

HEREFORDSHIRE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REPORT January 2016 - January 2019 Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Childcare Act 2006 and the statutory guidance '[Early Education and Childcare Guidance for local authorities](#)' require local authorities to assess the sufficiency of childcare in their local authority area. The aim of this report is to show how Herefordshire Council is securing Sufficiency of Childcare and to develop a Childcare Strategic Action Plan from the findings of the report.

The report assesses the availability and attributes of childcare in Herefordshire and makes judgements about whether there is sufficient childcare available to enable parents to work or take up training opportunities which lead to work. It will make judgements and recommendations about areas that need to be developed including places for 2, 3 and 4 year old children. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment describes the supply of childcare across Herefordshire and compares this to the demand for childcare from parents and carers. This process helps to identify any gaps in the childcare market and makes recommendations for appropriate remedial action.

To secure sufficient childcare places, the local authority should:

Take into account what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means in their area and:

- The state of the local childcare market; including the demand for a specific types of providers in particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
- The state of the labour market
- The quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise
- Encourage schools in their area to offer out of hours childcare from 8.00am to 6.00pm
- Encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market
- 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.

Summary Of Key Findings

The survey was completed by eighty seven (87) registered early years providers (including full day, sessional, breakfast, after school & holiday clubs) across Herefordshire out of a total of 98. A total of 101 childminders in Herefordshire are included within this sufficiency assessment report.

- The most used type of childcare is full day nurseries at 53%, holiday playschemes 29% and breakfast and after school clubs 20%.
- A large proportion 84% of parents surveyed found all or some of the childcare they were looking for. Only 5% of parents reported that they did not find any of the childcare they were seeking.
- There is a significant gap in holiday playschemes provision and some after school care (extended hours), baby care for 0-2 years and childcare for children aged 5-11 years.
- The main barriers reported to finding the right childcare were hours were not flexible enough, lack of providers in rural isolated areas or the provision was full
- The most sought after childcare type is full day care for 0-4 years.
- 63% of providers can care for children aged 2 years and over while a third can care for children aged less than a year. There is a limited baby care places in some areas of Herefordshire although the parent survey has not suggested that there is a great demand for this in those areas.
- Of the 81 primary schools (including 3 special schools) approximately 60 primary schools operate a breakfast, after school club or both at the school. Only a small number 11, do not have any before or after school provision on site and 5 schools (Lugwardine, Bredenbury, Eastnor, St Pauls & Hampton Dene) are located close by to a private provider which delivers the service or provides transport to one.
- The majority of parents seeking childcare were aged between 26 – 45 years and parents worked full or part time. 14% of parents surveyed that were seeking work or training were due to problems finding childcare.
- 35% of parents surveyed reported an income of less than the regional average of £24,982 per annum. 27% had earnings of between £25,000 - £35,000 and 38% earned over £35,000. Herefordshire has not seen an increase in earnings over the past 3 years.
- Childcare provision in Herefordshire is of high quality with 54% having an Ofsted rating of good 15% outstanding and 17% requiring improvement or awaiting Ofsted Inspection. Of the 101 childminders 18% are Outstanding, 57% are Good, 8% Requiring Improvement, 1% Inadequate, 7% did not meet the Early Years Foundation Stage criteria and 9% still awaiting inspection.

