

Childcare Sufficiency Report

Executive Summary

Childcare is key to preparing children for school and supporting the economy. The economic value of childcare is evidenced not only in the employment opportunities this sector provides but also in enabling people to work. EPPE Project Research 2004¹ shows that disadvantaged children who have attended childcare settings achieve better outcomes than those who do not. A good quality preschool education can support a child to reach a Good Level of Development by the end of the Foundation Stage, so that they are ready for school and able to participate in a learning environment.

Purpose of Report

1. This report outlines the work being taken forward to meet the requirement to make available sufficient childcare in the local area², which is a statutory duty placed on the Local Authority.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. This report is relevant to the following priorities and objectives laid down within the Council's Business Plan:
 - a. Good school results - *Promote high educational standards for all children, working closely with education providers, schools, colleges and academies*
 - b. Early Intervention (Prevention): Proactive Early Help and Children's Centres' services - *Re-shape the way we deliver services, with more focus on providing help early in a child's life and on supporting families where parents have difficulties which affect their ability to parent effectively through strong ongoing relationships with families and within communities*
 - c. Military and civilian communities are well integrated - *Ensure military personnel, their dependents and veterans suffer no disadvantage in access to services compared to the local population.*
 - d. Working with schools to support children who are vulnerable to underachievement – *including children from low-income families, those in care and those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).*

¹ Sylva K, et al (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596460/early_education_and_childcare_statutory_guidance_2017.pdf

Background

3. Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare places³, 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 children with disabilities). This is also relevant for children who are entitled to Two-Year-Old Funding, Three and Four-Year-Old Funding (universal entitlement and the extended 30 hours entitlement).
4. The entitlement above should be available all year round, meaning there is an expectation that families will be able to access childcare through holiday periods, and also outside school times, between 8am and 6pm if they wish. This makes for a very complicated pattern of support that needs to be delivered by the childcare market.
5. Officers use three levels of information to establish commissioning priorities and actions in order to create sufficient childcare across Wiltshire:
 - a. Population data enables an understanding of how many additional childcare places may be needed across Wiltshire due to migration and additional housing.
 - b. This information is then overlaid with the current percentage take up of places in each locality, town or village to understand the specific demand in each area. The forecast for uptake of available early years childcare places across the county in January 2021 is 62%. This compares to 68% in January 2020. The third lockdown has had an impact on the sector.
 - c. Local knowledge allows for an appreciation of how a local community operates e.g. there may be places in a village which are not accessible to people from a nearby town, or extra demand may be put on a town by people who work but do not live there. This data also plays an important role in the success of funding applications to the Department for Education, and requests for funding in relation to Section 106 contributions for capital projects. This helps the Council to support areas in Wiltshire where there is a need for additional provision and allows for contributions towards building or expansion projects.

Current Sufficiency

6. The January 2021 lockdown has led to a decrease in the number of children accessing an early years' place. On average 76% of settings are open on any one day, with 83% being the greatest number of settings open. This is 20% higher than in July 2020. However, in November 2020 as the confidence in early years grew there were up to 90% of settings reporting that they were open. Not every setting opens every day, so this is very close to a general expectation in a normal year. The funding for 2,3, & 4-year olds Early Years Entitlement children was only 4% lower than in 2019. This reflected the trend in the south west and some settings had a considerable increase in hours accessed.

³ Early Education & Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2017)

7. The table below shows the number of childcare providers across the county by type and the range of available provision for families of children under 12 to choose from.

Ofsted registered providers in Wiltshire at 31st December 2020:

Type of childcare provider	Number registered as of 31 st December 2020
Childminders	400
Childcare in non-domestic premises	364
Childcare in domestic premises	2
Home Childcare (nannies)	82

8. The percentage of children aged two benefiting from some early education entitlement (Data from the Local Governments Interactive Tool - LAIT) is below:

Local Authority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Wiltshire	77%	78%	87%	71%	80%
England	68%	71%	72%	68%	69%

9. Wiltshire has recovered from the dip in 2019 with funded provision in Spring 2020 offered to 80% of two year olds who are entitled to it. This is 11% above the national average. During 2019 work was undertaken with health visitors and children's centres to increase the take up of funded places by two year olds. Wiltshire had 72% take up in the Autumn Term and we expect this to continue to increase in the Spring Term.

