



**Buckinghamshire
Council**

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)

April 2021 – March 2022

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1. Introduction

Buckinghamshire Council (BC) has a statutory duty under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to carry out an assessment of the sufficiency of childcare within their area. BC has a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 or up to 18 for children with a disability. Under section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 BC is required to secure sufficient funded early years provision for eligible children aged two, three and four years of age.

Two-year-old children whose families meet the relevant eligibility criteria are legally entitled to 15 hours a week funded early years provision. All three and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours a week funded early years provision (the universal entitlement) with those whose parents meet the eligibility criteria entitled to an additional 15 hours a week (the extended entitlement).

The assessment is a measure of the need for, and supply of, childcare within each local area. Buckinghamshire Council Early Years Service aims to work in partnership with childcare providers to influence childcare provision, as far as reasonably practicable.

In carrying out this Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) the Local Authority should assess:

- The state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers in an identified locality, and the amount and type of supply that currently exists
- The quality and capacity of childcare providers, including:
 - Full day care
 - Pre-School term time only provision
 - Maintained nursery schools, schools with nursery classes, and governor managed provision
 - Independent schools
 - Childminders
- The state of the labour market
- The impact of planned housing development; and
- The impact of changes in demographics.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be considered, as supply of childcare places and demand has experienced shifts and changes during this period. The impact of the pandemic in the short, medium and long terms must be carefully analysed and regularly reviewed.

Priorities identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022 (see appendix A)

- Childcare sufficiency and Sustainability
- Early Years Workforce
- Holiday provision for all children including Healthy Activities and Food programme (HAF) provision
- Children with SEND and vulnerable children
- Early years workforce recruitment and retention

2. Executive Summary

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) covers the period between April 2021 and March 2022. The document summarises and analyses the local childcare market in Buckinghamshire. In view of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the childcare market any findings, as of the 31st March 2022 are likely to change over the coming year, as the market responds to changes in demand, take up and parental preferences.

In Buckinghamshire, there is a diverse range of childcare provision across the county that meets parents' needs, including day nurseries, school-based provision, childminders, pre-schools and out of school care.

In Buckinghamshire, currently there are sufficient childcare places to meet parent's needs. For every 4 children across all age groups there is 1 childcare place available. There are sufficient places available for the funded entitlements for 2, 3&4 year olds. Currently there are 17,673 places available for 0-4 year olds across Buckinghamshire to supply a child population of 13,520 children aged three to four along with 1083 eligible funded two year olds. There is sufficient flexibility in the delivery of places to ensure that providers can offer places according to market demand. Parents finding it difficult to access a childcare to meet their needs have been supported to find a place by our brokerage service. We have not received any reports or complaints from parents unable to take up a childcare place in Buckinghamshire.

In this report we take account of the following:

- a. Demand for childcare
- b. Take up of funded entitlements
- c. Quality of provision
- d. Support for providers
- e. Key influencing factors
 - Early years workforce recruitment and retention
 - HAF

a. Demand for Childcare

Data analysis for the period April 2021 – March 2022 shows that across Buckinghamshire there is sufficient childcare to meet working parents' needs. Looking forwards to the period covering March 2022 to March 2025, we can expect the demand for childcare to remain at current levels. Housing developments will produce the estimated numbers of children listed in the table below, however a forecast decrease in the population between now and 2025 will offset this figure meaning that should the number of childcare places remain at current levels there will be sufficient childcare places to meet demand.

Predicted changes in child population by age group by 2025			
0-4	5-9	10-14	0-14
-1070	-2028	994	-2104
Increase in child population due to planned housing developments			
2022	2023	2024	2025
487	481	449	495
Total			1912
Predicted decrease by 2025			-192

Changes in child population impacts on the demand for childcare places. For example, there are 979 fewer children aged 3-4 years in Buckinghamshire in 2021-22 than the previous year. Providers tell us there is an increase in demand for childcare places 0-2, some providers reported that there was a demand for childcare places they were unable to meet, however further analysis shows that this is due to parental preference rather than the lack of childcare places available locally. Parents have not reported a lack of childcare provision available.

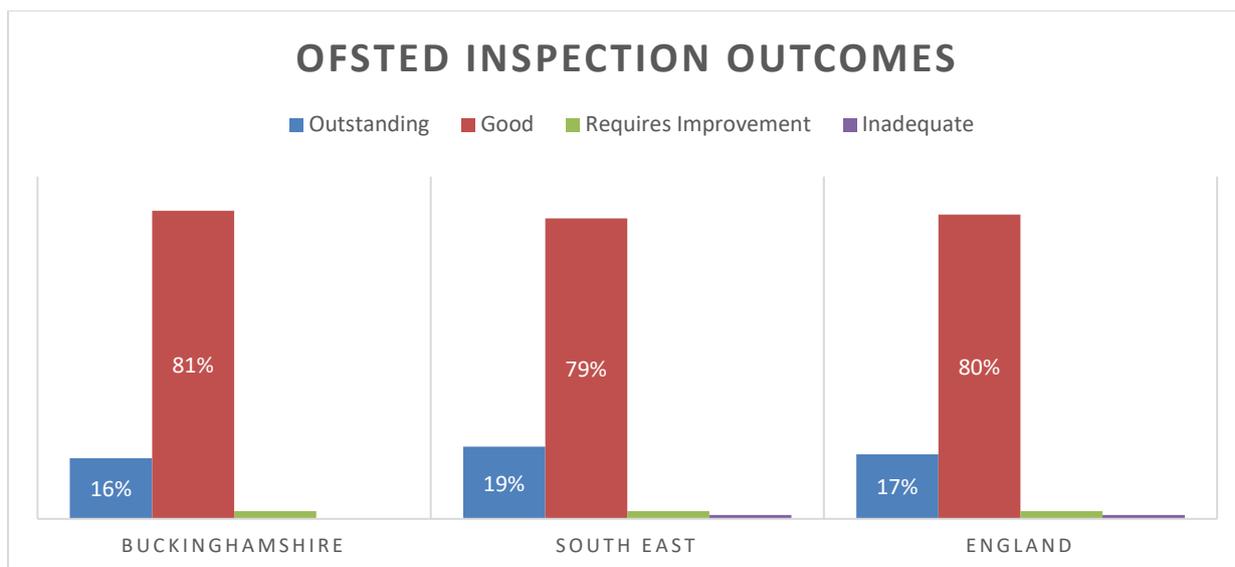
b. Take up of funded entitlements January 2021

