

Childcare Sufficiency Report update

Purpose of Report

1. This report is an update on the work undertaken to address the requirement to make available sufficient childcare in the local area, which is a statutory duty placed on the Local Authority.
2. The work includes an early years strategy and the development of the local childcare provider market.

Updates – Early Years

3. Ofsted registered providers in Wiltshire:

Type of childcare provider	Number registered	
	September 2023	March 2024
Childminder	306	304
Day Nursery/Preschool/School nursery	260	256

4. Although a difference of four settings is shown six did close. One was due to low numbers, two were due to lack of suitably trained and skilled staff to manage the provision, two due to retirement of owner and the final one due to an unsuitable building.
5. To offset this, new provision opened in Trowbridge and Purton.
6. In March 2024 there were 8027 childcare places available in group settings and 912 places with childminders.
7. To facilitate the development of places across the county funding from the DfE has been used to recruit three new Assistant Commissioners with responsibility for sufficiency.
8. As part of the expanded childcare offer £885,466.40 capital funding has been provided to the Local Authority to develop sufficient provision. An invitation to apply for funding was sent out via the weekly newsletter to all settings. Funding is agreed based on four criteria:
 - Demand in the community area.
 - Number of new places for two year old and under.
 - Percentage of contributions from the provider.
 - Speed of delivery of places (planning permission etc).

9. 20 Providers expressed an interest in expanding their provision. To date £342,338 in funding has been agreed for seven settings and these settings will make contributions of £342,018 towards the cost of the agreed developments. Funding has been agreed to develop new places in existing provision in the following areas:

Community Area	no of places created under 2s	no of places created 2 yos	extra places 3&4	Total number of paces
Melksham	12	4	2	18
Calne	21	0	0	21
Westbury	7	8	0	15
South West Wiltshire	3	3	0	6
Chippenham	6	4	0	10
Westbury	9	5	0	14
South West Wiltshire	18	0	0	18
	76	24	2	102

10. In the autumn report we highlighted sufficiency concerns in Bradford-On-Avon, Melksham, Marlborough, Warminster and Westbury. The developments listed above address the need in Melksham and Westbury.
11. To address the sufficiency concerns in Bradford-On-Avon S106 funding will be used to develop provision in the town.
12. A new setting will open in Warminster in the Autumn to address the pressures there and further options will be considered.
13. The situation in Marlborough is being monitored and there is currently sufficient provision.
14. Currently there is an opportunity to tender for Canberra Children's Centre in Melksham for use as early years provision. This should be able to offer 42 early years places which should address the demand in the town.
15. The greatest issue facing the expansion of childcare is the lack of appropriately qualified and skilled staff available and willing to work in the early years sector.
16. To address this issue the DfE has developed a website [Working in early years and childcare - Early Years Careers](#) and launched a national advertising campaign.
17. To raise awareness of a career in childcare officers are attending Careers Fairs and working with the Job Centre and linking with Supporting Families Employment Advisers.

18. Wiltshire College is offering Step into Early Years as a starter course. Sector Based Workforce Programmes (SWAP) will be planned with Job Centre and Family and Community Learning.

Updates – Wraparound Childcare

19. Current supply of wraparound provision has been reviewed.
20. A survey to understand the demand for wraparound childcare received 2269 responses. Of which 55% (n.1249) said that lack of childcare was preventing all parents/ carers in a household from working the hours that they would wish to work.
21. A development plan is being written to address the needs across the county and to prioritise areas for development.
22. There is DfE funding for capital work and support in staffing a provision to stimulate demand.
23. Over the next year officers will work with schools and independent providers to develop wraparound childcare in all schools so that an 8-6pm offer is available from September 2026 across the county.

Early Years Strategy

24. The early years strategy has been written and will be published in the summer.

Conclusion

25. The additional funding provided by the government to expand childcare places will help to develop sufficiency across the county.
26. The additional resource of three Assistant Commissioners allows a systematic approach to demand to be addressed and for timely responses to be implemented.
27. The support of schools is imperative to realise the ambition for full wraparound care from 8am – 6pm five days a week during termtime.
28. There is sufficient interest from providers in developing childcare places to reassure us that our targets can be met as long as sufficient trained, qualified staff are recruited.

Lucy-Anne Bryant

Commissioning Manager