10. The percentage of children aged three or four benefiting from some early education entitlement (Data from the Local Governments Interactive Tool - LAIT)

Local authority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Wiltshire	96%	95%	94%	93%	93%
England	95%	94%	94%	94%	93%

11. Wiltshire continues to offer funded provision to the same number of children as the national average. As part of the Best Start in Life FACT Programme there is a project group of multi agency professional working to find ways to increase the uptake.

Occupancy of early years settings across Wiltshire

12. There were moderate occupancy levels across Wiltshire in October 2020, a month after the opening of all settings in September following the lifting of lockdown restrictions. Demand for places quickly recovered and was reflective of Autumn 2019. Funding for settings was made at broadly the same level as they would have received in Autumn 2019, enabling settings to remain sustainable. It demonstrates that there are sufficient childcare places available across the county as a whole at this time.

13. The table below shows occupancy of early years settings by community area, comparing March 2020 pre COVID with October 2020 post COVID. Although figures were slightly down that is to be expected for the time of year and shows the recovery that the early years sector made after the first lockdown.

	March 2020 (pre COVID)				October 2020			
Community Area	Occupancy percentage across the week							
Age range	0-1 year olds	2 year olds	3-4 year olds	Overall	0-1 year olds	2 year olds	3-4 year olds	Overall
Amesbury	62%	74%	77%	71%	59%	55%	65%	62%
BOA	86%	72%	83%	80%	74%	70%	57%	63%
Calne	49%	59%	67%	58%	49%	57%	51%	50%
Chippenham	51%	48%	72%	57%	50%	50%	51%	49%
Corsham	49%	66%	59%	58%	49%	40%	56%	52%
Devizes	50%	50%	69%	56%	60%	43%	57%	52%
Malmesbury	42%	54%	73%	56%	42%	51%	50%	51%
Marlborough	56%	53%	69%	59%	57%	34%	56%	50%
Melksham	82%	69%	77%	76%	57%	70%	62%	63%
Pewsey	22%	46%	73%	47%	81%	42%	53%	51%
RWB and Cricklade	66%	61%	68%	65%	33%	45%	55%	51%
Salisbury	54%	56%	69%	60%	51%	51%	56%	54%
Southern Salisbury	76%	53%	74%	68%	64%	47%	60%	53%
SW Salisbury	49%	51%	67%	56%	45%	41%	51%	49%
Tidworth	68%	76%	91%	78%	56%	56%	68%	62%
Trowbridge	73%	68%	73%	71%	54%	69%	53%	53%
Warminster	69%	59%	77%	68%	69%	56%	63%	60%
Westbury	66%	68%	77%	70%	58%	70%	64%	66%
Total	59%	60%	73%	64%	56%	53%	57%	55%

14. In January, as market confidence grew, an increase in occupancy was expected as early years funding returned to being place based. However, the current lockdown has resulted in fewer children attending, this is illustrated in the table in 15.

15. The reduction in occupancy in Tidworth is due to the development of new childcare places to meet new demand in relation to the movement of military families from Germany to the area in 2020. However, the number of families was not as great as expected and we now have some spare capacity in that area.

Community Area	October 2020 occupancy	January 2021 occupancy	Difference	January 2020 occupancy	Difference
Amesbury	62%	69%	7%	73%	-4%
Bradford on Avon	63%	72%	9%	79%	-7%
Calne	50%	52%	2%	60%	-8%
Chippenham	49%	57%	8%	65%	-8%
Corsham	49%	59%	10%	61%	-2%
Devizes	52%	56%	4%	63%	-7%
Malmesbury	51%	61%	10%	68%	-7%
Marlborough	50%	55%	5%	61%	-6%
Melksham	63%	69%	6%	75%	-6%
Pewsey	51%	58%	7%	65%	-7%
RWB/Cricklade	50%	61%	11%	64%	-3%
Salisbury	54%	63%	9%	65%	-2%
South West	49%	55%	6%	60%	-5%
Southern Wilts	53%	62%	9%	67%	-5%
Tidworth	62%	66%	4%	86%	-20%
Trowbridge	53%	63%	10%	71%	-8%
Warminster	60%	64%	4%	72%	-8%
Westbury	66%	75%	9%	76%	-1%
Total	55%	62%	7%	68%	-6%

16. Currently there is not a shortage of childcare across Wiltshire. However, COVID19 has had an impact on the sector and specifically on Out of School Care. Some providers are finding the current market extremely challenging. This is because they need to stay open for low numbers of children, which affects their margin of profitability and sustainability. During February half term many of them chose not to open as it was not financially viable.