% of eligible children taking up their funded entitlement in the relevant year

	Buckinghamshire	South East	England
2-year-olds			
2022	72%	69%	72%
2021	60%	61%	62%
2020	76%	69%	69%
2019	75%	68%	68%
3- and 4-year-olds			
2022	94%	95%	92%
2021	91%	92%	88%
2020	92%	94%	93%
2019	91%	94%	93%

c. Quality of provision

In Buckinghamshire, across all providers 97% have received either met, Good or Outstanding Ofsted judgements up to March 31st 2022. This is a decrease from March 2021 when 98.5% of providers were good or outstanding. An analysis of Ofsted reports over this period evidences that a lack of qualified staff is the main issue for the decrease in Good judgments.



d. Support made available to childcare providers

Buckinghamshire Council has worked closely with early years settings and childcare providers to support the childcare market throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Advice and guidance were offered to all early years and childcare settings. This ensured childcare providers, including schools with childcare provision, received the most up to date information, along with support tailored for their specific needs and circumstances, providing them with guidance in a rapidly changing and evolving environment. In addition, financial and business support was made available to support early years and childcare settings during the pandemic.

- In December 2021 a Provider Covid and Workforce Development Grant was paid to members of the 'Directory of Buckinghamshire Providers eligible to deliver the Funded Entitlement.' This grant was paid to all providers who evidenced they had delivered funded places in the 2021/22 financial year (from 1st April 2021 up to the provisional claim for Spring term 2022) and evidenced their intention to operate in Spring 2022.
- The grant was intended to support:
 - Staffing cover to manage Covid related sickness
 - Recruitment costs
 - Costs for training for both new staff and established staff. Training was made available via Early Years CPD
- Sustainability Grants have been paid to 10 providers who needed additional support totalling £95,500. This enabled all 10 to remain open. Without financial support there was a risk that these providers would have closed creating a loss of childcare and funded places.
- Grants have been awarded to support 13 providers in meeting health and safety requirements, or Ofsted recommendations linked to their Ofsted inspection, to the

value of £187,000. Two providers have since been inspected with Good Ofsted outcomes

- Analysis of early years claim data in autumn terms 2019, 2020 and 2021 identified settings that had experienced a decline in early years income. These settings were contacted and offered business and finance support, tailored to their needs, ensuring all have remained sustainable to date and have sound business plans to cover the next three years.
- Every provider operating in Buckinghamshire has a named key contact that can provide direct support with queries and concerns. In addition, the Buckinghamshire Council's Early Years Service website has been updated with a range of specific information, advice, and guidance to support providers with business planning. Data gathered between April 2021 and March 2022 evidences 10,507 views to the area on the early years website that offers information to childcare providers. Of these, 477 direct visits were to access information on running a childcare business.
 - 11 new providers entered the childcare market between April 2021 and March 2022
 - 13 providers have changed ownership
 - 30 New Childminders entered the childcare market between April 2021 to March 2022, of those 8 were assigned to a childminder agency

e. Key factors that have an impact on Buckinghamshire's childcare market

- Recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff is a concern for a high proportion of settings.
- Financial stability for settings within a changing financial landscape (post covid recovery) is a concern and has restricted the growth of the sector.
- The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme rolled out nationally in 2021 with a focus on supporting vulnerable children with government funded holiday care. Since 2021 there has been a decrease in parental demand linked to changes in parental work patterns following Covid. Reflecting the demand, the number of registered holiday providers has decreased slightly. Two holiday childcare providers closed completely.
- The volatility in the patterns in demand appear to be led by changes in working patterns and financial consideration for families across Buckinghamshire.

Key priorities for 2022

Continue to assess parental demand for childcare places to analyse and respond to the changing childcare market

Continue to support childcare providers to remain sustainable by providing access to business planning tools and bespoke advice

Continue to work with settings to meet the needs of children with SEND and enable early identification of need

Strengthen links with the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) to better analyse and respond to provision for school-aged children.

Support a mixed model delivery, alongside fee-paid places, for non-HAF-eligible families to ensure the sustainability of out of school provision, whilst growing inclusive places for vulnerable families in the longer term

Continue to identify providers at risk of closure due to sustainability issues. Prioritise resources to support them in areas where there is pressure on places

Assess the extent to which providers are actively promoting Tax Free Childcare and Universal Credit to parents looking for, and already using, childcare

Further increase the take up of the funded entitlements by promoting the benefits of tax free childcare to parents via professionals and partner agencies and social media campaigns.

3. Buckinghamshire Context

Map: Buckinghamshire Primary Planning Areas



Child population

There are an estimated 106,457 children aged 0 to 14 years living in Buckinghamshire (source: Office for National Statistics population estimates mid-2020). The highest proportion of the child population lives in Aylesbury Town and High Wycombe.

