

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**Date: 26 November 2024**

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## **Subject: Childcare Sufficiency Report**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills**

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### **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 so they can contribute to the economy. The childcare sector has faced several challenges post Covid. The ongoing recruitment and retention crisis is continuing to reduce the number of childcare places available. Currently there is sufficient provision at a county level, this is continuously monitored.

The expansion of Early Years Entitlements is increasing the demand for places, physically this is being mitigated by the capital expansion funding. The Wraparound Childcare Programme requires the development of places for primary aged children from 8am -6pm. Both of these programmes require a clear plan for workforce recruitment and retention.

### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report outlines the work being taken forward to meet the requirement to ensure sufficient childcare is available in the local area, which is a statutory duty placed on the Local Authority. This includes infrastructure and development work of the local childcare provider market.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. The proposals are relevant to the following priorities and objectives laid down within the Council's Business Plan<sup>1</sup>:
  - Empower People to get the best start in life:
    - Guarantee that there are enough high quality and accessible preschool places.
    - Find the right specialist support for children with special educational needs.
    - Ensure all school pupils, including those who are vulnerable, can access a high-quality education provision and are well prepared for their next stage in life.
  - Thriving Economy with the right skills to prosper:

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<sup>1</sup> [Business plan - Wiltshire Council](#)

- Support educational establishments to reduce the risk to vulnerable pupils by developing early help practices and multiagency support, enabling all pupils to realise their potential.

## Background

3. Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare places<sup>2</sup>, 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:
  - Disadvantaged two year olds are eligible for 15 hours childcare
  - All children aged three and four are eligible for 15 hours childcare
  - For working families:
    - 30 hours childcare for children aged three and four
    - From April 2024, 15 hours childcare for children aged two years.
    - From September 2024, 15 hours childcare for children aged over 9 months
    - From September 2025, 30 hours childcare for children aged over 9 months.
4. Childcare should be available all year round, meaning there is an expectation that families will be able to access childcare through holiday periods, and outside school times, between 8am and 6pm if they wish. This makes for a very complex childcare market. The schemes and benefits that support parents with childcare are outlined in appendix one.
5. Officers use three sources of information to establish commissioning priorities and actions to create sufficient childcare across Wiltshire:
  - Current and forecasted population and demographic data, to understand potential demand.
  - The percentage take up or occupancy of places in each community area, town or village to understand the specific localised demand. This data is collected three times a year and the summer occupancy data is presented in this paper as it reflects the busiest time of the year, when most children are eligible for a funded place.
  - Local knowledge allows for an appreciation of how a local community operates e.g., there may be available places in a village which are not accessible to children from a nearby town, or extra demand may be put on a town by families who work but do not live there.
6. This data is used to inform funding applications to the Department for Education, and requests for funding in relation to Section 106 contributions for capital projects where there is housing development and insufficient places to meet demand.

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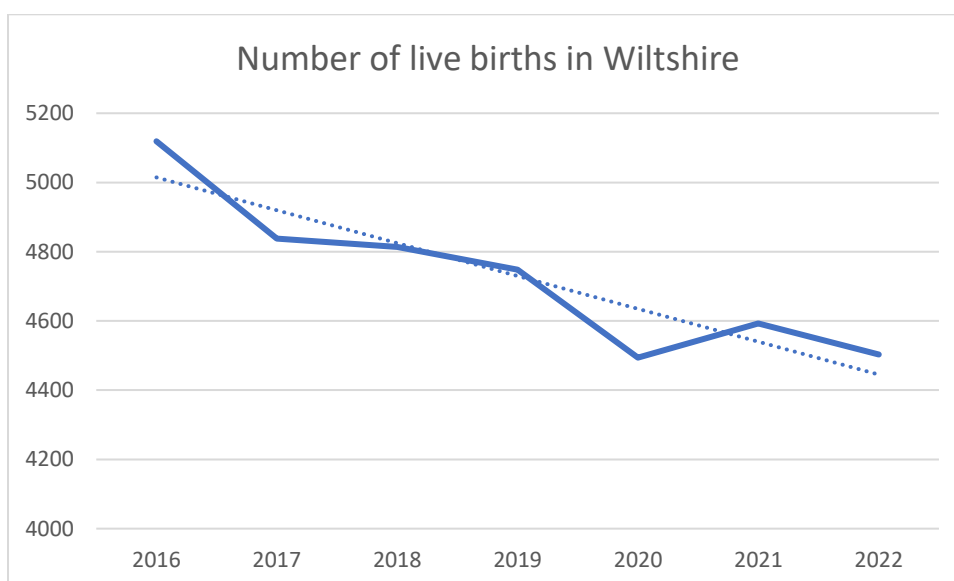
<sup>2</sup> [Early Education & Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities \(applies from 1 April 2024\)](#)

7. The Spring Budget 2023 announced the new childcare entitlements for working families as outlined in paragraph three. Additionally, the previous government announced a programme for all schools to provide term time wraparound childcare for primary age children from 8am to 6pm by September 2026. With the change of government, the new Minister has confirmed the Early Years Entitlement expansion for working parents and the wraparound programme remain a priority.

### Current Supply of Childcare

8. The latest data available shows that in 2022 there were 4503 live births in Wiltshire<sup>3</sup> which shows a steady decline since 2016. This significantly dropped in 2020 but has since steadied, although it still shows a downward trend.

Year of birth	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of live births in Wiltshire	5119	4838	4814	4748	4494	4593	4503



9. 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 as of 31 July 2024:

Type of childcare provider	Number registered
Childminder	311
Day Nursery/Preschool/School nursery	249
Childcare Register wrap around childcare	37

<sup>3</sup> [Births in England and Wales: summary tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/births-in-england-and-wales-summary-tables)

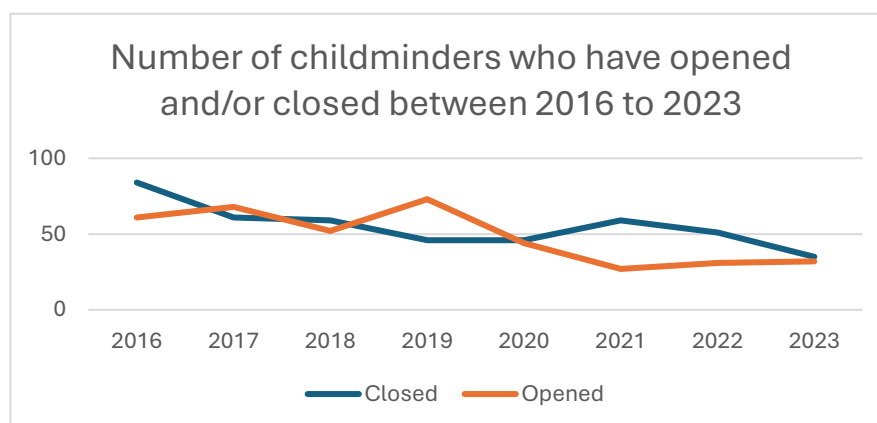
Early Years register for wrap around childcare	20
Voluntary Childcare register (drama /performing arts)	16
Home Childcarer	81

## Group provision

10. In Wiltshire the 249 Day Nursery/Preschool/School nursery providers are registered for 10,208 early years places. However, due to a lack of appropriately qualified staff only 9,073 places are currently available to children.
11. Between July 2023 and July 2024, nine group settings closed with a loss of 275 places. The reasons were varied: premises issues, sustainability pressures, personal reasons, recruitment issues.
12. To mitigate some of the loss, a school took over two nurseries in September 2023 and a further four new group settings have opened in the last year creating 176 new places. This has reduced the overall loss in Wiltshire in the past year to 59 places.

## Childminders

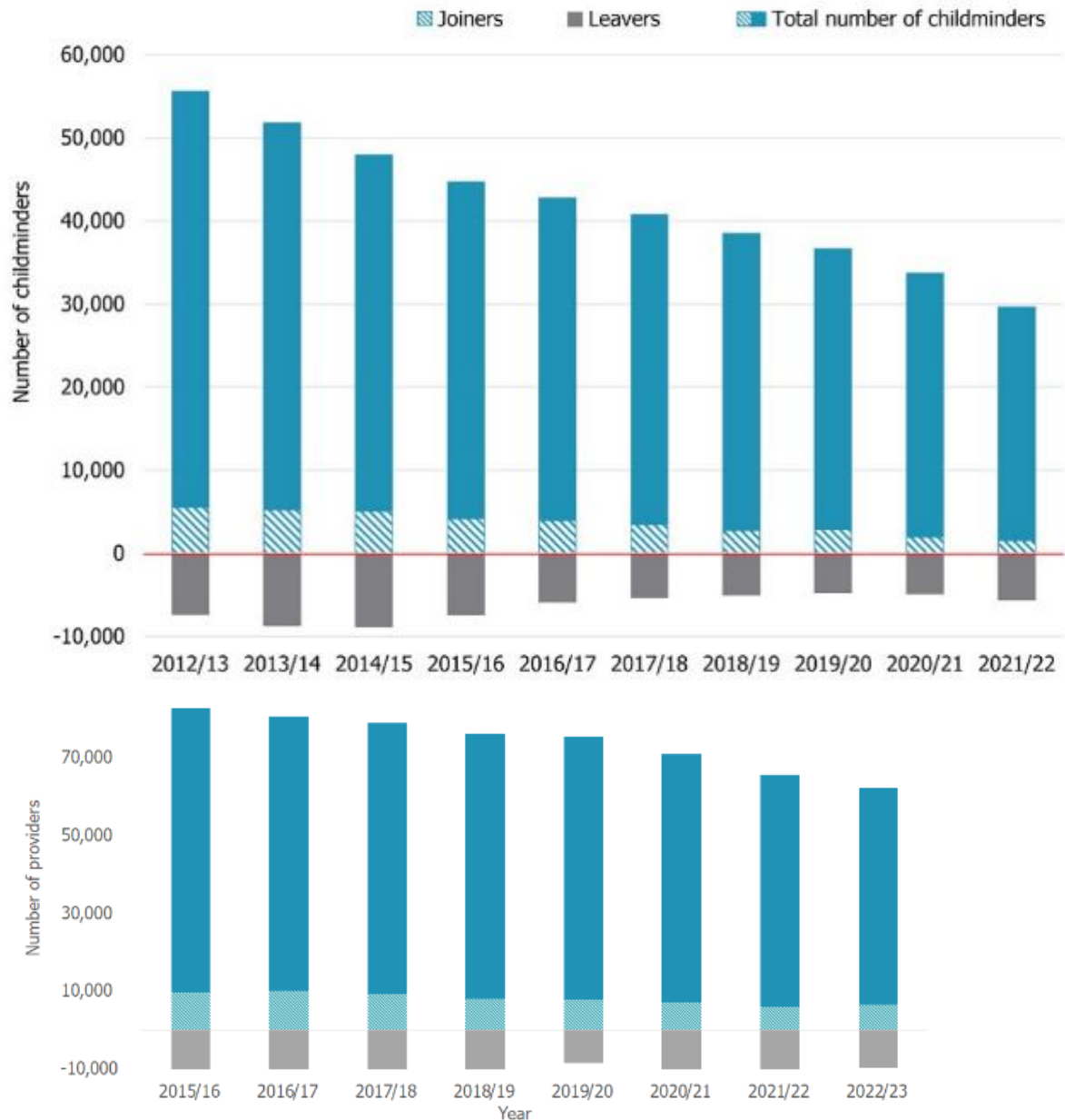
13. There are 311 childminders in Wiltshire offering a maximum of 933 places. The graph below shows the continued downward trend on numbers. However, the number of childminders has stabilised this last year.



14. The launch of the childminder 'start-up' grant<sup>4</sup> in November 2023 enabled childminders registering after 15 March 2023 to access funding of £600 if registering with Ofsted or £1200 if registering with a childminding agency. This has not had a significant increase on the number of enquires received by the sufficiency team with 22 new enquiries received in 2023 compared to 21 received in 2024. However, for the period September 2023 – August 2024, Ofsted confirmed 28 proposed new childminders compared with 20 in the same period for the previous year.