17. Although there is sufficient early years childcare in the county, the sustainability of the sector has been affected by the COVID pandemic, with lower numbers of parent paid hours being provided. This is due to furloughing, the impact of COVID on some sectors and more parents working from home which have reduced the need for childcare.

School Nurseries Capital Fund awarded by Department of Education

18. The table below shows the two new provisions that have been funded by the DfE to create school-based quality nursery in deprived areas with a low Good Level of Development (GLD) score. These opened in January 2021.

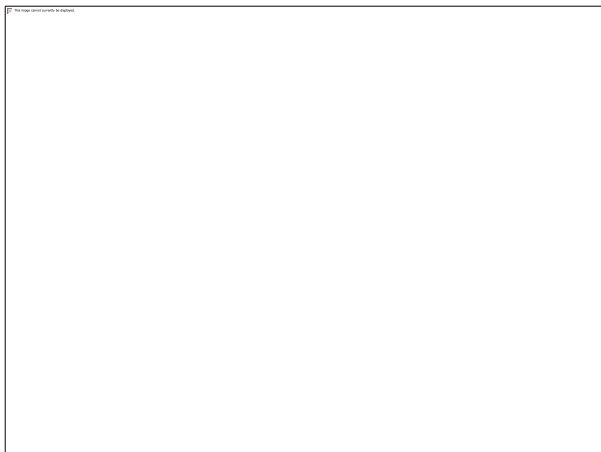
Name of school	Use of funding	Amount awarded
Princecroft Primary School, Warminster	The new provision has created new nursery places for 30 children	Up to £470,000

	during term-time, wrap-around care and holiday care	
Southbroom infants School, Devizes	This refurbishment project created a dedicated all-through nursery provision to support vulnerable families. The provision offers nursery term-time and wrap-around care for 56 children, and holiday care for up to 48 children	Up to £187,163.40 School are providing own financial contribution of £20,796 as project total is £207,959.40



Southbroom Nursery

Princecroft Nursery – near completion



Princecroft School
(near completion)

Housing Developments

19. Continuous monitoring of available childcare provision ensures that the future demand for early years places can be met. Commissioners are involved in spatial planning to influence appropriate sites for future development up to 2036, and requests for capital funding under the section 106 policy will continue to be made as necessary to meet new demand. Contributions for new early years places are sought where there are more than 10 housing units proposed.

20. The table below shows the amount of section 106 capital funding that has been received in 2019 / 20, to support childcare provision in the county and ensure that families have access to good quality provision as the demand for places increases.

Section 106 Capital Funding Applications 2019-2020			
Area	Source of funding	Amount of contribution	Amount committed to date
BOA Early Years provision	S106 contribution for Early Years and Childcare provision	£90,743 (This is the first payment; a further payment of £70,787 was due. This is currently being followed up with developers)	No funding has been committed at this time
Corsham/Rudloe Project	S106 contributions for Early Years and Childcare provision	£178,336	£20,000 of this funding has been allocated to the Springfield Hub Early Years project
Trowbridge (Bradley Road development)	S106 contribution for Early Years and Childcare provision	£ 153,645	No funding has been committed at this time

21. A new nursery is registered and ready to open in the Springfield Hub in Corsham but the reduction in the need for childcare has delayed its opening until at least Summer 2021.

22. Trinity School in Devizes has appointed a nursery provider to offer onsite provision to meet the need of the increase in housing in the Devizes area.

23. A national chain provider has chosen to build an 81-place nursery at Longhedge in Salisbury which should be open for Summer 2021. This will meet much of the early years' childcare need for the area along with the available capacity in other nearby settings.