Child population (0 to 14 years) by Primary Planning Area (PPA)

Primary Planning Area	0-2	2-3	3-4	5 -10	11-14	Total 0 - 14
Amersham	503	306	725	2425	1868	5827
Aylesbury Town	2325	1280	2681	7683	4658	18627
Beaconsfield	232	146	293	1385	938	2994
Bourne End	523	282	534	1679	1134	4152
Buckingham	369	210	442	1613	1304	3938
Burnham	307	182	368	1116	713	2686
Chesham	542	322	604	2173	1439	5080
Farnham and Stoke Poges	215	121	281	1059	763	2439
Gerrards Cross and The Chalfonts	714	387	820	2839	2088	6848
Great Missenden	156	113	251	1061	776	2357
Haddenham	322	171	389	1432	910	3224
High Wycombe	2632	1392	2780	8766	5943	21513
Ivers	367	195	365	1000	625	2552
Marlow	308	207	398	1654	1170	3737
Princes Risborough	243	123	257	888	588	2099
Waddesdon	551	295	598	1969	1023	4436
Wendover	339	191	399	1352	868	3149
Wing and Ivinghoe	410	235	537	1847	1188	4217
Winslow	242	147	341	1359	1023	3112
Wycombe West	392	198	457	1456	967	3470
Buckinghamshire total	11692	6503	13520	44756	29986	106457

Based on ONS population forecasts (2018), the child population in Buckinghamshire (0-10 years) is forecast to decrease by 2% between 2021 and 2025, with numbers of 11–14-year-olds increasing by 2.6% in the same period. This 2.6% increase is the population bulge that has moved through early years, primary and is now into Secondary education.

ONS 2018-based sub-national population estimates – five-year age groups

Age range	2021	2025	% Change
0-4 years	30,901	29,831	-3.5%
5-9 years	36,783	34,755	-5.5%
10-14 years	38,587	39,581	+2.6%
0-14 years	106,271	104,167	-2.0%

New housing

There are significant new residential developments planned across the county. In total, between 2020-33 there are 17,855 new dwellings expected with a reasonable certainty of completion. In the period 2020-26 the housing trajectory for Buckinghamshire is for 12,871 new dwellings, the highest number (4,161, 32% of total) in the Aylesbury Town planning area. High Wycombe accounts for 16% of the total.

The number of children aged 4+ expected from the developments outlined above is 2,626. A proportion of children from working families will require childcare. The projected number does not include pre-school aged children, who may require childcare, but gives an indication of where demand is most likely to increase.

The year referred to in the following table links to the September of the academic year in which children are expected to require a school place.

Estimated increase in the school-aged population because of new homes developments

Planning Area	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total 2021-2026	% Total
Buckingham	18	18	20	22	24	14	116	4.4%
Winslow	19	26	26	22	23	7	123	4.7%
Waddesdon	7	10	12	11	12	6	57	2.2%
Wing and Ivinghoe	29	31	32	30	39	34	196	7.5%
Haddenham	23	27	27	27	31	22	158	6.0%
Aylesbury Town	134	132	126	123	148	114	776	29.6%
Wendover	31	24	16	6	6	3	87	3.3%
Chesham	13	17	19	19	19	7	93	3.5%
Amersham	11	14	10	10	10	1	56	2.1%
Great Missenden	3	3	4	3	3	0	17	0.6%
Princes Risborough	18	20	16	10	10	0	73	2.8%
High Wycombe	66	81	88	83	84	25	426	16.2%
Wycombe West	5	7	6	6	6	0	30	1.1%
Marlow	8	7	5	4	4	0	29	1.1%
Bourne End	4	7	6	6	6	0	28	1.1%
Beaconsfield	10	13	10	11	12	7	63	2.4%
Gerrards Cross and The Chalfonts	28	27	38	37	39	20	191	7.3%
Ivers	8	8	3	3	3	1	27	1.0%
Burnham	11	11	12	11	11	2	57	2.2%
Farnham and Stoke Poges	3	4	5	5	5	1	23	0.9%
Total	448	487	480	449	495	266	2626	

Source: Buckinghamshire Council March 2022

The Buckinghamshire Economy

Buckinghamshire Council has a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14, or up to 18 years for children with a disability. Economic activity refers to the number, or percentage, of people of working age who are either in employment or who are unemployed. Buckinghamshire has a lower percentage of the working age population (16-64 years) compared to the South East region and Great Britain (GB) as a whole. Within that, the percentage of the working age population economically active (as at 2020) is broadly in line with the South East region and higher than GB. A higher proportion of Buckinghamshire's working population is self-employed than in the South East region.

Employment levels January 2020 to December 2020

	Buckinghamshire %	South East %	Great Britain %
All people:			
Employed	80.5	81.1	78.5
In employment	77.2	77.9	74.6
Employees	63.8	67.0	65.0
Self employed	13.3	10.6	9.5
Unemployed	3.8	3.9	4.8

Source: Office for National Statistics annual population survey (NOMIS). Percentage is a proportion of economically active.

Unemployment levels October 2020 to September 2021

Unemployment levels in Buckinghamshire are higher than across the region and lower than the national figure. An increase or a decrease in the number of people claiming out of work benefits can impact on a child's early education funding entitlement and on the families need for childcare, reducing demand or changing the amount or type of childcare required. Unemployment refers to people who are not in work, this includes those who may be retired or choose not to work.

	Buckinghamshire %	South East %	Great Britain %
All people Unemployed	19.5	18.9	21.5
Seeking employment	20.4	21.8	19.8
Not seeking employment	79.6	78.2	80.2

Source: Office for National Statistics annual population survey (NOMIS).

Out of work benefits

In December 2021 the Claimant Count in Buckinghamshire was 3.1%, compared to 3.5% in the South East and 4.4% nationally.

In the period January – December 2020, 10.0% of households were workless (16,800 households). This compares to 10.5% in the South East and 13.6% in GB.

March 2022 data, published by the Buckinghamshire Economic Intelligence Observatory, shows an increase in the number of residents claiming out of work benefits (the claimant count). This has increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 in the following way:

- There were 4,425 more claimants in Buckinghamshire in March 2022 than at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.
- Between March 2020 and March 2022 there was a 96% increase in the number of 25–49-year-old claimants compared to an 80% increase across all age ranges.
- Within Buckinghamshire, the claimant count was highest (and above the national average) in the Wycombe parliamentary constituency area (at 4.6%).