<sup>4</sup> [Apply for a childminder start-up grant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-a-childminder-start-up-grant)

15. Annually Ofsted produce a report – ‘Main findings: Childcare providers and inspections as of 31 August 2022’<sup>5</sup>, the tables below show the steady national downward trend in Ofsted registered childminders compared with the national trend for all providers. The number of childminders registered on 31 August 2023 has further reduced by 2,580 to 27,000. This is replicated in Wiltshire as the enquires from prospective childminders in Wiltshire has significantly reduced over the last few years.

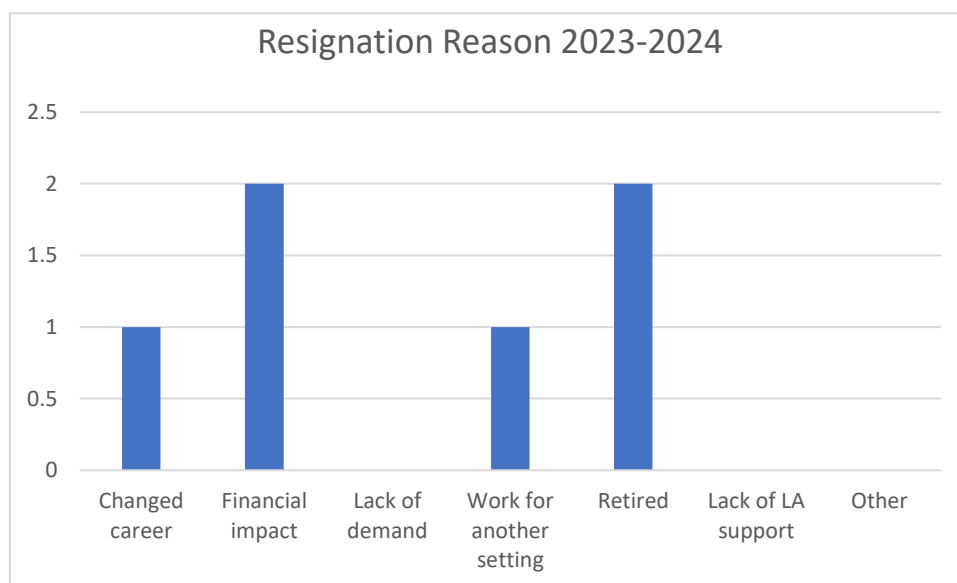


16. Nationally, the total number of paid childcare staff increased by 4%. School-based providers and group-based providers both saw increases in the total number of staff of 7% and 4% respectively. In contrast, the number of

<sup>5</sup> [Main findings: Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 August 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)  
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childminders and childminder assistants fell by 5%<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the national trend shows reductions in the spread and variety of childcare options for parents.

17. An exit survey is conducted with Wiltshire childminders following their resignation. Responses were received from five out of the 34 resignations that occurred between 1 September 2023 to 14 August 2024. Of these five, two said they would consider either working in group childcare provision or becoming a childminder again in the future. Within the same timeframe we had 28 people apply to childmind with Ofsted.



18. All comments and reasons gathered during exit interviews are informing future recruitment plans and the awareness that in some cases childminders will only mind for as long as is suitable for them and their family. Many older childminders and early years staff are leaving and there is an acknowledgement nationally of a lack of younger people joining the sector. Some of the reasons mentioned by potential applicants are the low pay and requirement for qualifications.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

19. The early years team within the School Effectiveness directorate work with children with SEND. The Early Years Inclusion Advisors (EYIA) received 724 new referrals from September 2022 and August 2023. 572 children who received support from EYIA team transitioned into Primary School in September 2023.
20. There were 967 Inclusion Support Funding (ISF) applications of which 900 were accepted. 407 children were supported. This may have been up to three applications in an academic year.

<sup>6</sup> [Childcare and early years provider survey, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service.gov.uk)

21. Of children who started school in September 2023, 165 had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP):

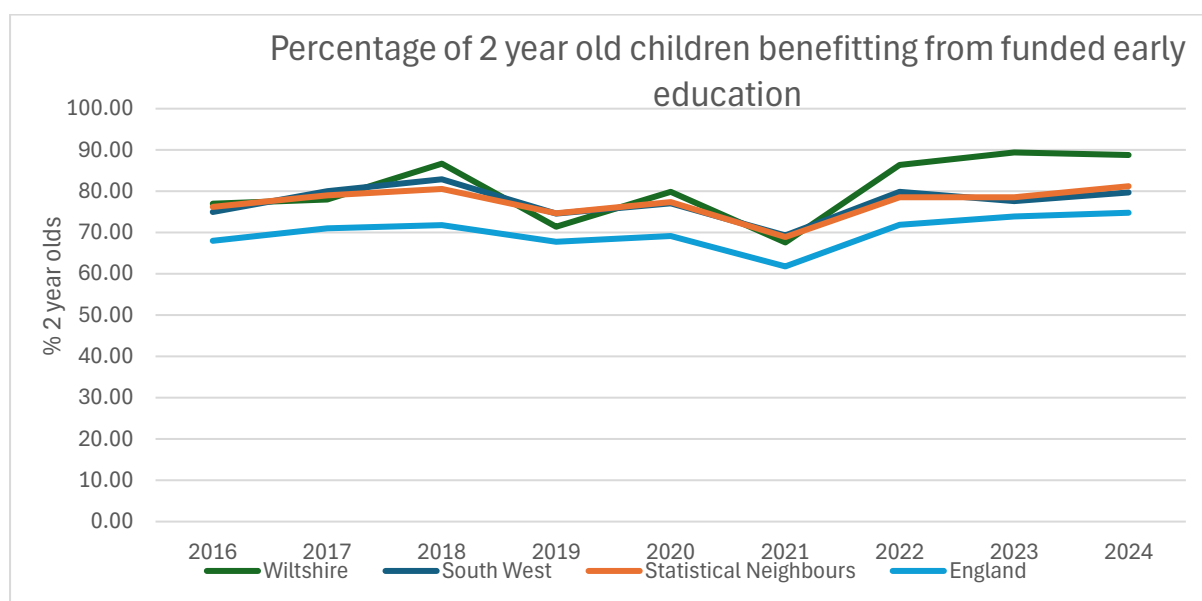
- 80 went into mainstream
- 47 went to Resource Base
- 38 went to specialist provision.

### Government Funded Early Years Entitlements

22. Percentage of disadvantaged children aged two benefiting from some early education entitlement (Data from the Local Authority Interactive Tool - LAIT):

Local Authority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Wiltshire	77%	78%	87%	71%	80%	68%	86%	89%	89%
Regional	75%	80%	83%	75%	77%	69%	80%	78%	80%
Statistical	76%	79%	81%	75%	77%	69%	79%	79%	81%
England	68%	71%	72%	68%	69%	62%	72%	74%	75%

NB - These January 2024 statistics do not cover the expanded entitlements for children of eligible working parents which includes, from April 2024, the 15-hour entitlement for 2-year-olds and, from September 2024, the 15-hour entitlement for children aged 9 to 23 months.

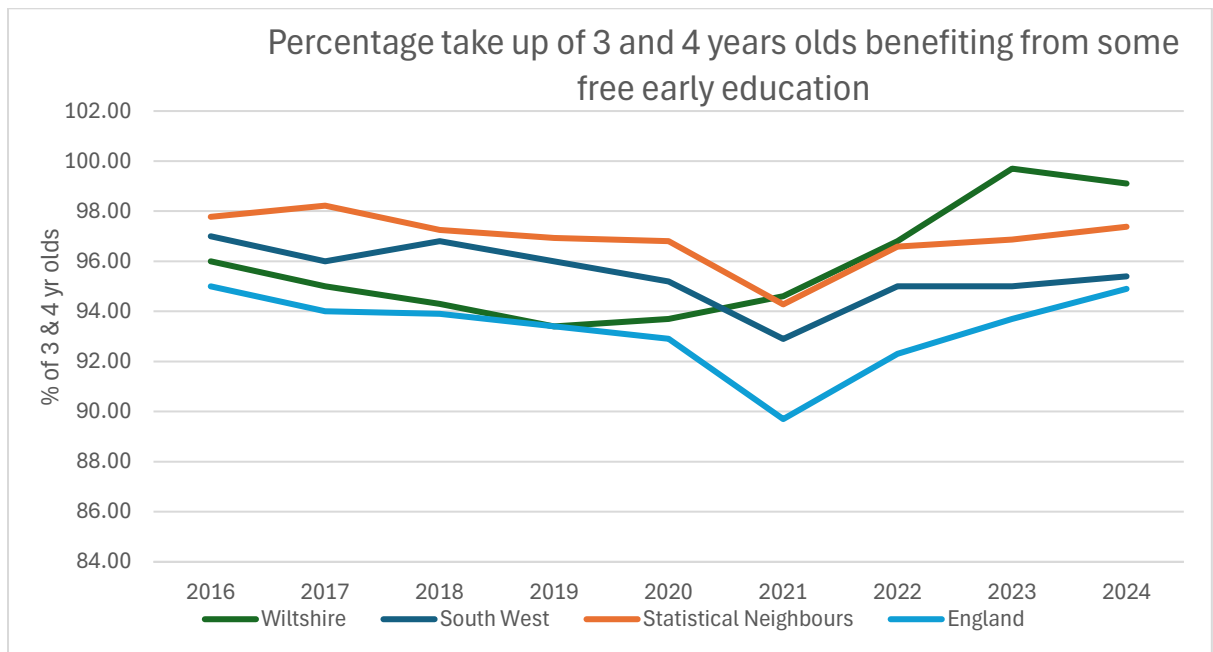


23. The table above shows that there has been an overall increase in the take up of 2-year-old places since 2016, Wiltshire continues to exceed national performance. The Department for Work and Pensions share regular lists with the Local Authority of those families identified as being eligible. Uptake has been increased and maintained by an effective method of communication; families are invited to apply for the funding via text and e-mail from the Early Years Entitlements Team. The family hub team also contact eligible families who have

not accessed funding. To simplify the process applications are made online and parents can be supported by either the setting or family hub if they need help.

24. Percentage of children aged three or four benefiting from some early education entitlement (Data from the Local Authority Interactive Tool - LAIT):

Local Authority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Wiltshire	96%	95%	94%	93%	93%	95%	97%	99%	99%
Regional	97%	96%	97%	96%	95%	93%	95%	95%	95%
Statistical	98%	98%	97%	97%	97%	94%	97%	97%	97%
England	95%	94%	94%	94%	93%	90%	92%	93%	95%



25. Wiltshire continues to perform very well with early years entitlement uptake in comparison with regional, statistical and national percentages.

26. The EPPE Project Research 2004<sup>7</sup> shows that disadvantaged children who have attended childcare providers 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. An 89% update of two year old funding and a 99% for three and four year old uptake means that a high percentage of disadvantaged children are accessing some sessions in an early years setting and this will support their development and outcomes.

### Occupancy of early years group settings across Wiltshire

<sup>7</sup> Sylva K, et al (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.