Sufficiency Concerns

24. Even with the outbreak of COVID-19 there are currently only three areas of concern in Wiltshire. However, officers are closely monitoring the sufficiency and sustainability of childcare providers and will be responding to any changes in capacity and availability.

Community area	Gap	Action
Bradford on Avon	Shortage of provision for children aged 0-4	S106 funding has been agreed for the development of new places
Melksham	Shortage of care for 0-1-year olds	A bid has been put in for S106 funding to develop new places
Marlborough	Lack of provision in the town which is open from 8am- 6pm, specifically for babies	Discussions with providers to increase the provision

Military Population

25. Over the last year Wiltshire Council has managed a major programme arising from the British Army's Basing Project (ABP). Wiltshire received the largest net addition of troops to be relocated from Germany under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) programme. The military presence in Wiltshire is significant with more than 20 per cent of the Regular British Army now accommodated in the county. The net addition is 4,000 personnel plus 3,200 spouses and children, leading to expected additional demand on childcare places. This resulted in the development of new early years provision, alongside new schools in the army basing areas of Tidworth, Ludgershall, Larkhill, Bulford and Lyneham.
26. £1,496,070 of funding was provided by the MoD to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for families across the county. Additional provision was developed, and the demand is currently being met for these additional families. Any subsequent additional demand will be discussed with the military as and when they expand their Army Basing Project.

Main considerations for the council

Early years entitlement and the cost of childcare

27. A continuing challenge for our early years providers is the ongoing concern whether the funding rate is sufficient to ensure sustainability (please see the finance section). This is a national issue and has been widely discussed for a number of years. Officers continue to provide business health checks to support providers to maintain their sustainability, and national Early Years groups continue to lobby central government for a review of funding levels.
28. When looking at the cost of childcare it can be difficult to compare like with like as costs vary from one childcare setting to another. Some settings provide nappies, wipes, snacks and meals as part of their fees and others charge extra for these, at a range of costs in line with government guidelines. In addition, some settings

offer discounts to siblings and staff. Costs are kept under regular review by Wiltshire Council officers.

Early Years Workforce

29. Providers continue to report that their greatest challenge is the recruitment of staff which reflects the national position. Historically, the sufficiency team has attended recruitment events to support providers and most settings are trying to address recruitment challenges through growing their own staff, apprenticeships and encouraging more people to work in childcare. Consideration is being given nationally on how to promote childcare as a credible option choice for young people as well as those returning to work or thinking of a career change.
30. A campaign to promote childcare as an attractive offer to those who are looking for an alternative career has been developed by Wiltshire Council, and will launch in April.
31. Wiltshire Council has worked with Jobcentre Plus and Family and Community Learning, to develop a Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) course which can be mandated by the Jobcentre. This programme involves pre-employment training, work experience and a guaranteed job interview. One of our local chain providers is currently offering the work and interview element of this and if successful we hope to increase the number of providers involved. 20 participants accessed this programme in January.

COVID-19

32. During COVID-19 there has been significant pressure on the Early Years market to ensure that childcare is available for as many families as possible. The sector has been open for children since the start of the initial lockdown and has remained open in line with government guidance ever since, enabling over 7000 children per week to receive childcare in December 2020.
33. During the pandemic all settings have been offered support from the finance and early years teams in the Local Authority if their business is at risk of financial hardship, and four settings accessed this funding.
34. The early years sector has not had any specific national COVID support and yet remain open to support pre-school children and facilitate the needs of working parents. Wiltshire Council has allocated £1million of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to be used to support this sector. This funding will enable the sector to remain COVID compliant and help to reduce transmission, and keep settings open for children and families. There are three strands to the funding:
 - financial support for settings where they have a loss of fee-paying income when a bubble is burst, and they need to ask all staff and children to self-isolate

- financial support for a setting with staff who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and therefore not able to work due to shielding
- one-off payment of between £150-£1000 (depending on the size of the setting) to help with PPE and enhanced cleaning.

In the first week in February there were 48 applications received from settings, in relation to a burst bubble in their provision since November 2020. These have all been offered the additional funding.