Employment levels may affect the childcare market in several ways:

- An increase in the level of those claiming out of work benefits may increase the number of children eligible for 2 year old funding.
- More people actively in work may increase the number of parents entitled to the extended entitlements (30 hours childcare) therefore increasing demand for places.

Childcare provision

Changes in child population have created less demand for childcare places. For example, the number of two year olds eligible for the funded entitlement has decreased by 17% and the number of children eligible for universal or extended entitlements has decreased by 7%.

In the period April 2021 to March 2022 there have been a number of significant changes in the early years and childcare sector:

- The number of day nurseries across Buckinghamshire has increased, and the number of pre-schools/nursery schools has decreased
- In March 2022, there were 774 registered providers offering early years and childcare provision to children aged 0-4 years old. This compares to 832 in March 2021.
- There has been a decrease of 55 childminders across the period. Numbers of registered childminders have been declining nationally over several years, and this is reflected in Buckinghamshire. The COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to more recent closures.
- Seven schools have changed their registration status from 'school with nursery provision,' to 'Section 27 Governor-led provision'. Governor-led provision can allow more flexibility to meet parent's needs.

The childcare market has responded to the decrease in childcare population and subsequent reduced demand in childcare places by reducing the number of childcare places offered.

Provision for children aged 0-4 years

Childcare type	Number of providers (March 2021)	Maximum places (March 2021)	Number of providers (March 2022)	Maximum places (March 2022)	Providers (Net Comparison)	Places (Net Comparison)
0 - 4-year-olds						
Day Nursery	101	6,095	105	6,342	+4	+247
Pre-School or Nursery School	135	4,127	130	3,970	-5	-157
Maintained Nursery School	3	446	3	446	-	-
School/Academy with Nursery Class	57	2,651	49	2,080	-8	-571
School Governor Led Pre-School	32	1,128	39	1,423	+7	+295
Childminder	488	2,939	433	2,568	-55	-371
Nursery Units of Independent Schools	16	860	15	844	-1	-16
Total 0 – 4-year-olds	832	18,246	774	17,673	-58	-573

Source: Buckinghamshire Council March 2022.

Maximum places in Buckinghamshire by Primary Planning Areas (PPA) 0-4 years

PPA	Day nursery	Pre-school	Maintained nursery school	School nursery class	School-managed pre-school	Childminder	Nursery Unit Independent school	Overall
Amersham	433	327	132	130	0	113	34	1,170
Aylesbury Town	966	472	0	489	400	509	0	2,836
Beaconsfield	431	60	0	0	56	28	50	625
Bourne End	217	134	0	84	42	211	0	688
Buckingham	213	50	0	120	26	53	45	507
Burnham	403	60	0	23	38	61	0	585
Chesham	220	155	0	201	46	144	24	790
Farnham and Stoke Poges	149	192	0	82	0	69	150	642
Gerrards Cross and the Chalfonts	242	219	0	82	24	211	160	938
Great Missenden	79	22	0	30	118	81	40	370
Haddenham	199	274	0	0	15	105	61	654
High Wycombe	923	725	314	597	253	408	52	3,272
Ivers	148	90	0	33	31	18	0	320
Marlow	379	257	0	0	26	72	0	734
Princes Risborough	223	187	0	26	15	72	40	563
Waddesdon	56	142	0	10	60	65	0	333
Wendover	490	138	0	0	70	127	0	825
Wing and Ivinghoe	203	283	0	0	126	109	0	721
Winslow	121	147	0	56	64	57	188	633
Wycombe West	175	36	0	117	13	54	0	395
Buckinghamshire overall	6,342	3,970	446	2,080	1,423	2,568	844	17,673

Source: Buckinghamshire Council March 2022.

Provision for children aged 5 years and older

Childcare type	Number of providers (March 2021)	Maximum places (March 2021)	Number of providers (March 2022)	Maximum places (March 2022)	Providers (Net Comparison)	Places (Net Comparison)
Out of School - 5 Years +						
After School Club	124	3,985	135	4,413	+11	+428
Breakfast Club	47	1,947	45	1,962	-2	+15
Holiday Club	42	2,666	40	1,890	-2	-776*
Total Out of school - 5 Years +	213	8,598	220	8,265	+7	-333

Source: Buckinghamshire Council March 2022.

* A data validation exercise was completed to ensure that the number of places reported as available by individual holiday clubs was realistic and deliverable. Therefore, the decrease in the number of places available for holiday club provision is not solely attributed to 2 providers closing.

Registered provision in Buckinghamshire by Primary Planning Areas (PPA) 5+ years

PPA	Out of school club	Breakfast club	Holiday club
Amersham	12	3	3
Aylesbury Town	14	9	3
Beaconsfield	8	4	3
Bourne End	4	2	1
Buckingham	8	2	1
Burnham	1	1	2
Chesham	4	0	1
Farnham and Stoke Poges	3	0	0
Gerrards Cross and the Chalfonts	12	4	3
Great Missenden	4	1	2
Haddenham	8	3	2
High Wycombe	19	9	10
Ivers	1	0	1
Marlow	7	2	2
Princes Risborough	8	0	2
Waddesdon	4	0	0
Wendover	5	2	1
Wing and Ivinghoe	5	2	0
Winslow	4	0	2
Wycombe West	4	1	1
Buckinghamshire overall	135	45	40

Source: Buckinghamshire Council March 2022.

Between March 2021 and March 2022, there has been a decrease in the number of breakfast clubs and holiday club provision, however, the number of after school clubs has increased. This reflects parents changing work patterns and the current change in childcare needs for families.

It should be noted that in addition to group providers, listed in the table above, both day nurseries and childminders work across both age ranges (0-4 and 5+). Many of the childminders (433) included in the table above will also offer places to school-aged children.

In addition to the registered provision outlined above, there are 171 registered home child carers (nannies) in Buckinghamshire, and there is no regulation or data available for the number of au pairs. In 2018 Ofsted changed registration of home child carers to their place of residence. This may be different from their place of work. Home child carers tend to work with one family and care for the children of that family. In that regard they cannot be considered 'childcare' to meet the childcare sufficiency duties and have been excluded from analysis.