	Occupancy percentage across the week								
Community Area	Summer 2023				Summer 2024				Overall Difference
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	Difference
<b>Bradford on Avon</b>	89%	88%	90%	89%	90%	88%	88%	86%	-3%
<b>Calne</b>	76%	69%	85%	80%	82%	74%	88%	83%	3%
<b>Chippenham</b>	87%	88%	74%	78%	79%	69%	90%	85%	7%
<b>Corsham</b>	69%	61%	81%	76%	48%	69%	78%	74%	-2%
<b>Devizes</b>	75%	65%	89%	83%	93%	55%	88%	77%	-6%
<b>Malmesbury</b>	66%	59%	88%	77%	67%	62%	94%	82%	5%
<b>Marlborough</b>	71%	72%	85%	81%	72%	55%	81%	73%	-8%
<b>Melksham</b>	66%	75%	95%	90%	69%	73%	91%	88%	-2%
<b>Pewsey</b>	79%	65%	81%	76%	85%	43%	74%	66%	-10%
<b>RWB and Cricklade</b>	83%	62%	90%	83%	63%	63%	82%	75%	-8%
<b>Salisbury</b>	77%	71%	87%	81%	70%	70%	78%	75%	-6%
<b>Southern Wilts</b>	67%	66%	85%	77%	68%	71%	87%	81%	4%
<b>Stonehenge</b>	69%	65%	86%	81%	69%	64%	87%	79%	-2%
<b>SW Wiltshire</b>	81%	61%	85%	80%	78%	65%	85%	78%	-4%
<b>Tidworth</b>	83%	76%	88%	85%	63%	73%	85%	79%	-5%
<b>Trowbridge</b>	84%	90%	89%	85%	64%	69%	88%	82%	-3%
<b>Warminster</b>	85%	70%	91%	86%	74%	77%	86%	82%	-4%
<b>Westbury</b>	48%	76%	92%	87%	62%	82%	89%	86%	-1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>-2%</b>

27. There has been a decrease in the overall occupancy between Summer 2023 and Summer 2024. Three and four year old occupancy continues to be high at 86%, even though this is 1% lower than last year, it is still indicative of pressure for this age group, which is accessed by the greatest number of children.

28. There were 616 fewer births in 2022 compared to 2016, which should result in a reduction in the demand for childcare. However, the expansion in Early Years Entitlements means that there is likely to be an increase going forward and this is why new places are being developed across the county.
29. Housing developments add pressure on the demand for places, applications are made for S106 funding (mentioned later in the paper) to increase places through building new or extending existing provision.
30. Overall, Summer 2024 (see appendix two maps) saw a downward trend in occupancy compared with 2023. The summer term is when the settings are at their most busy and it is felt that 85% is a comfortable rate of occupancy for a community area. There are four community areas which show an overall (0-4 year olds) occupancy of 85% or above: Bradford on Avon, Chippenham, Melksham and Westbury. Specifically, Chippenham, Malmesbury and Melksham have occupancy of 90% or above for 3- and 4-year-olds.
31. To mitigate the overall occupancy rate, new places are being developed in all these four community areas as part of the DfE Early Years Capital expansion as shown in paragraph 64.
32. Melksham is the area with the highest overall occupancy of 88% for 0-4 years-olds and 91% for 3- & 4-year-olds. In January 2025 a new 42 place day nursery is due to open in the old children's centre building in Melksham which will support the increasing demand in the area. Planning consent for a new Primary School on Pathfinder Way in Melksham has now been approved and this includes a new nursery. However, the school and nursery are not expected until September 2027 at the very earliest.
33. Malmesbury is continuing to be closely monitored whilst we await the transfer of the 0.3hectare of land secured through S106 where a new 80 place day nursery will be built.
34. Chippenham has seen an overall 7% increase in occupancy since 2023. There are numerous housing developments and there is S106 is available to expand provision in this area.
35. Pewsey has the greatest decrease in occupancy, this is due to the creation of a new 31 places provision that opened in September 2023, as well as a fall in birth rate in the area, there are 72 four year olds in the area 13 less than last year and this will decrease to 53 in 2028.
36. It is important to acknowledge that available space does not always meet the needs of a parent or carer. An early years setting may have 24 full time places, but 35 children could be attending. This could be to meet parents' work requirements or personal preferences and not all children will access 30 hours or more of early years education.

37. A setting may show that it is at 88% capacity, leading to the belief that there is 12% of spaces unused. This capacity could already be reserved for younger children not currently in attendance but will require the place in the near future. Therefore, it cannot be made available to another parent. The available spaces may also not be the hours required for a parent, as they may wish for their child to attend Monday to Thursday 9am-4pm, but only Tuesdays to Fridays are available 9am-3.30pm. Other patterns and considerations affect the availability of spaces.
38. Representatives at the Early Years Reference Group have previously shared that they are not able to offer baby places until 2025. New places are being created for under twos as part of the capital expansion. Officers continue to closely monitor occupancy for this age range. Some settings are continuing reduce the number of their registered places available due to a lack of suitably qualified staff, as recruitment and retention remain a significant challenge. There continues to be concerns around the ability to recruit managers and deputy managers which could risk further closures in the future and affect the quality of the provision.

### **Occupancy of childminders across Wiltshire**

39. Occupancy data is successfully collated for settings, but it has always been a challenge to replicate this for childminders, due to various anomalies that could increase or decrease their capacity including: having their own children (need to reduce their capacity accordingly); working part time (e.g. 3 days a week) or full time; working with assistants and whether these are full or part time; work all year round or term time only; some offer early years places only; some only offer wraparound childcare and some offer both.
40. Childminders can care for a maximum of six children under the age of eight. This includes their own children. Of these six, a maximum of three can be early years children who do not attend school. Assuming all childminders had no children of their own and worked full time providing the maximum of three places a day, then the 311 childminders (as June 2024) could potentially provide a maximum of 933 early years places across Wiltshire.
41. A snap survey was issued to childminders June 2024 to request their occupancy data (summary in Appendix three). 79% (245) of childminders completed the survey this year compared to 65% in 2022. A completely accurate reflection of places is not possible without 100% returns; however, it does provide a guide indicating the value childminders provide offering places within Wiltshire. Officers are currently chasing the 21% of childminders who did not respond to the survey to gain 100% feedback.
42. Of the 245 childminders responding, 233 indicated they offer places to 0–4-year-olds. Of which 17% (42) indicated they care for 64 of their own children within the early years age group. Therefore, 635 chargeable places are provided by these childminders.

43. Of the 245 childminder, 31 (13%) employ 44 assistants. Assuming their hours provide care for this age range at maximum capacity, this increases the number of places by 132 places.
44. Childminders support the wraparound offer to our families offering care for school age children 4-8 and 8+. If a childminder is caring for three early years children, then they can also provide care for an additional three children aged 4-8. They can also care for children over eight but there are no restrictions on the number of over 8s (dependent on insurance). The survey indicated 170 cared for 4–8-year-olds and 215 cared for children 8+. The care offered is a mix of breakfast clubs, afterschool clubs and during school holidays, but not all work all year round. In 2022, 96 childminders did not offer all year-round care, this reduced to 35 in 2023 and 37 in 2024.
45. The survey asked childminders what vacancies they had for the different age groups; it is to be noted that these vacancies are only a true reflection of the day they complete the survey. This highlighted there were no spaces in Marlborough, Melksham, Pewsey, RWB & Cricklade and South Wiltshire for 0-4 year olds. The Early Years team in partnership with Job Centre Plus are providing fully funded training and pre-registration support to potential childminders with an intake cohort of 8 per month. The first cohort attended their training in July 2024.
46. The vacancies at the time of the survey for the different age groups show a significant reduction in numbers compared to last year.

	<b>0-4 years</b>	<b>4-8 years</b>	<b>8+</b>
<b>2024</b>	47	41	40
<b>2023</b>	142	129	139

47. To stimulate the childminder market the government has introduces a new Ofsted category. 'Childminder without domestic premises' This will enable a childminder to operate from somewhere other than home, like a community or village hall or a school. The hope is that this new flexibility will encourage more people to consider childminding, as often the loss of space in their home is the reason childminders cease to operate.

### **Quality of Childminders and Early Years Group Settings**

48. Ofsted is the arbiter of the quality in early years settings, therefore all settings must be registered and regularly inspected. All group settings are registered with Ofsted, although private schools can register with the Independent Schools Inspectorate as well. Most childminders are registered with Ofsted, however, 15 are registered with a Childminding Agency who provide them with training, advice, administrative support and marketing to families.
49. Ofsted regularly inspects early years providers. The table below shows the Ofsted gradings for all Wiltshire early years providers on 2024. Most providers

are graded good or outstanding. Settings and childminders graded below Good are supported by the Early Years Quality and Assurance Team.

<b>Ofsted/Independent schools Inspectorate grading for Early Years Group settings</b>	<b>Number of providers</b>
No grading due to new registration	27
Inadequate	3
Requires improvement	3
Good	171
Outstanding	44
Met (may be due to no EY children in when completing inspection)	1

<b>Ofsted/Childminder Agency Grading for Childminders</b>	<b>Number of childminders</b>
No grading due to new registration	43
Inadequate	2
Requires improvement	4
Good	186
Outstanding	37
Met (may be due to no EY children in when completing inspection)	22
Not met with actions	1

50. Wiltshire Council Early Years team offer quality support to all providers which will include focussed support if they are graded Requires Improvement or Inadequate.
51. If a provider receives an Inadequate grading according to the terms of the Local Provider Agreement<sup>8</sup> Early Years Entitlement funding can be withdrawn, with an opportunity for appeal.

### **Wraparound Childcare Programme for Primary age children**

52. The DfE national wraparound childcare programme aims to ensure that childcare provision is available in all primary schools from 8am-6pm (or similar hours) this means that it will be regular, has longer hours and is more dependable for working parents. Local Authorities are critical to the successful delivery of the programme. Wiltshire were involved in the co-production of the programme along with 20 other Local Authorities (LA).
53. DfE funding has been allocated to the Council to support the development of places for the expansion of wraparound childcare. The funding has three strands to support:

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<sup>8</sup> [Wiltshire Council Provider Agreement April 2024 FINAL.pdf](#)

- Capacity funding to enable the LA to build internal capacity to deliver the programme and fund a designated wraparound lead if one does not already exist for the duration of the programme (up to end of March 2026).
  - Programme funding to deliver the programme objectives, including distribution to providers to set up new provision or expand existing provision. This is a tapered payment.
  - Capital funding to support new/extended wraparound provision.
54. For the duration of the programme (until March 2026), the Capacity funding provides:
- two assistant commissioners to support delivery of the programme
  - 0.5fte Wraparound Lead
  - an extra Quality Assurance Officer from September 2024
55. Critical to achieving successful delivery of the wraparound programme is securing sufficient, quality, and accessible wraparound provision. This will be achieved through a strong partnership between commissioners and providers in all sectors; Primary Schools, PVIs and childminders.
56. A delivery plan allocating for £2,353,148.58 for Programme Funding as agreed by the DfE in June 2024. This will provide 8am-6pm care across the county by:
- Expanding place capacity at provision that already meets 8am to 6pm (490 places)
  - Expand hours of provision to meet 8am to 6pm (2452 places)
  - Addition of new provision to existing provision, new breakfast or after school club (481 places)
  - Creation of new provision to meet the 8am to 6pm (325 places)
  - Total of 3748 places.
57. A Wraparound Reference Group has been established as a sub-group of the Wiltshire School's Forum in response to the government's plans for wraparound care
58. Expressions of Interest and cash flows are presented to a panel monthly, so far 28 applications have been approved for programme funding, of these 17 have requested capital funding.
59. To date the following programme funding has been agreed:

Community area	Total number of new places	Programme funding approved
Bradford on Avon (4)	113	£85,262.88
Calne (2)	45	£43,436
Devizes (4)	101	£93,198.57
Malmesbury (1)	30	£47,116

<b>Marlborough (1)</b>	25	£27,752
<b>Melksham (3)</b>	130	£72,625
<b>Pewsey (1)</b>	16	£20,530
<b>Southwest Wiltshire (1)</b>	30	£33,270
<b>Southern Wiltshire (1)</b>	12	£14,209
<b>Stonehenge (1)</b>	40	£16,134.87
<b>Tidworth (3)</b>	56	£105,545.84
<b>Trowbridge (5)</b>	180	£183,551.71
<b>Warminster (1)</b>	35	£12,263.26
<b>Total (28)</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>£754,895.13</b>

60. To make the best use of the available funding it is expected that all new and expanded places will be available before March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025 and will be funded for a maximum of five terms. There is good evidence that schools are working with early year providers, private, voluntary, independent (PVI) settings and childminders to help deliver the most suitable wraparound model for their area.
61. Wiltshire is one of 20 LAs that have been randomly selected by the DfE to take part in the formal evaluation of the National Wraparound Childcare Programme. The evaluation is split into two parts. The first part is a process evaluation consisting of an interview conducted by IFF Research to understand how the programme has been delivered and what has worked well. The second part will consider the impact of the programme.