Commissioning Considerations

35. Officers will continue to develop the quality and scope of early years and childcare provision and work closely with providers to ensure that there are sufficient high-quality places available across the county where needed. Work will also continue to develop relationships with existing nurseries and childminders across the county, working with all childcare providers to respond to any increase in demand. This includes looking at ways to bring new providers into the market in Wiltshire to ensure that all families are able to access a choice of appropriate, and high-quality childcare.
36. Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to secure information, advice and training to all providers registered on the Ofsted early years register who are judged less than 'good' at their most recent inspection and to any new providers. In addition, Wiltshire Council must offer information advice and training to any provider that requests this to ensure the provision meets the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
37. The Early Years Teachers employed by the Council offer support around learning and the Quality Assurance Officers support settings with safeguarding and welfare requirements. Regular training events are held throughout the year by these teams. The commissioning team also offer support around sustainability and sufficiency.
38. The table below shows the actions that Officers will be taking in the coming year in relation to childcare sufficiency, working with colleagues and providers across the sector to ensure that enough provision is available to meet the local demand in each area.

Action	Outcome	Responsible	Timescale
Secure sufficient childcare in key areas of need detailed in paragraph 19 (Bradford-On-Avon, Melksham and Marlborough)	Local families will have sufficient childcare to meet demand for all types of provision	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	June 2021
Ensure that capital grants from central government and section 106 funding is used to	Additional capacity in the market to meet growing demand for childcare places, in response to local	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	March 2021

deliver additional early years provision places	housing development and migration		
Produce a full review of childcare provision across the county once the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, and lockdown restrictions are removed, to identify any new pressure for places. This could be as a result of closures, or other local factors	To identify any gaps in the market, and understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on demand for places	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	June 2021 (dependant on lifting of lockdown measures)
Promote Childminding as a career to support gaps in areas of need e.g. villages	Sufficient childcare provision in villages and areas where required	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	April 2021 & Ongoing
Promote childcare as a serious career option	To ensure enough staff available to meet the demand for childcare places across the county	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	April 2021 & Ongoing
Identify new ways to promote early years funding to more families	More families and children will access good quality childcare	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	May 2021
Increase uptake of Early Years Entitlement Funding for 2,3 and 4-year olds	The most disadvantaged children have access to good quality childcare which will help to improve their outcomes	Programme Lead-Families & Children's Commissioning	July 2021

Safeguarding Considerations

39. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that there is 'effective safeguarding and promotion of welfare of the children for whom the early education is provided'. The School Effectiveness team within Wiltshire Council monitor the quality of provision and respond to any safeguarding risks, with support from the Safeguarding teams as necessary. These can be identified from a range of sources, including employees in a setting, parents or carers, and Ofsted in the main. The Quality and Assurance team who are part of School Effectiveness respond to any queries that are raised and participate in Designated Officer for Allegations (DoFA) meetings.
40. There have been 13 safeguarding concerns in 2020 /21. Six were referred to the DoFA, five are resolved and one is ongoing. The other seven have been resolved and closed through additional support from the School Effectiveness Team, enabling the setting to reach the required standard.

Public Health Implications

41. The provision of sufficient childcare is part of the Local Authority's overall commitment to support the health and wellbeing of Wiltshire's communities. Wiltshire Council recognises the importance of the early years as part of the Family and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme which includes a workstream focusing on the Best Start in Life. As part of this there is a focus on Speech and Language and the Home Learning Environment with associated campaigns being developed.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

42. There are no specific environmental and climate change issues because of developing childcare sufficiency.

Financial Considerations

43. The Department for Education (DfE) funding is allocated from the early years funding block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) which is calculated on a per pupil basis and allocated on part time equivalents (PTE) i.e. children attending settings on an annual basis.

44. The hourly rates for 2021/22 are in the table below. The funding is based on the January 2020 census data of 9,068 part time equivalent (PTE) pupils whilst the current take up is lower than January 2020 census data representing the children who are not attending provision during the pandemic. 88% of the children are attending a setting compared with November 2020, higher levels are anticipated to return during 2021 as lockdown eases and parental confidence increases.

