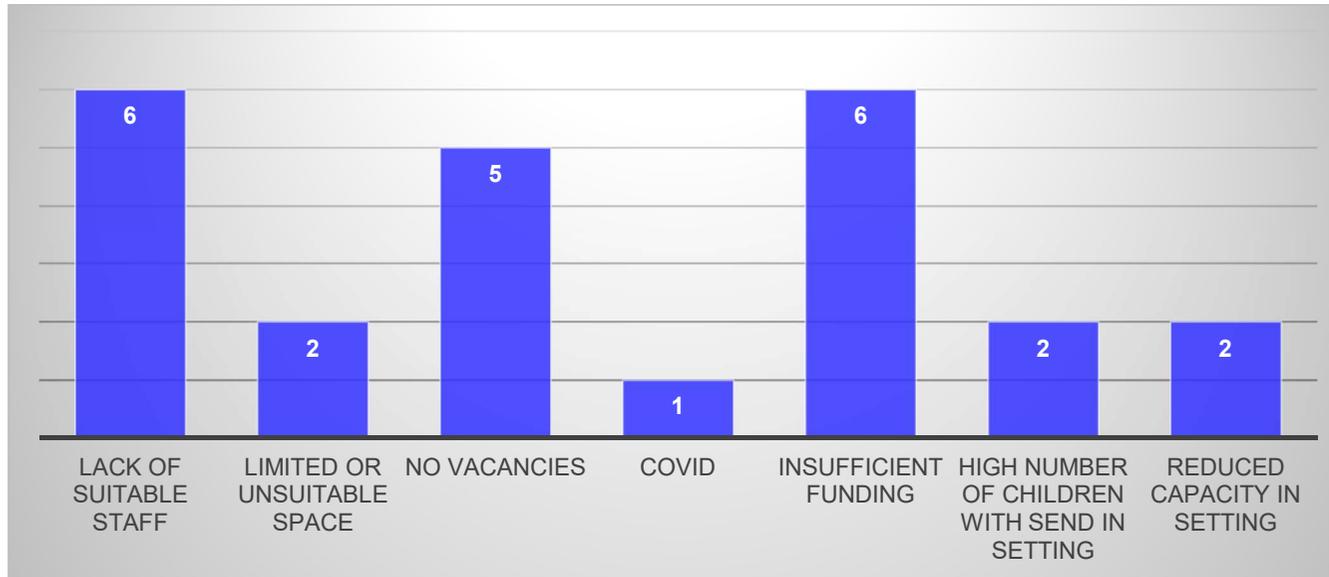
Services for children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) *(sourced from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider Survey autumn term 2021)*

Local provision of SEND funding support

There are 94 children across the city currently benefitting from Early Years SEND funding (EYSF). 7 children in the autumn term were in receipt of Disability Access funding (DAF) in the PVI sector which is half the number who benefitted in the summer term 2020. Both the EYSF and DAF provide financial support to childcare providers and schools to include a child with SEND. There is scope to increase the number of children in receipt of DAF and the Local Authority is working with childcare providers and schools to identify eligible children and gain consent from parents to make a funding application. From April 2022, the value of DAF funding increases from £615 to £800 per year per child which may result in an increase in applications made.

Through the autumn term survey, early years providers were asked questions relating to provision for children with SEND. One question focused on whether early years providers had been unable to accommodate a child or children with SEND and if so, the reasons why.

When asked 'Have you been able to accommodate all children with SEND' 20% of early years providers answered **no**. The reasons given for this are as follows:



Context

Through discussions with early years practitioners, it is evident that the pandemic has negatively impacted on developmental progress for some children. Particularly speech and language. We have also seen an increase in children entering provision with SEND concerns and there has been an increase in applications for SEND funding support.

Parental Engagement

As restrictions lift and services start to resume some level of normality, it is expected that the demand for childcare services will rise. Work continues across the city to reengage parents with the funded early years entitlements and childcare services through partnership involvement with parent facing services and refreshed marketing strategies. At the same time it is essential to prioritise the sustainability of existing childcare businesses to ensure places remain open and available to respond as demand for childcare increases.