### **Childcare Expansion Capital Grant**

62. The DfE acknowledged that capital funding would be necessary to support the expansion of childcare places. Wiltshire's capital grant allocation is £1,106,833.34.
63. £221,366.60 is available to create new and/or increase access to wraparound places. This could include building modifications, such as secure external access, outside lighting or storage of wraparound resources.
64. There is £885,466.40 available to create additional places for two-year-olds and under to meet the demand from the new Early Years Entitlements starting April 2024 (see paragraph 3). Providers able to expand must complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) outlining their project. They also need to include costings to complete the project. These are reviewed by a panel to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria:
- Demand in the community area
  - Number of new places for two-year-olds and under
  - Percentage of contributions from the provider
  - Speed of delivery of places (planning permission etc).
65. 11 applications have been approved and the work is near completion. These are outlined in the table below:

Community area	Number of settings	New Places under two years	New places two-year-olds	Extra 3&4 year old places	Total new places	Capital Grant contribution
Calne	2	32	9	20	61	£71,752
Chippenham	1	6	4	0	10	£21,600
Melksham	2	21	24	26	47	£90,218
Southwest Wiltshire	2	21	3	6	24	£38,956
Trowbridge	2	0	38	24	62	£58,950
Westbury	2	21	19	14	14	£156,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>£437,476</b>

66. The remaining £447,990.40 will support further expansion or development of early years places for two year olds and under. Further places will be required in Wiltshire to ensure we can meet the demand in readiness for September 2025 when the Early Years Entitlements expands to offer working parents up to 30 hours childcare for children from 9 months old.

67. Wraparound capital allocations approved by community area:

Community area	Capital allocation approved
Bradford on Avon (1)	£11,735
Chippenham (1)	£6,368
Devizes (4)	£57,000
Melksham (1)	£26,500
Pewsey (1)	£7,500
Southwest Wiltshire (1)	£6,138
Southern Wiltshire (1)	£2,000
Tidworth (1)	£37,094
Trowbridge (5)	£48,674
Warminster (1)	£1,073
<b>Total</b>	<b>£204,082</b>

### School Nurseries Capital Mobile Replacement

68. £1,170,000 has been secured as a contribution towards the replacement of temporary mobile buildings which are leased by Wiltshire Council to 22 early years providers, with 23 temporary mobile buildings. This capital funding is to enable Wiltshire Council to support the providers with a maximum of 25% of the build costs for a replacement building. This investment will support Wiltshire Council to maintain its statutory duty to provide sufficient childcare.

69. Following the successful completion of the first project Summer 2023, the second priority project is now under construction. The preschool is temporarily using a space within the school building whilst the new building is completed.



Once finished this will secure the continuity of care for children attending the school from early years through to year 6. This project is also going to create an additional 8 places for two-year-olds with further support from the Childcare Expansion Capital Grant.

70. A RAG rating was devised as part of the policy to support the replacement of mobile buildings. Due to maintenance undertaken on some of these temporary buildings since the policy was agreed in 2022, a review of the remaining buildings will be undertaken in Autumn 2024. Two of the 23 initial temporary buildings are now void due to closure of provision and their disrepair. Once the second project is complete there will be 18 units remaining in scope of this project.

### School Based Nurseries

71. In October 2024 The new government launched the first round of funding for school based nurseries. Primary schools can now apply for up to £150,000 capital funding to develop a nursery in available space in school buildings.
72. Any application should be agreed by the LA and should be able to support the most vulnerable children. It can be delivered by the school or by a provider from the voluntary or private sector or by childminders.

### Housing Developments

73. Continuous monitoring of available childcare provision ensures that the future demand for early years places can be met. Officers are involved in spatial planning to influence appropriate sites for future development until 2036. Under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 contributions can be sought from developers towards the costs of providing community and social infrastructure. Requests for capital funding under the S106 policy 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.
74. The table below shows the amount of S106 capital funding that is currently held to support childcare provision in the county and ensure that families have access to good quality provision as the demand for places increases.

Area	Source of funding	Amount of contribution received	Amount committed to date
Bradford on Avon Kingston Farm	S106 contribution for Early Years and Childcare provision	£194,271	Christchurch Primary developing a nursery to open Jan/April 2025

Area	Source of funding	Amount of contribution received	Amount committed to date
Calne Berhills Farm, Chilvester Hill	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£78,091	No funding has been committed at this time.
Chippenham Hunters Moon Phase 5	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£175,220	No funding has been committed at this time.
Corsham Land at Bradford Road	S106 contribution for Early Years and Childcare provision	£178,336	£20,000 was allocated to the Springfield Hub Early Years project
Corsham Land of Potley Lane	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£35,044	No funding has been committed at this time.
Malmesbury Backbridge Farm	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£394,086	This will be pooled with other contributions for the new 80 place nursery.
Malmesbury Land at Filands Road/Jenners Lane	Site of 0.3ha for early years provision and S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£245,940	This will be pooled with other contributions for the new 80 place nursery.
Melksham Land at Semington Road	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£169,146 (50% of total due)	No funding has been committed at this time.
RWB Purton Land at Restrop Road	S106 contribution for Early Years and Childcare provision	£52,566 (50% of total due)	No funding has been committed at this time.
Trowbridge Land at Bradley Road	S106 contribution for Early Years and Childcare provision	£ 153,645	No funding has been committed at this time.
Trowbridge Clarks Mill and Mill House	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£27,315 (50% of total due)	No funding has been committed at this time.
Trowbridge 26 Fore Street	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£36,248	No funding has been committed at this time.
Trowbridge Elizabeth Way	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£361,559	No funding has been committed at this time.
Salisbury Land North of Netherhampton Road	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£105,132 (50% of total due)	No funding has been committed at this time.
Salisbury Land South of Netherhampton Road	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£365,707 (10% of total due)	No funding has been committed at this time.
Southern Wiltshire Downton Scotts House	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£37,691	No funding has been committed at this time.
Warminster Land to Northwest Folly Farm	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£52,274 (50% of total due)	No funding has been committed at this time.

Area	Source of funding	Amount of contribution received	Amount committed to date
Westbury Land West Dartmoor Road and South A3098	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£52,566	No funding has been committed at this time.
Westbury Land South of Sandhole Lane	S106 contribution for Early years and Childcare provision	£122,654	Cygnets Preschool is named within the S106 for expansion.

75. To meet the demand in Bradford on Avon the S106 funding will be used to support the development of early years provision at Christchurch Primary which will open January/April 2025. This goes a considerable way to managing sufficient childcare provision in the needs of the area.
76. S106 funding was allocated to develop a nursery in the Springfield Campus. However, a lack of demand for places caused the setting to withdraw. With the expansion in entitlements there is now increased demand in Corsham and options for expansion are currently being considered.
77. S106 funding allocated for Malmesbury will be pooled to create a new 80 place early years provision. Further funding is expected in Malmesbury, and this will also support the new nursery. The new nursery will be located on the 0.3ha of land secured through the planning application. The development of the housing site has commenced, so once the services are in place, the land will be transferred to the Council to manage the project. Officers are developing a project plan for the new nursery working with colleagues from procurement and the Senior Project Manager for the Build Programme (who manages creating new school places).
78. S106 funding for Melksham will be used towards a nursery class within a new Primary School at Pathfinder Way.
79. S106 funding for Trowbridge can be pooled to expand provision within the locality. The funds allocated to Bradley Road Trowbridge was specified for Clarendon School site. The school are no longer able to facilitate a provision there, and the developers have to date not agreed for it to be used at an alternative site. This funding may need to be returned in future. To mitigate against this issue in future, any new S106 developer contributions we try not specify a site to ensure we are able to meet the needs of the area within a range of options at the time of the development.
80. S106 funding for Chippenham will be used with other funding in the area in the future to develop new provision alongside new primary schools on the new housing developments, which will meet the sufficiency needs of Chippenham.
81. S106 funding for Salisbury in Netherhampton Road will provide a nursery class within the new school. The remaining contributions will be used to create further new provision within the locality.

82. S106 funding for Westbury had to name a project during the appeal process and names Cygnets Preschool to be expanded. Other S106 within the locality of Cygnets can be pooled towards further expansion.

### Sufficiency and Sustainability

83. The cost-of-living crisis continues to affect the sustainability of some of our childcare providers. The increased pressure of the National Minimum Wage and affect the ability of providers maintain viability. This could further affect the number of childcare places if providers are forced to close due to the ongoing financial impact year on year.
84. The community areas with the greatest sufficiency concerns are listed below with the actions to address the issue:

Community area	Gap	Action
<b>Bradford on Avon</b>	Shortage of provision for children aged 0-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S106 funding has been agreed for the development of new places at Christchurch Primary School with a new nursery planned to open 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>Chippenham</b>	Shortage of provision for children aged 0-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S106 funding requested to develop early years places across all ages.</li> <li>New places being created as part of the Childcare Expansion Capital Grant.</li> </ul>
<b>Melksham</b>	<p>Shortage of provision for children aged 0-4 but specifically 0-1-year olds.</p> <p>No childminders spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S106 funding requested to develop early years places across all ages.</li> <li>Canberra Children's Centre building to open as new nursery in 2025.</li> <li>Continue to look at new options for delivery in the area.</li> <li>Possible location of a School Based Nursery</li> <li>Look at increasing childminder provision within the area.</li> </ul>
<b>Malmesbury</b>	Shortage of provision for children aged 0-4, specifically 3-4 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S106 funding requested and 0.3ha land secured for a new 80 place day nursery to develop early years places across all ages.</li> </ul>

Community area	Gap	Action
<b>Marlborough</b>	Lack of provision in the town which is open from 8am- 6pm, specifically for babies  No childminders spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with providers to increase the provision.</li> <li>• Look at increasing childminder provision within the area</li> </ul>
<b>Pewsey</b>	No childminders spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at increasing childminder provision within the area</li> </ul>
<b>RWB &amp; Cricklade</b>	No childminders spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at increasing childminder provision within the area</li> </ul>
<b>South Wiltshire</b>	No childminders spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at increasing childminder provision within the area</li> </ul>
<b>Westbury</b>	Shortage of provision for children aged 0-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S106 funding requested to develop early years places across all ages.</li> <li>• Expansion of existing nurseries to create an additional 40 places using Childcare Expansion Capital Grant.</li> </ul>

## **Military Population**

85. As Wiltshire has such a high proportion of military families the needs of these families must be considered. Since the major programme arising from the British Army's Basing Project (ABP), there has not been any significant movements. Any subsequent additional demand will be discussed with the military as and when they expand their Army Basing Project. These areas continue to be monitored.

## **Main considerations for the council**

### **Early Years Workforce**

86. There is an acknowledged ongoing recruitment and retention crisis in the early years sector. Existing staff are leaving for a range of reasons, including higher paid less stressful roles in retail or administration.

87. The increase in the National Living Wage to £12.21, for over 21 years olds from April 2025, puts additional pressure on the running cost of settings. It was announced in September 2024 that additional funding for early years providers

will be distributed through a new grant, the Early Years Budget Grant<sup>9</sup> (EYBG) in 2024-25 (covering September 2024-March 2025). At this stage it is too early to say how this will impact the funding rates to providers to support increasing costs.

88. Providers continue to try and address recruitment challenges through growing their own staff, apprenticeships and encouraging more people to work in childcare.
89. Officers have benefitted from the support of Hempsall's in creating an action plan on recruitment and retention. DfE funding for Assistant Commissioners has increased the capacity to now attend Job Centre Plus and school careers fairs to promote working in childcare. Additionally, the DfE have re-launched their early years and childcare recruitment campaign 'Do Something BIG, Work with Small Children'<sup>10</sup>. They are also revamping the jobs category of 'Find a Job' entitled 'Education and Childcare Jobs'. Employers in both early years and wraparound will be able to advertise any available positions on this site for free.
90. Programme funding is also being used to provide free advertising on the Wiltshire Council Jobs Site for Wraparound Care as providers are impressed with the quality of candidates from this site.
91. The Early Years team in partnership with Job Centre Plus are participating in a pilot which offers fully funded training and pre-registration support to eight potential childminders per month. The first and second cohorts have commenced their training. If this is successful the scheme will be rolled out nationally.
92. Officers continue to meet with other Local Authorities and share ideas around the workforce crisis. Concerns are continually raised with local DfE representatives at monthly meetings and at DfE events.
93. Settings report that Level 3 qualified staff and above are the most difficult roles to recruit, there is also a challenge in finding Level 2 qualified staff. It should be noted that in any setting on the Early Years Register, the manager must hold an approved level 3 qualification or above and at least half of all other staff must be at least level 2 qualified<sup>11</sup>.