Holiday Activities and Food programme

In 2021, a £220m programme was rolled out nationwide in all 151 English local authority areas. The Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) aims to offer valuable support to families on lower incomes, through access to rewarding activities alongside healthy meals.

The holiday activities are free of charge for school-aged children eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM). It is not expected that all eligible children will attend. LAs are also encouraged to make provision available for non-eligible children who are able to pay.

Activities should include provision across a range of outdoor and indoor sport, physical activities, arts and crafts, games and play, food learning and cooking, and trips etc.

Expected outcomes for children and families:

- Eat more healthily in the school holidays
- To be more active in the school holidays
- To take part in engaging and enriching activities to support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with wider educational attainment
- To be safe and not socially isolated
- To have greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- To be more engaged with school and other local services

Government grant funding covers coordination and provision of free holiday places for six weeks a year: four weeks in the summer, one week at Easter (2022) and one week at Christmas (2022). In the autumn 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the Government announced their plans to continue funding the Holiday Activity and Food for the

three-year period starting 2022. Based on the government plans to continue this funding further work needs to take place to access the impact on childcare place sufficiency.

Buckinghamshire Council has established a comprehensive, county-wide activity programme that offers a rich variety of free, high-quality clubs, activities and experiences which provide opportunities to develop and strengthen skills or knowledge. HAF activity clubs also provide healthy meals, informal nutritional learning, and physical activities to attendees at each session.

Working with local activity providers in Buckinghamshire, between Easter 2021 and Christmas 2021 a total of 2415 children and young people have accessed a place through the HAF programme. A total of 9371 sessions taken up over this time.

New providers have applied to join the programme at every delivery period since March 2021 welcoming around 30 new providers to the scheme, many of whom operate across multiple sites.

Looking forwards to summer 2022 and beyond we know, there are approximately 10,000 eligible children who could access a HAF place should they chose to.

From 2022, local authorities are also able to offer up to 15% of overall HAF programme places to other children who are not eligible for benefits-related free school meals but who could benefit from HAF club provision; these groups include looked after and previously looked after children, young carers and children with an education, health and care plan.

5. Quality of Childcare provision in Buckinghamshire

Data held by Buckinghamshire Council has been collated to provide an overview of the quality of provision. The table on page 5 (Executive summary) shows Buckinghamshire Council to be 1% above the national number of providers receiving a good Ofsted outcome and 3% higher than statistical neighbours. During the same period 2020 – 2021 Buckinghamshire was 1% above the national statistics and 1.2% above statistical neighbours. The Early Years Service supports all childcare provision to meet statutory requirements and the EYFS where it is appropriate. They support quality assurance processes in all HAF provision to ensure children have access to good quality experiences in a safe environment.

The overview excludes settings where there is no inspection record (the setting has not yet been inspected) or where data has not been shared. In the table below ‘met’ means the setting has no Early Years children on roll and the inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration. Not met with actions is the equivalent of an inadequate judgement for the purposes of any follow-up action.

Ofsted inspection outcome

Type of provision (number in sample)	Outstanding	Good	Met	Requires improvement	Not met with actions	Inadequate
Childminding (354)	13%	70%	15%	1%	0.6%	0.3%
Day nursery (82)	11%	88%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Holiday scheme (20)	15%	60%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Breakfast club (22)	5%	73%	23%	0%	0%	0%
Out of school (54)	4%	54%	43%	0%	0%	0%
Pre-school (111)	18%	80%	0%	18%	0%	0%
All registered provision (613)	13%	74%	11%	1%	0.3%	0.3%

Should a provider receive an inadequate judgement Buckinghamshire Early Years Team work together with the provider to create an action plan. Support, advice, and training is offered to ensure that the provider is supported to address any immediate Ofsted actions. Further support is planned and delivered to give the provider an opportunity to achieve a better Ofsted Judgement at their next inspection.

6. The Early Years Entitlements in Buckinghamshire

Funded entitlements refer to funded education for children who fall into the categories below:

- All three-and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours (per week up to a maximum of 38 weeks, or 570 hours stretched across more weeks of the year) the term after their third birthday.
- Eligible families with a three-and four-year-old became entitled to an additional 15 hours (per week up to a maximum of 38 weeks, or 570 hours stretched across more weeks of the year). Eligibility for funded 30 hours childcare is based on both parents working in a couple household, and a single parent working in a lone-parent household, with minimum and maximum income thresholds applied. Parents apply to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and, if eligible, are given a code which their chosen childcare provider validates before a place is taken up
- Eligible families with a two-year-old that meet economic criteria such as in receipt of benefits or on a low income.

Key points:

- Across Buckinghamshire, analysis of data indicates that there are sufficient 2-year-old funded entitlement (2FE) places to meet parental demand. There are 2,472 2FE places for an identified 1,083 eligible children.
- Take up of 2FE in 2021 had dropped below national levels for the first time in many years. The Covid epidemic prevented individual face to face support with parents for much of this time, and along with an increase in parental anxiety over attendance at group childcare, take up was low. See table below.
- In response to the decrease in place uptake, an action plan was put in place to develop a more varied approach to reach parents. This included the use of social media to promote the funding offer to potentially eligible families and encourage families to take up their child's place. As a result of this targeted work, Buckinghamshire has seen an increase in take up and is now back in line with national levels.
- Data analysis shows that there are sufficient universal funded entitlement places (UFE) and extended funded entitlement (EFE) places across all PPA areas in Buckinghamshire.

The impact of Covid 19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the total percentage of children taking up their funded early years entitlements. During the first lockdown, childcare provision closed to all except children of critical workers. Early years provision was expected to remain open during the national lockdown in January 2021 and subsequently. Open providers were asked to return data on the expected attendance of their registered children. This includes children who were temporarily absent due to the impacts of COVID-19 on parental confidence, health, and self-isolation. Providers who were closed due to government advice (for example, staff members self-isolating) were also asked to return the expected attendance of their registered children.