We have outlined city wide parental engagement strategies in previous [CSA scorecards](#). Below are two examples of projects focused on particular communities. These projects offer an insight into the needs of families, the barriers they face when accessing childcare provision or the reasons why they choose not to access their funded entitlements. This information provides invaluable supplementary data to the childcare sufficiency assessment.

Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC)

SSBC have been involved in a project with an aim to engage with non-English speaking parents with young families in Sneinton and St Ann’s, to better understand the barriers in accessing health care. The project was commissioned by Nottingham City East Primary Care Network and supported by partners working with children and families in this locality. The results of this project will be used to inform improvements to the clinical delivery offer to meet the individual needs of children 0-5 years, which aim to improve health outcomes for these children. Part of this project focused on the funded entitlement for 2 year olds, the outcome is as follows:

Figure 7

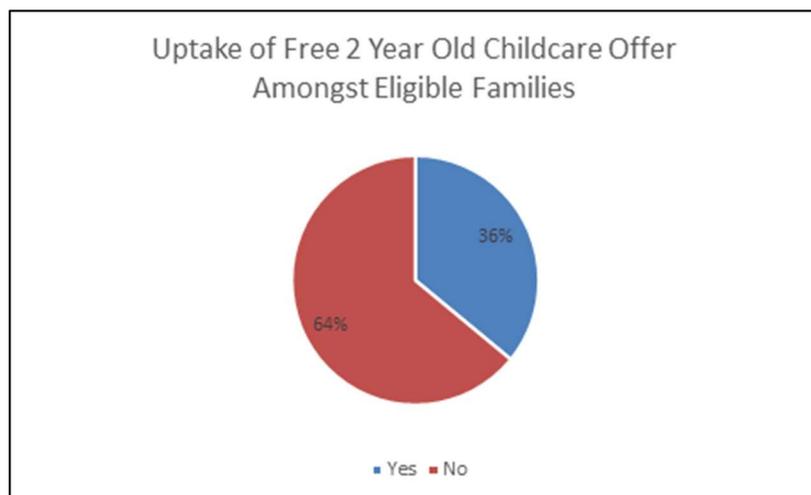


Figure 7 shows the uptake of the free 2-year-old childcare offer amongst those families that were eligible. For eligible families who did not take up the offer, cultural norms were a significant factor.

As part of the face to face interviews conducted, respondents spoke about how the women raising the children was an important part of their culture and faith up to the age of schooling. The age, which was appropriate for some cultures to send their children to school, was 5 so parents saw taking care of their children as one of their values. Grandparents seemed to have an influence on decisions about parenting and schooling which had an impact on the parent’s decisions for those residing in intergenerational families.

Nottingham Women's Centre Focus Group

Nottingham Women's Centre provides a safe and supportive environment to women across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. They help women build self-confidence and independence by enabling them to address and resolve issues in their lives. This is done through a regular programme of training courses and other support services from within the Centre.

Nottingham Women's Centre held a networking event autumn 2021. The event flagged the following as a barrier to employment.

- Childcare providers are oversubscribed
- There is a lack of flexibility with the hours available for childcare services
- Costs of childcare are too high
- Migrant families are particularly at risk
- Information and recommendations are passed around via word-of-mouth. There aren't any written guides to support parents while navigating the relatively complex childcare systems
- Nursery bills can be confusing and wrong
- Childminders are an attractive option but childminders have been hit hard because of the pandemic

The findings were taken to the Economic Recovery Taskforce and a plan of action is under development in partnership with Nottingham City Council and Nottingham Women's Centre.

Market Management

The Early Years team have a market management system, designed to respond to identified sufficiency concerns in a particular ward, where the cause of these concerns isn't clear. This approach draws upon the support and engagement of early years providers, professionals and parents who work and/ or live within the identified ward. Those identified are invited to share their experiences of the offer of childcare and early years funded provision in their community through structure consultation. Data and information collated through consultation is scrutinised to identify successes, barriers, challenges and good practice. The Early Years team use this evidence to work with early years providers and professionals to find solutions and share good practice.