### **Early years entitlement and the cost of childcare**

94. A continuing challenge for early years providers is the ongoing reported concern that the funding rate itself remains insufficient to ensure sustainability (please see the finance section from paragraph 105). This is a national issue which continues to be widely discussed. Rising running costs have had an impact on

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<sup>9</sup> [Early years budget grant \(EYBG\) 2024 to 2025: methodology and operational guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-years-budget-grant-2024-to-2025-methodology-and-operational-guidance)

<sup>10</sup> [Do something big - Early Years Careers](https://www.gov.uk/government/campaigns/do-something-big)

<sup>11</sup> [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444)

setting viability as well as the 17% increase of the National Minimum Wage from £10.42 to £12.21 in 2025.

95. Childcare settings are open for a variety of times during the day and are open for different numbers of weeks across the year. Therefore, 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 choose to charge extra fees for consumables, such as nappies, wipes, snacks and meals. Whilst some settings include them as part of their fees. This results in a range of costs across Wiltshire. Additionally, some settings offer discounts to siblings and staff. South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) have undertaken a review of Early Years Entitlements. The audit findings will enable officers to address any concerns.
96. Officers provide business support to settings who have concerns about their sustainability. A Business Health Check tool is available on the early years and childcare pages of Wiltshire Council website<sup>12</sup> to support providers to maintain and review their sustainability.

### **Commissioning Considerations**

97. Officers continue to develop the quality and scope of early years and childcare provision and work closely with the providers to ensure there is sufficient high-quality places available across the county where required.
98. Officers are working with existing nurseries and childminders across the county, to respond to any increase in demand due to the new entitlements for working parents introduced in April 2024, September 2024 and those planned for September 2025. There is continued interest in the childcare market from providers who would like to move into Wiltshire and from existing providers looking for new provision in Wiltshire.
99. 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).
100. The Early Years Teachers employed by the Council offer support for learning and development and the Quality Assurance Officers support settings with safeguarding and welfare requirements. Regular training events are held throughout the year. The Commissioning team also offer support around sustainability and sufficiency.
101. 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

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<sup>12</sup> [Information for professionals - Wiltshire Council](#)

across the sector to ensure that enough provision is available to meet the local demand in each area.



<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Secure sufficient childcare in key areas of need – Bradford-On-Avon, Chippenham, Melksham, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Pewsey, RWB & Cricklade, South Wiltshire and Westbury  To also secure sufficient childcare across the whole of Wiltshire to support the new childcare entitlements for two-year-olds and under.	Develop new childcare places at Christchurch School in Bradford on Avon with S106 funding	Local families will have sufficient childcare to meet demand for all types of provision	Commissioning Manager, Senior Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners – Families & Children’s Commissioning	April 2025 & Ongoing
	Dialogue with national and local chains about expanding in Chippenham, Melksham, Marlborough, Warminster and Westbury			
	Consult and discuss with current providers about expanding in Bradford-On-Avon, Chippenham, Melksham, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Pewsey, RWB & Cricklade, South Wiltshire and Westbury			
Promote childminding as a career to support gaps in areas of need e.g. villages Specifically in areas where childminders report no vacancies – Marlborough, Melksham, Pewsey, RWB & Cricklade and South Wiltshire	Advertise in local village newsletters Online campaign and marketing using national and local materials	Sufficient childcare provision in villages and areas where required	Assistant Commissioners – Families & Children’s Commissioning  Quality Assurance Officers – Early Years	April 2025 & Ongoing
Promote childcare as a serious career option	Attend school careers events and job centre fairs	Sufficient qualified staff available to meet the demand for childcare places across the county	Assistant Commissioners – Families & Children’s Commissioning  Quality Assurance Officers – Early Years	April 2025 & Ongoing
	Advertise widely using social media			
	Promote the positive aspects of childcare			

	Use DfE promotional material widely on social media channels			
Identify new ways to promote early years funding to more families	Speak with minoritized groups to find out what would encourage them.	More families and children will access good quality childcare	Commissioning Manager, Senior Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners – Families & Children’s Commissioning	April 2025
	Use videos to show how good early years is for the child and the family.			
To secure sufficient wraparound childcare from 8am-6pm for primary age children of eligible families	Develop new wraparound childcare places where gaps are identified.	Local families will have sufficient childcare to meet demand for all types of provision	Commissioning Manager, Senior Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners – Families & Children’s Commissioning	April 2025 & Ongoing

## **Safeguarding Considerations**

102. 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 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) meetings. There have been nine open LADO cases in 2023/2024, two of which will be carried over into the next academic year.

## **Public Health Implications**

103. 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. This includes the 0-5 Journey<sup>13</sup>. Early Years educational attainment checks are undertaken in early years settings at age 2-3; findings are co-ordinated with mandated Health Visitor two and half year old developmental checks.

## **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

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

## **Financial Implications**

105. The DfE (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. In December initial allocations are published prior to the new financial year starting and these are updated with the final allocations mid financial year using updated census data.

106. In his 2021 Spending Review, the Chancellor announced a number of national increases to increase early years entitlements including £170 million in 2024-25.

107. The early years funding block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) is set by the local authority and, following consultation with early years representatives, recommended by Schools Forum at their January meeting to be ratified by Full Council in February 2024. The final allocation for 2023-24 was

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<sup>13</sup> [0-5 years journey - Wiltshire Together](#)

£32.743m, republished in July, using Wiltshire's updated census data. The total 'initial' or provisional allocation for 2024-25 from the DfE is £52.886 million. Hourly rates have increased by 1.73p per funded hour for 2 year olds, and 0.53p per hour for 3&4 year olds (excluding the one-off, now nationally baselined supplementary grant of £0.33). In addition to the early years funding, the high needs block makes a contribution of £0.180m to the ISF. The original budget set using the provisional early years block settlement for 2024-25 for Wiltshire comprises of the following elements:

<b>Provider Rates</b>	<b>PTE (where applicable)</b>	<b>2023-24 Wiltshire Rate</b>	<b>Proposed 2024-25 Wiltshire Rate</b>	<b>£ million</b>
3 & 4-year-old entitlement (all)	10,722	£4.68/hour + £0.33p Supplementary grant	£5.21/hour	31.842
9 months to 2 years working parent entitlement	1,100	N/A	£9.63	6.038
2-year-old working parent entitlement	2,171	N/A	£7.17	8.872
2-year-old disadvantaged entitlement	727	£5.75/hour + £1.86 Supplementary grant	£7.48/hour	3.101
Deprivation, rurality				0.25
Central EY functions				0.859
EY Inclusion Support Fund				1.143
Disability Access Fund	360 children	£828/child	£910/child	0.328
Early Years Pupil Premium	1,065 children	£0.62/hour	£0.68/hour	0.413
<b>Total proposed budget for 2024-25</b>				<b>52.886</b>

\*Includes £0.041million contingency

## **Commercial considerations**

108. 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. Government funding of Early Years Entitlements supports any parent to be able to access affordable, accessible good quality childcare provision. Access to early years provision promotes a good level of development for all children, which helps to support the viability of the sector.

## **Equalities Impact**

109. 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 22 and 24 Wiltshire provided childcare for 89% of disadvantaged 2-year olds and 99% of all 3-and4-year olds across the county, both being above the national average.

## **Risk Management**

110. 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.
  - Children may not have access to an early years setting and consequently may not have the experiences they require to ensure that they are ready for school and achieve a good level of development.
  - There is a risk that early years childcare will be negatively affected by the cost of living and recruitment and retention crisis.
  - There is a risk to places if providers in temporary buildings leased by Wiltshire Council are unable to raise the 75% capital to replace their building within the next ten years, or as required.

To mitigate these risks:

- Officers are working with current and prospective providers to develop childcare in areas of need.
- The DfE have provided Early Years Capital Expansion to create additional childcare places for two-year-olds and under.
- The DfE have provided Programme funding to develop wraparound provision for primary age children 8am to 6pm term time only.

- Officers are working with Job Centre Plus and Wiltshire College to encourage interest in working in the early years sector.
- Officers are working with providers to look at income sources and alternative building options.

### **Legal Implications**

111. It is a legal requirement that Wiltshire Council ensure sufficient childcare is available across Wiltshire to all parents who wish to access this provision. Officers will continue to work with the providers to ensure there is sufficient high-quality Early Years and Wraparound provision across the county.
112. Wiltshire currently has adequate provision which is keeping up with local demand in most areas. However, due to the high occupancy rates in the identified areas and the introduction of the new Early Years Entitlements, all provision is being closely monitored. The main challenges are:
- cost of living crisis
  - the expansion of housing
  - the recruitment and retention of early years staff
  - increase in entitlements for both early years and wraparound childcare
  - maintaining quality of provision with the current recruitment crisis.

### **Conclusions**

113. The new Government has recognised that early years and childcare is a very high priority area.
114. The continued increase in the capacity of Officers is crucial in ensuring Wiltshire is ready to meet the need for places and meet the statutory duty of the Local Authority.
115. It is acknowledged that there continues to be to be a crisis affecting the early years and childcare sector which is compounded by:
- Cost of living crisis
  - the impact of the increase in the national living wage
  - the expansion of housing
  - the recruitment and retention of early years staff

To mitigate these issues:

- The demand for places in community areas is monitored by a member of the commissioning team who works closely with School Place Commissioning Lead to review planning applications. This enables plans for future sufficient childcare places to be developed and applications for future S106 funding to be submitted.
- The DfE is aware of the nationwide recruitment and retention crisis and has created marketing resources and a careers website. The LA has

developed a recruitment plan and offers the advertising of job roles free of charge

- Further programmes are being developed to support recruitment and retention in the early years sector
- Childminder pilot with Job Centre Plus to encourage this employment opportunity.
- Frequent conversations with DfE and other local authorities are held to discuss current and future issues and solutions

116. The expansion of Early Years Entitlements has put additional pressure on the sector. It is experiencing a particularly challenging time at the moment with a range of factors affecting the viability of settings and the wider childcare market as detailed in the paper. Even with the range of mitigating actions, some settings are already unsure if they will be able to continue to be sustainable into the new year and beyond. We are in a very precarious position with regard to continued sufficient childcare, and although work will continue to ensure we maintain delivery of our statutory duty, pressure still needs to be put on central government to review the sector and improve funding to ensure children continue to receive the best start in life.
117. In the meantime, some families may need to travel further to access their nearest childcare setting, as we may not be able to maintain all childcare provision across such a rural county in every area.
118. The county wide action plan in paragraph 101 will focus development work in the coming year. There will be increased work with schools to continue to address the wraparound care for school age children.
119. The Wiltshire Council website must be updated 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.