The data shows that the percentage of children accessing their early years funded entitlement decreased across this time. However early education places have increased enabling further choice for parents of 3 and 4 year olds.

Take-up of the early years funded entitlements January 2022

% of eligible children taking up their funded entitlement in the relevant year

	Buckinghamshire	South East	England
2-year-olds			
2022	72%	69%	72%
2021	60%	61%	62%
2020	76%	69%	69%
2019	75%	68%	68%
3- and 4-year-olds			
2022	94%	95%	92%
2021	91%	92%	88%
2020	92%	94%	93%
2019	91%	94%	93%

Source: DfE: Provision for children under 5, DfE, January 2022 released July 2022.

Total Early Education Funded Places

3 & 4 year olds

	2020	2021	2022
Eligible Population	14,016	14,499	13,520
Places	15,645	15,645	15201
Surplus at County level	1,629	1,146	1,681

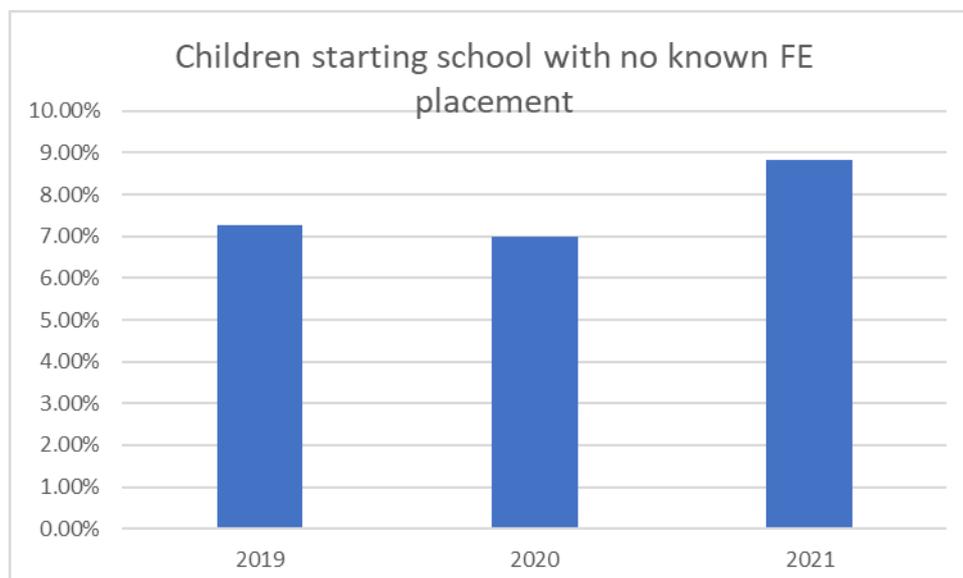
2 year olds

	2020	2021	2022
Eligible Population	1,315	1,272	1,083
Places	2,687	2,687	2472
Surplus at County level	1,372	1,415	1389

Children starting school with no known Early Years placement

The number of children starting school without a known Early Years placement in September 2021 has increased to 8.83%. There is no national data set here. This may be a direct impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic as parents chose to not access a funded place. Work patterns have changed over this period with more people working from home and using friends and family for childcare. The rise in the use of Nannies or Home Childcarers may also have influenced this increase.

We would expect this figure to decrease to normal levels of 7 – 7.25% by September 2023. The benefits of early education are being promoted to parents through social media and through face to face contact with families.



7. Changes in demand for childcare

Childcare providers were asked how demand had changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In all, 76% of respondents (581 settings) reported a change in demand.

56% of settings reporting a change, reported a decrease in demand, in contrast to 44% who reported that demand had increased. 85% of out of school settings were more likely to have experienced a decrease in demand, in contrast to 70% of day nurseries who were more likely to have experienced an increase. The table below demonstrates the fluidity of the childcare market between April 2021 and March 2022. With parents choosing different providers to meet their changing working patterns.

Demand since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

% of respondents (number)

Demand overall:	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased	37% (88)	70% (67)	49% (52)	15% (14)	62% (33)	44% (254)
Decreased	63% (148)	30% (29)	51% (64)	85% (77)	38% (21)	56% (327)

Base: all respondents, 581. Excludes non-respondents. Percentages rounded.

Changes in demand since the start of Covid-19 at Primary Planning Area level

Level of overall demand % reporting:

PPA (base for calculations)	Increased substantially	Increased slightly	Decreased slightly	Decreased Substantially	Total change in demand
Amersham (25)	16%	40%	20%	24%	12%
Aylesbury Town (88)	14%	34%	31%	22%	-5%
Beaconsfield (17)	6%	41%	35%	18%	-6%
Bourne End (35)	3%	34%	43%	20%	-26%
Buckingham (23)	35%	17%	39%	9%	4%
Burnham (15)	13%	40%	13%	33%	7%
Chesham (25)	8%	24%	32%	36%	-36%
Farnham and Stoke Poges (14)	14%	21%	50%	14%	-29%
Gerrards Cross and the Chalfonts (36)	22%	36%	31%	11%	16%

Great Missenden (18)	6%	28%	28%	39%	-33%
Haddenham (27)	26%	41%	40%	4%	23%
High Wycombe (102)	6%	27%	44%	23%	-34%
Ivers (6)	17%	33%	17%	33%	0%
Marlow (23)	4%	39%	13%	43%	-13%
Princes Risborough (16)	19%	25%	38%	19%	-13%
Waddesdon (22)	14%	27%	50%	9%	-18%
Wendover (24)	13%	17%	67%	4%	-41%
Wing and Ivinghoe (24)	4%	33%	33%	29%	-25%
Winslow (19)	16%	42%	26%	16%	16%
Wycombe West (23)	9%	30%	48%	13%	-22%
Buckinghamshire overall	12%	31%	36%	20%	-13%

Base: all respondents 581. Excludes non-respondents. Percentages rounded.