45. The early years funding block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) is set by the local authority and, following consultation, noted by Schools Forum at their January meeting. The total 'initial' or provisional allocation for 2021-22 from the DfE is £28.217 million. Wiltshire has been able to fully passport the 8p per hour increase to entitled 2-year olds and passport 5p of the 6p per hour increase for 21-22. The detailed budget for Wiltshire is shown in the table below.

	PTE	Hourly Rate	21/22 Allocation agreed by Schools Forum £M
3 and 4-Year-Old Funding - universal 15 hours including contingency for increased take up	6,982	£4.25 (5p increase)	16.994
3 and 4-Year-Old Funding – extended for working parents 15 hours including contingency for increased take up	2,087	£4.25 (5p increase)	7.478
Deprivation & Rurality			0.230

2-Year-Old Funding	774	£5.48 (8p increase)	2.417
Early Years Disability Access Grant	214 children	£615 /child	0.132
Early Years Pupil Premium (max £302.10/570 hours pa)		£0.53/hour	0.187
Early Years Inclusion Funding			0.357
Central Early Years Functions			0.422
TOTAL of INDICATIVE Allocation 21-22			28,217

A funding adjustment will take place in the summer following the January 2021 census data. There is a risk of reduced funding due to children not attending provision during the pandemic. This is offset by setting the budget at funded rates rather than take up rates which allows for potential future funding changes.

Commercial considerations

46. Creating and meeting the childcare sufficiency expectations across the county has a direct impact on the capacity of communities to enable as many parents who are seeking employment or training as possible to have the opportunity to realise their ambitions. Early years and childcare provision also benefit from the range of Government funding designed to promote a good level of development for all children, which helps to support the viability of the sector.

Equalities Impact

47. Childcare sufficiency seeks to promote equality and inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged families, looked after children, children in need and children with special educational needs and disability. As a Local Authority, there are duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 0-25 to consider when securing free places, so that all families can access the provision they require in the right place. Officers continue to work with providers, and social care and education colleagues, to remove barriers of access to free places, and work with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. As detailed in paragraphs 8 and 10 Wiltshire provided childcare for 80% of 2-year olds, above the national average and 93% of 3- and 4-year olds across the county, in line with national figures.

Risk Management

48. There are risks related to insufficient early years and childcare provision. Without sufficient early years and childcare provision:

- Wiltshire Council would not meet the statutory duty to ensure, where reasonable, that there is sufficient provision.
- Parents would not be able to access Government funding to pay for childcare, or have a choice of provision

- Children may not have access to an early years' setting and as a consequence may not have the experiences they require to ensure that they are ready for school, and achieve a good level of development
- Local businesses may find recruitment more difficult if parents have to stay at home to provide childcare

Legal Implications

49. It is a legal requirement that Wiltshire Council ensure sufficient childcare is available across Wiltshire to all parents who wish to access this provision. Commissioners will continue to work with the providers to ensure there is sufficient high-quality Early Years provision across the county.

Conclusions

50. Wiltshire continues to have sufficient high-quality provision which is keeping up with local demand in most areas. The three main challenges are:

- recovery after COVID-19
- the expansion of housing
- the recruitment of early years staff.

Officers will continue to monitor the needs of all community areas, encouraging expansion or the development of new provision, including childminders, in areas of need. Intelligence is gathered by both local knowledge and the use of surveys. Officers will continue to work with the early years and childcare sector, colleagues within the council, communities and others to ensure there is sufficient provision. Occupancy of settings will be reviewed twice a year to inform the amount of available provision required.

51. The county wide action plan in paragraph 38 will focus development work in the coming year. There will also be more work with schools to address the ongoing wrap around care for school age children as identified in the government's manifesto pledge.

52. Work is already in progress to update the Wiltshire Council website to provide clearer information for those interested in setting up new childcare provision in the county. Officers will continue to work with colleagues in school effectiveness to promote the online childcare directory, and ways of paying for childcare.

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Appendix 1 - Schemes and Benefits

Appendix 2 - Occupancy maps for Wiltshire: (a) Under 2s, (b) 2-Year-old children, and (c) 3 & 4-Year-old children