**Nicola Harris**

**Senior Commissioner**

**Gemma Oakley, Steven Smith, Vicky Watt**

**Assistant Commissioners**

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1 : Schemes and Benefits**

**Appendix 2 : Occupancy maps for Wiltshire**

**Appendix 3 : Summary of June 2024 Childminder Occupancy**

## Appendix 1. Schemes and benefits

### Tax-free childcare

- For working families, including the self-employed, in the UK
- Earning under £100k and at least £131 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage) each
- Who aren't receiving Tax Credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers
- With children aged 0-11 (or 0-16 if disabled)
- For every £8 you pay into an online account, the government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child per year

### 15 hours free childcare – 2-year-olds

- For families in England, receiving some form of support
- With 2-year-old children
- 15 hours of free childcare or early education for 38 weeks
- To be able to take up 15 hours of free childcare for your two-year-old you or your child must meet the eligibility criteria
- A total of 570 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider
- Some providers will allow you to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week

### 15 hours free childcare – 9-month-old to 2-year-olds

- For working families in England
- With 9-month-old to 2-year-old children
- 15 hours of free childcare or early education for 38 weeks
- To be able to take up 15 hours of free childcare for your nine months to two-year-old you and your child must meet the eligibility criteria
- A total of 570 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider
- Some providers will allow you to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week

### 15 hours free childcare – 3- and 4-year-olds

- For all families in England
- With 3 and 4-year-old children
- 15 hours of free childcare or early education for 38 weeks
- A total of 570 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider
- Some providers will allow you to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week

### 30 hours free childcare – 3- and 4-year-olds

- For working families in England
- With 3 and 4-year-old children
- 30 hours of free childcare or early education for 38 weeks
- A total of 1,140 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider
- Some providers will allow you to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week

### Tax credits for childcare

- For working families, in the UK
- With children under 16 (or under 17 if disabled)
- 70% of childcare costs, up to a cap



- If you cannot make a new claim for Tax Credits, you may be able to apply for Universal Credit instead.

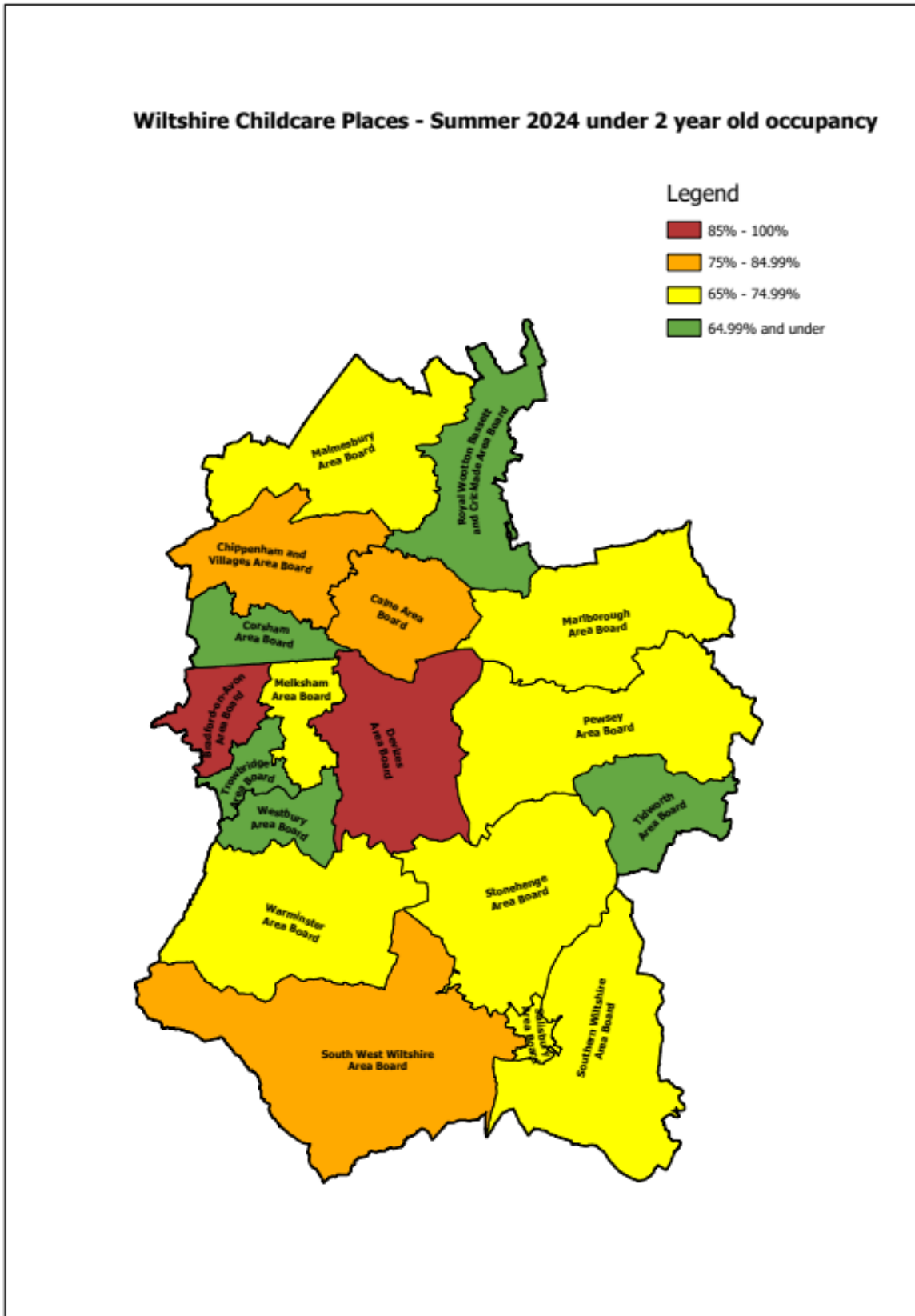
#### Universal credit for childcare

- For working families claiming Universal Credit, in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales
- With children under 17
- 85% of eligible childcare costs, up to a cap

#### Support while you study

- Weekly payments from Care to Learn if you're at school or sixth-form college
- Help through your college if you're in further education
- A weekly grant if you're in full-time higher education

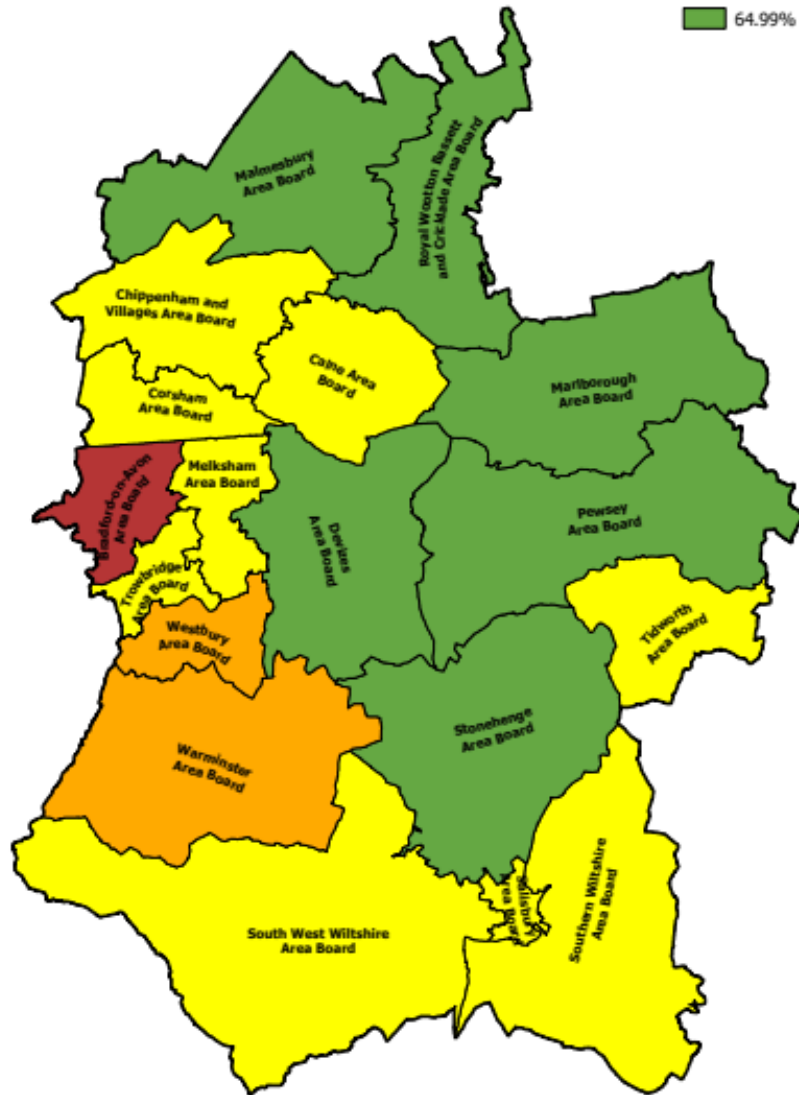
Appendix 2



### Wiltshire Childcare Places - Summer 2024 2 year old occupancy

#### Legend

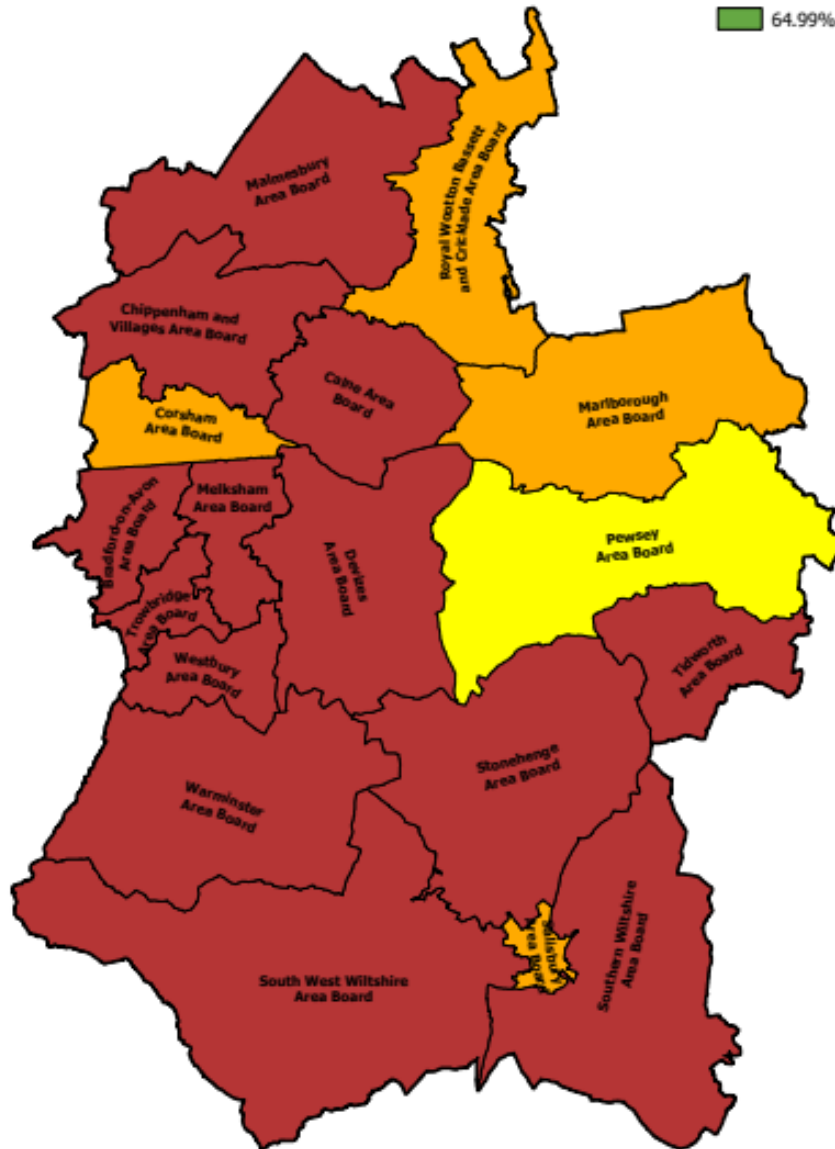
- 85% - 100%
- 75% - 84.99%
- 65% - 74.99%
- 64.99% and under