Impact of COVID-19 on childcare services

From data gathered through the CSA Provider Survey Autumn 2021, we have extracted the following as an indication of the current childcare business position:

- 15% of providers have seen an increase in occupancy compared to 39% in the summer term 2021
- 44% have seen a decrease in occupancy compared to 32% in the summer term 2021
- 35% of providers have no concerns about their business sustainability
- 24% of providers have concerns about their business compared to 35% in the summer term 2021. 27% of providers are concerned about occupancy levels, 39% have financial concerns and 16% have staffing concerns

SUPPORT TO THE CHILDCARE SECTOR

The Local Authority Early Years team offer support, challenge, advice and guidance to the local childcare sector. We adapted our strategies throughout the pandemic to maintain connection with the sector in the safest possible ways. This included online provider networking, online 1 to 1 discussions, daily bulletins, newsletters and adapting our Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offer to be delivered virtually.

As restrictions lifted, the Early Years team recommenced the offer of face to face support. A thorough risk assessment has ensured the transition back to face to face support has been done safely and in collaboration with childcare providers. The Early Years CPD offer remains primarily online. This is currently under review as we plan for the 2022/23 Early Years CPD offer. As with many businesses, some practices adopted through the pandemic proved to be effective therefore there are certain aspects of our provider support offer which will remain online – such as our informal online provider meetings.

Priorities for support to the sector during the summer term 2022 include:

- Continued implementation of the revised EYFS supported by Early Years Working Groups and Agreement Trialling sessions
- Occupancy and business recovery
- Recruitment challenges
- Ofsted graded inspections

Childcare Sufficiency Implications – headlines to be taken forward to action or further investigation

Sufficiency of childcare places

There are vacancies reported across each age range within every ward in the city. There needs to be an element of caution taken with the data presented. Measuring sufficiency is complex, particularly as the full extent of the impact of the pandemic is only just starting to emerge. When we compare data in this report to data collected summer 2021, we can identify where demand for childcare provision continues to fall and to what extent. We can also see that in some areas recovery has started to have an impact on the childcare sector as occupancy is on the rise. There may not be a need to expand provision currently however, maintaining existing childcare places is a priority to ensure availability of service as part of the city's economic recovery.

Funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds

Participation rates of the funded entitlement for 2 year olds are rising slowly but are still below pre-pandemic levels. Parent applications to check eligibility for the funded entitlement for 2's are rising and it is hoped this will be reflected in future termly participation. Participation rates of the universal funded entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds have dropped this term in all but two wards. This is particularly concerning as pre-pandemic levels were consistently high – around 40% higher than current levels. Participation rates of the extended funded entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds have dropped this term in all wards. We believe this is due to the shift in parents working patterns and more parents working from home. As the restrictions have now lifted, infections rates are falling and people return to face to face employment and training opportunities; it is anticipated confidence will grow and parents will start to reconnect with early years and childcare services. Foot fall in communities is starting to increase and our marketing and parental engagement activities will respond accordingly. It is essential that, along with our partners, we refocus on a 'back to basics' approach to promoting the funded entitlements to reignite parental trust and the understanding of the benefits of quality early education and childcare.

Out of School places

Data shows that the demand for out of school provision is slowly starting to increase. As reported in the summer term 2021 CSA, out of school childcare places were at significant risk due to the pandemic (school restrictions, working from home, furlough). Although there has been an increase in after school provision, holiday care has seen a slight decrease in places this term. Staffing difficulties are having a significant impact on the provision of out of school care. Anecdotally, cost is a major barrier for parents accessing out of school provision. Work is underway nationally to increase parental awareness of Child Tax Credits which support working parents financially to access registered childcare provision.

Anecdotally, some schools and daycare providers are unable to resume their out of school provision as they have been unable to recruit to vacant posts. In addition to this, in order for out of school provision to be sustainable, there needs to be a level of demand to justify the creation or expansion of places. In some areas the demand is not great enough to justify expansion.

Staffing

As mentioned throughout this report, a local and national early years staffing crisis is having a significant impact on the early years and childcare sector. Whilst this is being monitored nationally; locally we are considering as an LA, how best to support the sector at this challenging time. Currently, we have joined forces with neighbouring LA's to produce a Careers in Childcare video which will be used to promote working in childcare throughout the East and West Midlands. The Early Years team produce regular Recruitment Specials where providers can advertise vacancies and our termly newsletter has a regular feature on recruitment.

For further information please contact:

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