Providers were asked, where demand had changed, and in what ways.

Demand for children aged 0 -1 (baby places)

23% of Providers reporting an increase in demand for baby places. This was particularly evident in childminding and day nursery settings.

% of respondents (number)

Demand for children aged 0 -1	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	30% (70)	57% (55)	8% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)	23% (134)
Decreased demand	19% (46)	15% (14)	3% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11% (63)

Demand for children aged 2

Overall, findings suggest an increase in demand for paid for childcare for children aged two years old, particularly in day nursery and pre-school provision:

% of respondents (number)

Demand for children aged 2 – paid for	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	13% (31)	38% (36)	33% (35)	1% (1)	21% (11)	20% (114)
Decreased demand	14% (32)	8% (8)	25% (26)	0% (0)	2% (1)	12% (67)

Patterns of demand for the funded early years entitlements show a mixed picture, with some settings experiencing an increase, and others, a decrease. Looking at the two-year-old entitlement, the trend for childminders is towards decreased demand and for day nurseries, a trend towards increased demand. For other types of provision, the split between those that experienced a decrease and those that experienced an increase is broadly even.

% of respondents (number)

Demand for funded 2 year old places	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	6% (13)	25% (24)	29% (31)	0% (0)	13% (7)	13% (75)
Decreased demand	14% (34)	9% (9)	25% (27)	0% (0)	2% (1)	12% (71)

For the universal entitlement for three-and four-year-olds, day nurseries and school-based provision were more likely to have experienced an increase in demand overall, with pre-schools showing a relatively equal split between increased and decreased demand.

% of respondents (number)

Demand for the universal funded entitlement	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	4% (10)	21% (20)	25% (27)	0% (0)	37% (19)	13% (76)
Decreased demand	9% (22)	6% (6)	29% (31)	1% (1)	12% (6)	11% (66)

Overall, demand for 30-hours has remained relatively constant. 14% of respondents reporting a change in demand, reported it had increased and 14% reported a decrease. Within that, childminders and pre-schools were more likely to report a decrease in demand for 30-hours.

% of respondents (number)

Demand for 30-hours	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	6% (15)	27% (26)	21% (22)	3% (3)	35% (18)	14% (84)
Decreased demand	13% (31)	10% (10)	28% (30)	1% (1)	17% (9)	14% (81)

Of those reporting a change in demand, 14% reported parents choosing to use only one setting for their childcare, and this was a similar finding across all types of provision with a higher percentage of schools (23%) reporting this pattern. This is likely due to change in working patterns including a rise in home working.

Just less than a third of respondents overall (30%) reported parents wanting fewer hours or shorter days. Childminders were more likely to have experienced this change in demand (42%).

% of respondents (number)

Changes in demand	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Parents wanting fewer hours or days	42% (100)	26% (25)	27% (29)	18% (16)	4% (2)	30% (172)
Parents choosing only one setting for their childcare	15% (36)	17% (16)	17% (18)	1% (1)	23% (12)	14% (83)

Demand for Wrap-around childcare

A high percentage of out of school providers reporting a change in demand reported a decrease in demand for wrap-around care (74%). Childminding settings also reported a decrease in demand for wrap-around (49%).

% of respondents (number)

Demand for wrap-around care	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	19% (44)	18% (17)	6% (6)	12% (11)	23% (12)	15% (90)
Decreased demand	49% (115)	6% (6)	8% (9)	74% (67)	12% (6)	35% (203)

Demand for paid for provision

A higher proportion of pre-school and out of school respondents reported less demand for paid-for childcare. The volatility in the patterns in demand appear to be led by changes in working patterns and financial consideration for families across Buckinghamshire.

% of respondents (number)

Demand for children aged	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	9% (21)	23% (22)	16% (17)	10% (9)	17% (9)	13% (78)
Decreased demand	14% (33)	16% (15)	29% (31)	24% (22)	10% (5)	18% (106)

Demand for SEND provision

15% of providers responding to the Audit reported there had been an increase in demand for SEN provision since the pandemic.

% of respondents (number)

Demand for SEN	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased demand	3% (7)	21% (20)	34% (36)	7% (6)	33% (17)	15% (86)
Decreased demand	4% (9)	1% (1)	3% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2% (13)

The rising demand for SEN provision broadly reflects the increases in demand for SEND provision for school aged provision

Base: all respondents with unmet demand, 208. Percentages rounded. Multiple responses.

Providers were asked if they had made any changes to their provision because of COVID-19.

Across all respondents, 71% (378 settings) reported they had not changed their provision

8. Early Years Workforce recruitment and retention

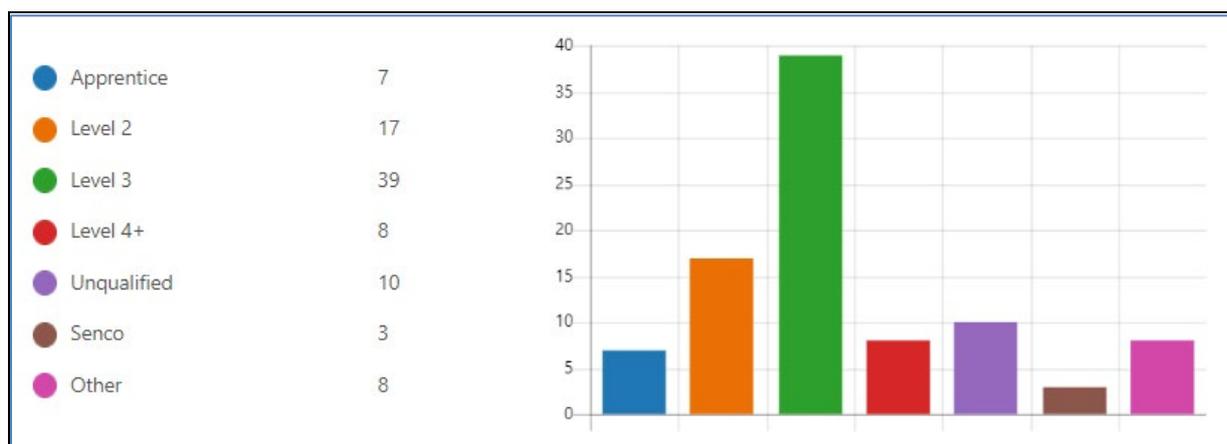
Buckinghamshire Council invited early years settings to participate in a recruitment and retention survey in December 2021. A total of 47 settings responded. Whilst this is a small sample of early years settings across the county, findings support reports from other studies (Social Mobility Commission 'The stability of the early years workforce in England, August 2020'¹; Early Years Alliance 'Breaking Point: the impact of recruitment and retention challenges on the early years sector in England, October 2021'²) which concluded there were increasing pressures on the early years workforce, which are resulting in recruitment and retention issues across all sectors.