### Wiltshire Childcare Places - Summer 2024 3 & 4 year old occupancy

#### Legend

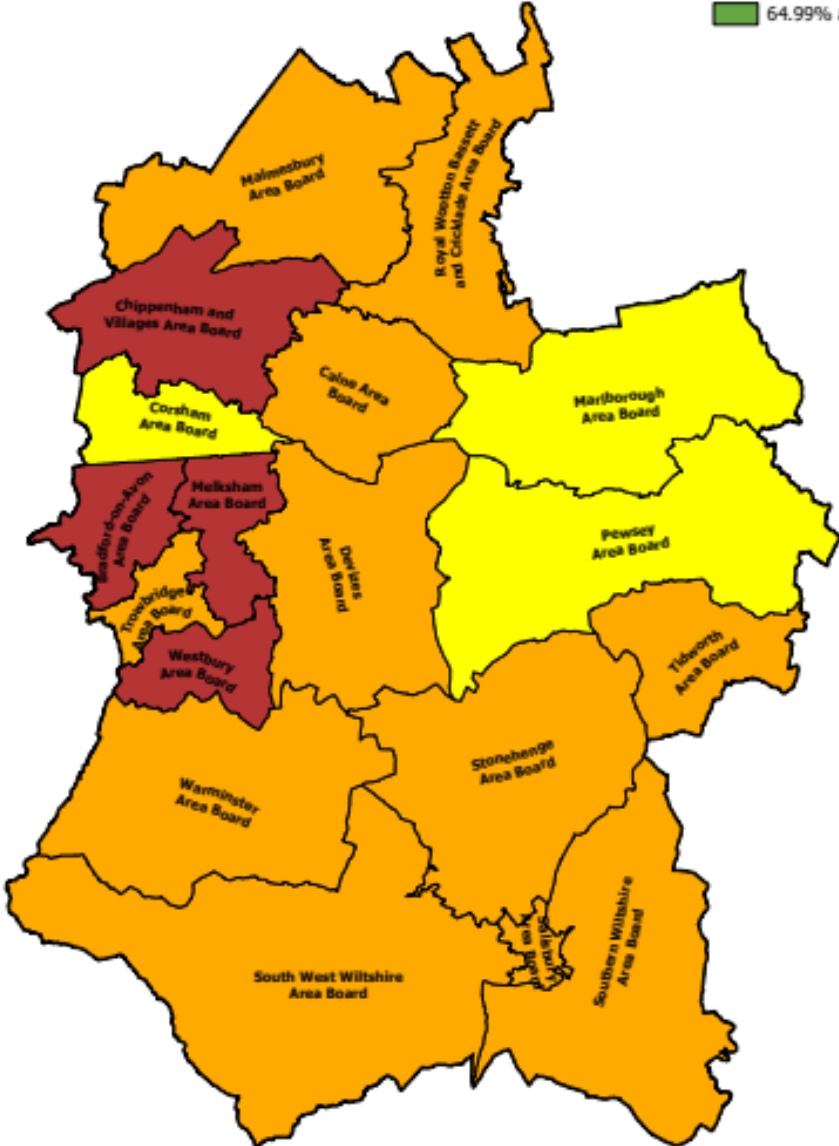
- 85% - 100%
- 75% - 84.99%
- 65% - 74.99%
- 64.99% and under



**Wiltshire Childcare Places - Summer 2024 overall occupancy**

**Legend**

- 85% - 100%
- 75% - 84.99%
- 65% - 74.99%
- 64.99% and under



## Appendix 3

### Summary of June 2024 Childminder Occupancy Survey

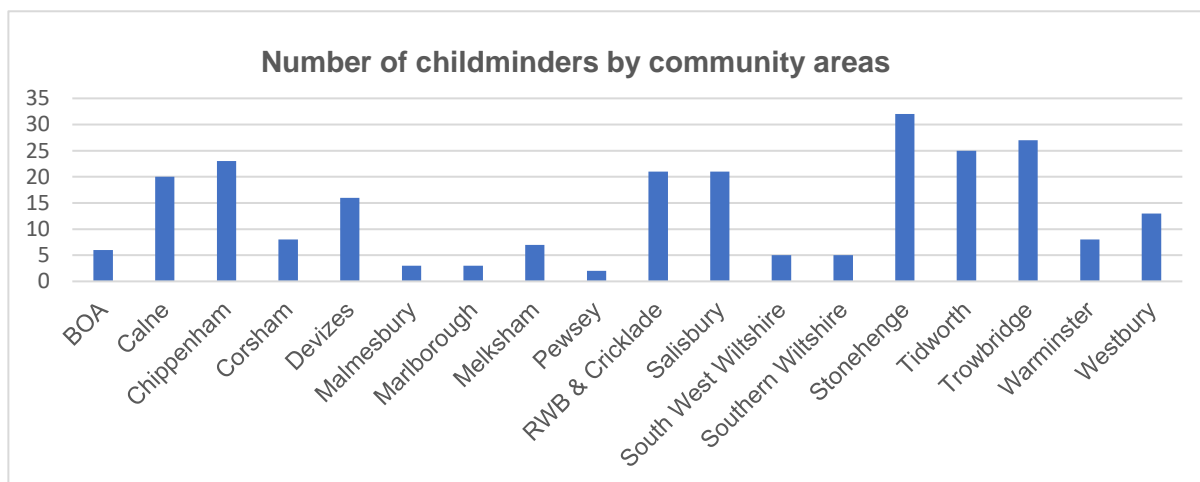
**Introduction:** In June 2024 registered childminders were asked to provide their occupancy data. At the time of the survey Wiltshire had 311 registered childminders. 79% (245) of childminders responded to the survey, compared to 65% (204) in 2023. Not having 100% return does not enable an accurate reflection on places, however the data available can be used as a guide.

Childminders choose the hours they work and can care for a maximum of 3 young children and a maximum of 6 children under the age of 8<sup>14</sup>.

Childminders can work alone or with other childminders and/or assistants. When working with childminders/assistants the number of child places increases subject to restrictions, for example space.

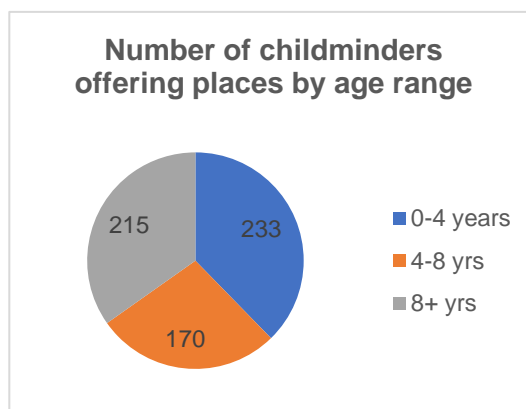
A maximum of 3 childminders/assistants can work together at any one time. Where there are more than 3 this would be classed as childcare on domestic premises and ratios applicable to nurseries and preschools would apply.

**Community Areas:** The below graph shows the number of childminders who responded to the survey by community area.



**Age ranges:** Childminders can choose to care for any age group of children or combination.

- Early years (0-4years)
- 4-8 years
- 8+ years



<sup>14</sup> At any one time, childminders (whether providing the childminding on domestic or non-domestic premises) may care for a maximum of six children under the age of eight. This includes the childminder's own children and any other children for whom they are responsible, such as those being fostered. Of these six children: • A maximum of three may be young children (i.e. a child is a young child until 1st September following his or her fifth birthday). • There should only be one child under the age of one. [Statutory framework for the early years' foundation stage for childminders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## Capacity 0-4 years: 767

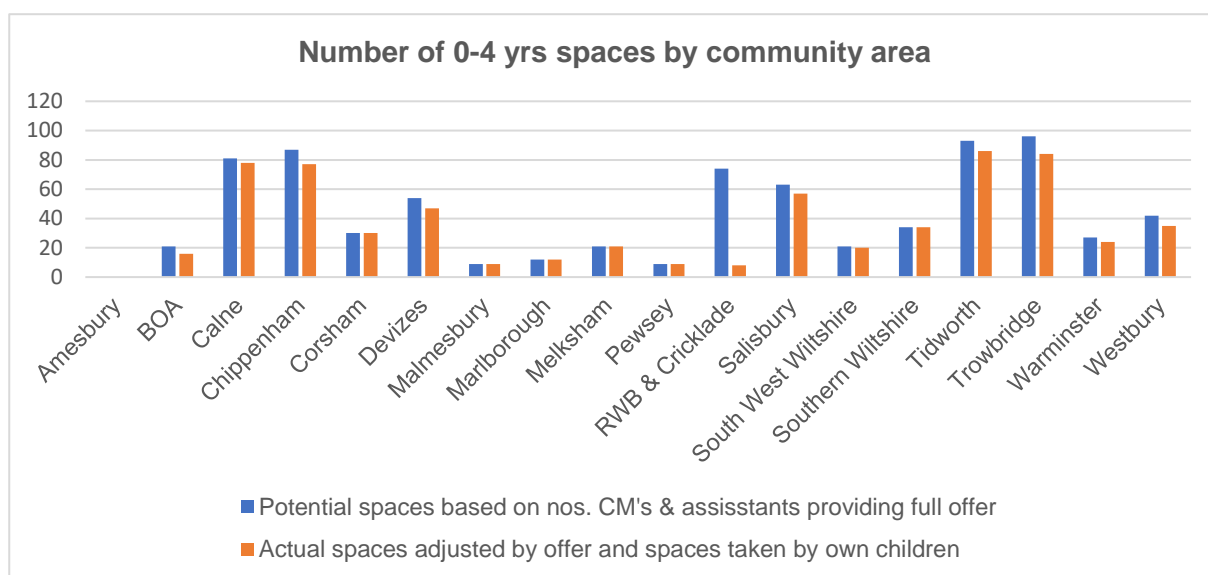
Of the 245 childminders who responded to the survey, 233 offer places for 0–4-year-olds. Based on 3 spaces per childminder, this allows for 699 places. 42 childminders, (17%) had 64 places taken up by their own children resulting in **635** actual available spaces.

If all childminders (311) had responded, assuming they all offer spaces for 0–4-year-olds at full capacity this could potentially provide a maximum of 933 early years places across Wiltshire. If all childminders (311) had responded assuming they all offer spaces for 0–4-year-olds using 17% as an average of childminders providing space for 1 of their own children, this would potentially provide 877 spaces.

From those who responded to the survey, 13% (31) employ 44 assistants. Assuming their hours provide care for this age range at maximum capacity, this increases the number of places by **132** places. This is slightly below the national average of 17%.

To show the value of assistants working with childminders and the impact on places. If we assume an average of 13% of all registered childminders employing 1 assistant on a full-time basis, this will provide 121 spaces.

The below table shows the potential number of 0-4 years places based on the number of respondents providing a full offer against the actual number of places adjusted by actual offer including places taken by childminder’s own children. This shows that with the exception of RWB and Cricklade, the majority of childminders across all community areas actual offer is very close to the potential offer.



It is important to review this data alongside the occupancy data provided by our settings to identify any areas where we need to actively advertise for more childminders to support demand and give parents choice. The summer occupancy returns (for which we have 100% return) show:

- Bradford on Avon, Melksham, Tidworth and Westbury are all showing as having high occupancy rates for this time of year. There are plans in place to address this.
- The remaining areas show overall occupancy levels within ranges we would normally expect to see at this time of year.

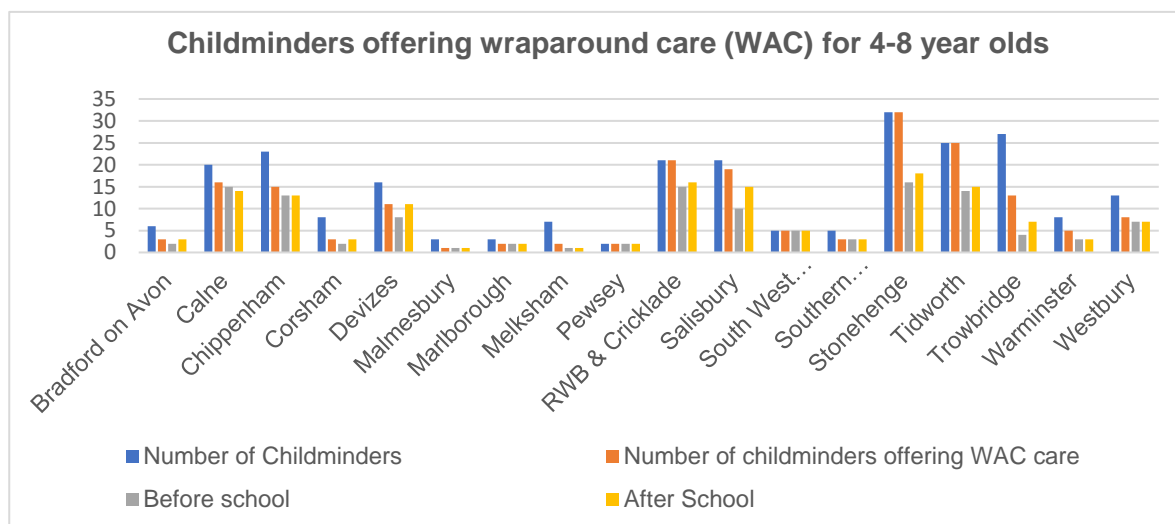
### Capacity 4-8 years:

69% (170) of responding childminders offer before and/or after school care. 125 childminders offer before school care and 141 offer after school care. Childminders can provide 3 spaces in this age range which provides 375 and 423 places respectively.