- The cost of childcare varies from £3.20 to £6.00 (most expensive) per hour. The average being approximately £4.03 per hour. Childminding costs vary between £3.00 - £4.50 per hour with the average rate being £3.50
- Children with disabilities or additional needs were able to access good quality childcare with a range of early years providers. Early years providers hold a variety of specialist training to meet the needs of children with additional needs and where they didn't, they work with the family and child to meet needs where possible.
- The parent survey did not highlight a need for "childcare" for disabled children over the age of 11 – 25 years. However we know that there is limited regular holiday playschemes provision and due to the very rural nature of the county, this tends to be located in Hereford City with some provision in Leominster, Bromyard & Ross on Wye. Two parents reported the lack of specific respite care and overnight care for severely disabled children in Herefordshire and lack of school holiday provision (holiday playschemes) in certain areas eg Ross on Wye for this group.
- Childminders across Herefordshire has seen a reduction over the years. In 2013 we had 163 and in 2015 we have 101.
- 93% of 3 and 4 year olds take up the 15 hours free Nursery education Funding in Herefordshire. This is predominantly through private and maintained nurseries, childminders and pre-school playgroups. Generally there is a sufficient supply of childcare across Herefordshire to meet this need, however due to the rural nature of the county, in some areas there is limited choice of provision.
- 63% of eligible 2 year olds were taking up the 15 hours free Nursery Education Funding in (summer 2015) in Good or Outstanding settings. A small number of parents chose to use early years providers that were deemed "Requiring Improvement" by Ofsted and these were authorised due to parental individual circumstances e.g. transportation, consistency for the child or a sufficiency issue. All early years providers deemed as "Requiring Improvement" by Ofsted work closely with the Local Authorities Quality Improvement Team to ensure standards are raised and high quality childcare is provided.
- A small proportion of parents surveyed reported a need for longer before and after school care hours to enable them to work both typical office hours or atypical hours
- According to the latest Ofsted care and education ratings, overall the childcare available within Herefordshire is of good quality.
- Changes to how families receive welfare benefits may place an added pressure on demand for childcare due to a potential increase in the number of parents who are supported back into work. The potential increase from 15 hours to 30 hours for 3 & 4 years olds will impact on early years providers if it is not funded appropriately.
- Over half of the parents surveyed sought childcare through families and friends. Only 15% used the Herefordshire Family Information Service and most said that the FIS website and helpline wasn't very useful. It is essential that parents know how to access impartial, specialist, tailored information to help secure childcare that meets their needs.
- Most parents who answered the parent survey were 'working part time', which accounted for 54% of responses and the most common working arrangement for spouse/partner was 'working full time' accounting for 82% of responses.

Progress since the last Childcare Sufficiency Report (2011-2015)

It is not possible to maintain that there are no gaps within the childcare market, but Herefordshire Council will assure parents that it takes account of the gaps it has mapped and is doing what is reasonably practical to close them. In Herefordshire some of the gaps in the market identified from the childcare sufficiency assessment in 2011-2015 have improved, these include:

- A large number of our primary schools now offer either a breakfast club, after school club or both which support working parents, parents accessing training and in some circumstances shift patterns e.g. early mornings.
- Herefordshire has a high proportion of Nurseries that deliver Nursery Education Funding for 2 year olds and this is still being developed to ensure our “requiring improvement “ settings are supported to be “Good” and therefore can accept 2 year funded children.
- 8 childminders through the community childminding network within the past 3 years have had additional support and training to accommodate children with specific needs and disabilities. The supply of childminders has reduced across Herefordshire and this is an area for further marketing to recruit, train and sustain this sector of the market.
- Work to extend provision of flexible care arrangements within the sector to support working parents is on-going. Supporting the market to be sustainable through growth and a review of the amount paid to providers for Nursery Education Funding will need to be considered with the proposed increase in free childcare from 15 hours to 30 hours for 3 & 4 year olds. Some early years providers are reporting to us that the current funded hourly rate for 3 & 4 year Old’s is not sustainable or covers costs and if this increases to 30 hours per week at the current rate that they could not deliver a service and or they would have to close.
- Quality improvement is being focused on areas that Ofsted have deemed “requiring improvement” or “inadequate”. This will assist in the development of more 2 year old funded places and the proposed increase of 3 & 4 year old nursery education funding from 15 hours to 30 hours.

Identified Gaps & Action Plan

As a result of these surveys Herefordshire Council have identified the following high-level actions to be completed to assist towards improving Child Care Sufficiency across Herefordshire.

- Support for parents in rural areas particularly via the childminding community and aimed at 0-2 years and holiday provision
- Support schools where they have no breakfast and after school provision to consider offering this where there is demand
- Support all early years providers to deliver flexible 2,3 & 4 year old free nursery education funded places
- Support early year's providers to expand in identified areas where there is limited provision and or full eg Ledbury, Ross on Wye & Bromyard to enable more flexible childcare delivery and support the proposed government extension to deliver 30 hours nursery education funding in the future.
- Support development of expansion across all areas based on housing proposed and supporting workless people and those wishing to get back into training and or employment
- Carry out a more "drilled down" analysis of the childcare needs specifically for parents of children with complex needs and special needs that may be a barrier in enabling them to access employment or training.
- Support the childcare market to expand where it is feasible and demand dictates to offer holiday playscheme provision for all children and specialist playschemes for disabled children