In the Buckinghamshire study, 89% of providers indicated their setting has difficulties recruiting staff. The most cited qualification level where recruitment was an issue was Level 3 (identified as an issue for 93% of settings experiencing recruitment difficulties).

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906906/The_stability_of_the_early_years_workforce_in_England.pdf

²<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/breaking-point-impact-recruitment-and-retention-challenges-early-years-sector-england>

Qualification levels respondents reported difficulty recruiting



Source: Buckinghamshire early years recruitment and retention survey December 2021

There is no national data that will enable direct comparisons to Buckinghamshire’s early years recruitment and retention survey. The reports below offer further insight into the national impact of recruitment and retention of the early years workforce.³

The most common difficulties experienced in recruiting staff included:

- a low number of applicants, the quality of applications received and applicants not meeting the required standards.

Providers also identified issues related to retention of staff, with 53% indicating they have experienced difficulties retaining staff. Asked to comment on staff retention issues, a number of respondents mentioned salary as a driver, for example:

“We have previously had long serving staff; however this is third time we have advertised for a Deputy Position in the last five years. Both previous staff occupying this position left the sector. The level of responsibility to pay were both part factors”

“We have not reviewed pay for three years! Staff work long hours for pennies...”

Issues around COVID and funding were also cited as drivers. Buckinghamshire Council has an early years and childcare vacancy service that settings can use free of charge to advertise posts. Across the period 01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022 there were 1,929 hits to the Early Years jobs page: <https://earlyyears.buckscc.gov.uk/early-years-jobs/> with 55% of respondents reporting successfully recruiting using the service.

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906906/The_stability_of_the_early_years_workforce_in_England.pdf

A shortage of suitably qualified and experienced staff poses a sufficiency risk as the number of childcare places being made available may be capped. Providers who are not able to meet child: adult ratios due to staff vacancies may need to reduce the number of children they can care for until they can recruit successfully, or existing staff attain a suitable early years qualification.

9. Send and Vulnerable Groups

Settings were also asked if they had experienced an increase in the number of children presenting with additional needs – a third reported this to be the case, particularly amongst pre-schools, school-based settings, and day nurseries.

Increases in the number of children with speech and language delay and the need for additional support with social interaction were most commonly reported. Speech and language delay and communication issues are identified as some of the main additional needs being presented nationally. Issues with socialisation, child anxiety, and a lack of access to health support are also highlighted.

Change in the attendance rate of children with SEND

% of respondents (number)

Change in attendance rate of children with SEND	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Attendance has increased	2% (4)	14% (13)	26% (30)	5% (4)	7% (4)	9% (55)
Attendance has decreased	1% (3)	4% (4)	6% (7)	1% (1)	6% (3)	3% (18)
Attendance is about the same	97% (250)	82% (78)	68% (80)	94% (78)	87% (47)	88% (533)

Base: all respondents, 606. Excludes non-respondents. Percentages rounded.

Children presenting with additional needs

Settings were also asked if they had experienced an increase in the number of children presenting with additional needs.

A third of settings (32%) had experienced an increase. The increase was particularly high in pre-school and school-based settings, and day nurseries.

% of respondents (number)

Increase in the number of children presenting with additional needs	Childminder	Day nursery	Pre-school	Out of school	School-based	Overall
Increased	12% (35)	49% (48)	67% (81)	11% (11)	67% (38)	32% (213)
No change	88% (257)	51% (50)	33% (40)	89% (85)	33% (19)	68% (451)

Base: all respondents, 664. Excludes non-respondents. Percentages rounded.

The actual number of children attending setting by provider type is evidenced in the tables below. This demonstrates that some provider types have an increase in children with SEN support whilst others experience a decrease. Overall, there is a decrease in the number of children accessing support from a provider, whilst there is an increase in the number of children with an EHCP compared to previous years.

No. of children with SEN Support

Type of provider	2020	2021	2022
Schools and Pre-Schools	342	388	290
Day Nursery	120	72	133
Funded Childminder	4	8	3
Nursery Unit of Independent School	5	1	0
Total	471	469	426

Number of Early Years Children without EHCP Supported (excluding those in Special Schools)

No. of children with EHC Plan

Type of Provider	2020	2021	2022
Schools and Pre-Schools	51	44	41
Day Nursery	20	24	26
Funded Childminder	1	0	12
Nursery Unit of Independent School	0	0	0
Total	72	68	79

Number of Early Years Children with EHCP (excluding those in Special Schools)

Glossary

BC	Buckinghamshire Council
CIN	Child in Need
CLA	Children Looked After
CSA	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
DfE	Department for Education
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EEF	Early Education Funding
EFE	Extended Funding Entitlement
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EYA	Early Years Audit
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
FE	Funded Entitlement
LA	Local Authority
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NDP	Non-Domestic Premises
PPA	Primary Planning Area
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
RBA	Reception Baseline Assessment
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disability
SN	Statistical Neighbour (See Appendix)
UFE	Universal Funded Entitlement
2FE	2 Year Old Funded Entitlement