There are 44 assistants across the county, assuming their hours cover wraparound care at full capacity this would provide an additional 132 spaces.

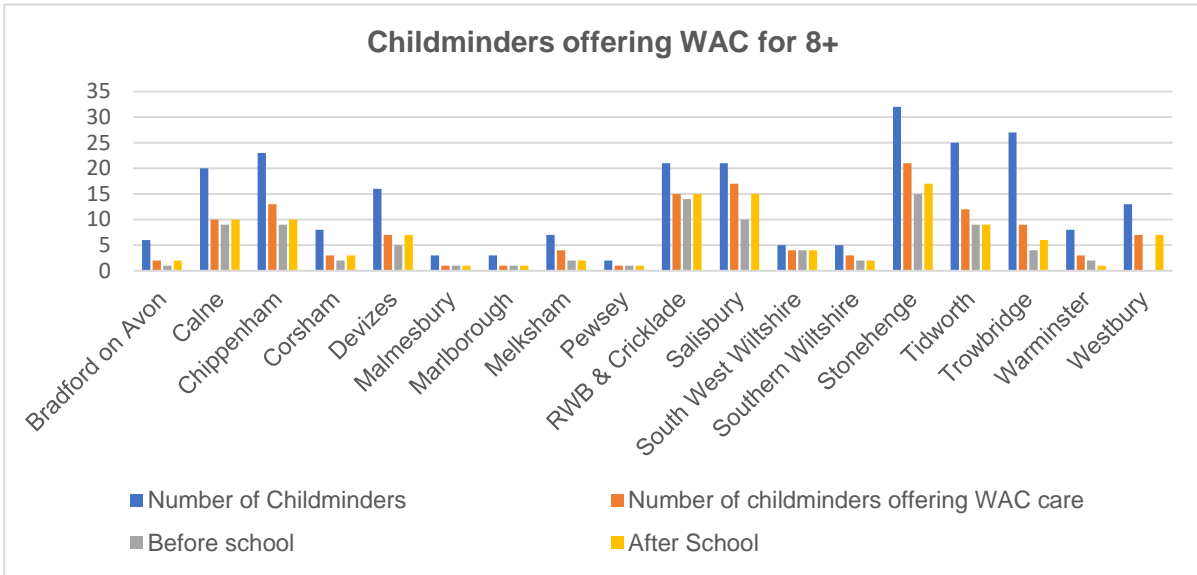
The wraparound care expansion programme aims to provide wraparound care for all primary aged school children by September 2026 and is designed not to displace the existing market. It is too early to tell if this will have an impact on childminders should parents decide to move to a school-based provision.

Childminders can apply for funding to expand their provision within this programme however to date we have not received any expressions of interest from childminders. The commissioning team will be looking at ways of promoting this funding opportunity to expand places with the childminder community.



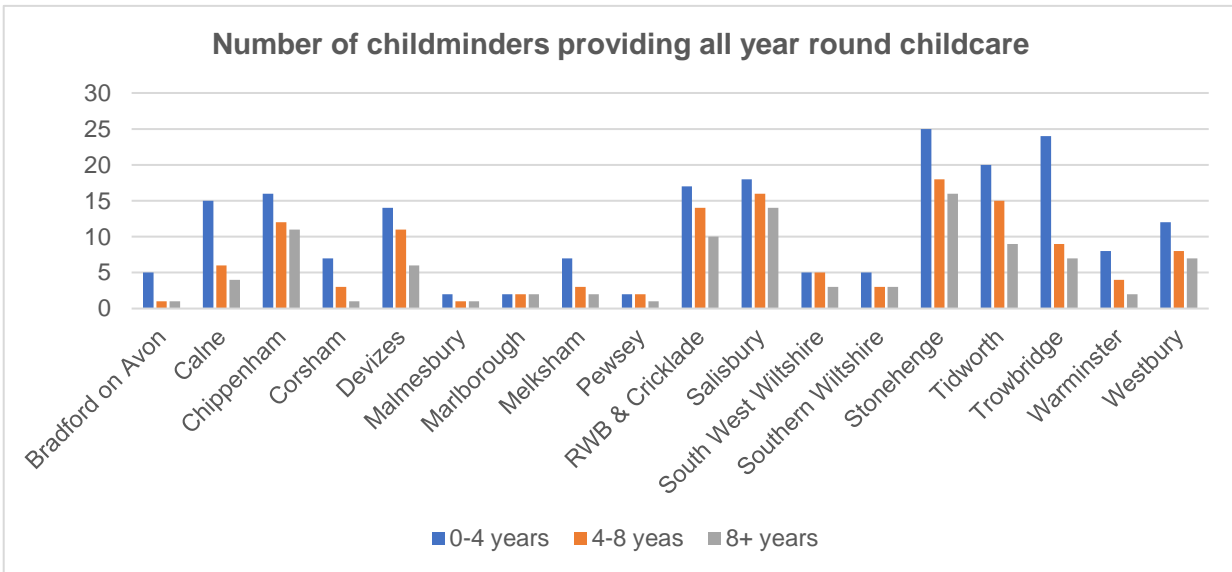
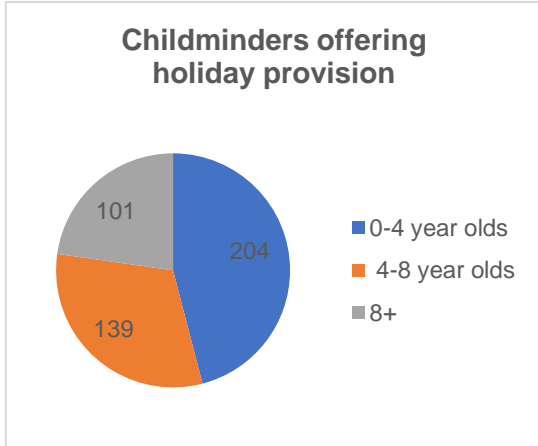
**Capacity 8+ years:** 88% (215) of responding childminders offer care for children aged 8+. There is no ratio or limit to numbers of children aged 8+ years, therefore we cannot calculate the number of places offered.





**Holiday provision:**

Childminders support the provision of holiday care for working parents. 85% (208) said they work all year round. Childminders working all year round also support families whose children attend sessional preschool provision.



**Childminders vacancies:**

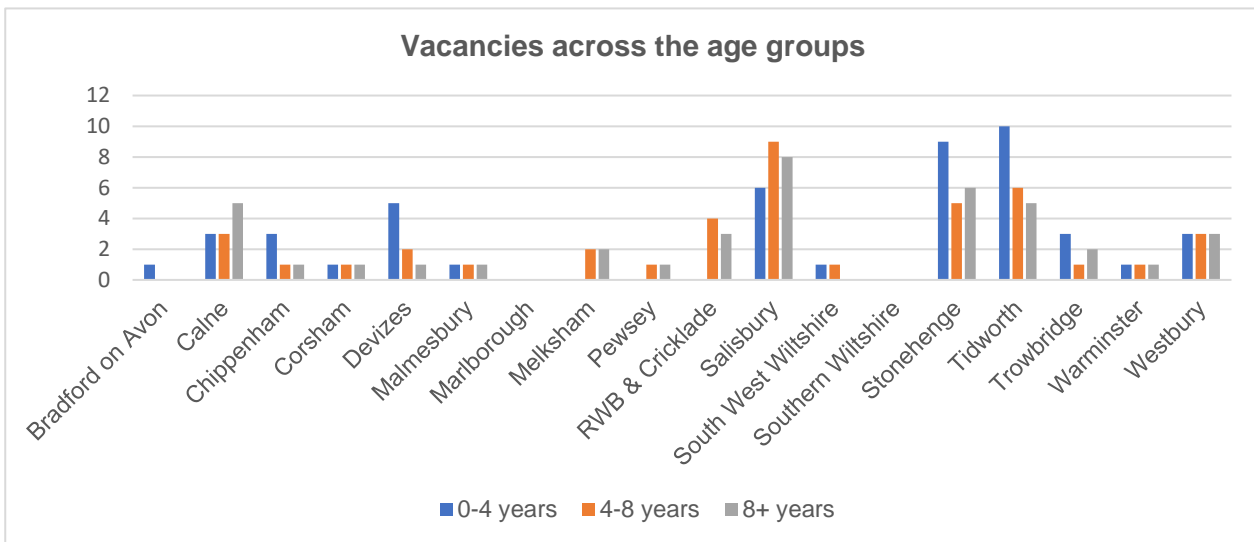
Childminders in Marlborough, Melksham, Pewsey, RWB & Cricklade and South Wiltshire do not have any spaces for 0-4 year olds.

Childminders in Bradford on Avon, Marlborough and South Wiltshire do not have any spaces for 4-8 year olds.

Childminders in Bradford on Avon, Marlborough, South West Wiltshire and South Wiltshire do not have any spaces for 8+ year olds.

Marlborough and South Wiltshire report no spaces across all of the age ranges.

Planned expansions from schools and private providers as part of the wraparound expansion programme will offset some of these vacancies and will start to become available from September 2024.

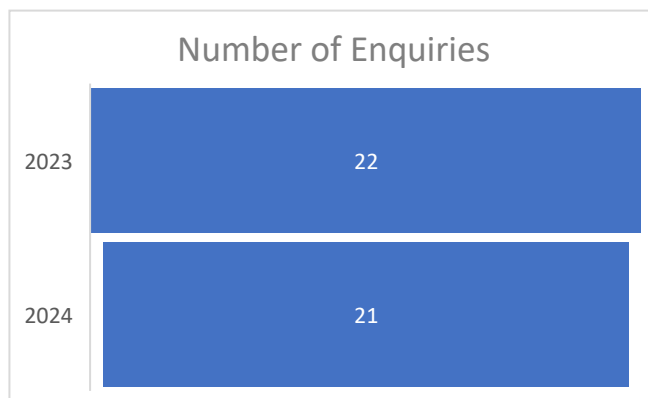


**Incentives:**

The launch of the childminder ‘start up’ grant in November 2023 enabled childminders registering after 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to access funding of £600 if registering with Ofsted or £1200 if registering with a childminding agency.

This has not had a significant impact on the number of enquires received by the sufficiency team.

The Early Years team in partnership with Job Centre Plus are providing fully funded training and pre-registration support to potential childminders with an intake cohort of 8 per month. The first cohort attended their training in July 2024.



**Conclusion:**

Childminders in Wiltshire support the demand for childcare across the county.

It is too early to tell the impact of the early years' team funded training programme on the numbers of childminders.

Whilst not directly related to childminders, the Early Years Capital Expansion programme is currently on track this Autumn to create an additional 154 places across the county for 0–2-year-olds through expansion of current provision. This supports the delivery of the new entitlements announced in the Spring 2023 budget. Further expansions are planned in the coming year to create additional places. Ongoing childminder recruitment is also crucial to support the new entitlements and provides choice for parents.

The change in government will potentially lead to changes in the childcare sector in terms of funding and priorities and we are already receiving questions regarding what this could look like particularly around the pledge to provide free breakfast club spaces.

When repeating this survey consideration should be given to capturing 100% return to enable a full picture to be given. In the meantime, the team are working towards 100% return this year by contacting childminders who have not responded to the survey.