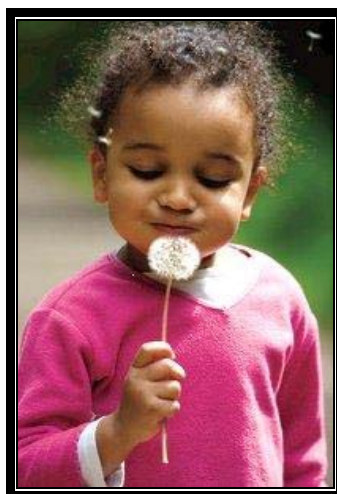




Buckinghamshire County Council Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011

Summary Document



Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 placed duties on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work or train for work. As part of these duties Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) is required to undertake and publish a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every three years. This is the Executive Summary of the second CSA to be completed by BCC and is published on the BCC website together with the full CSA. This document summarises the key findings of the full assessment.

Methodology

Completion of the CSA requires:

- Understanding the area
- An assessment of the **supply** of childcare
- An assessment of the **demand** for childcare
- Comparison of the demand to the supply and completion of a **gap analysis**

Understanding the area - Buckinghamshire

- With a total population of just under 500,000, children and young people (0 – 19 years) make up almost a quarter of the population
- Although primarily an affluent area with higher than national average levels of employment, 2.5% of the population live within the 30% most disadvantaged areas of the country and more than 12,000 children are considered to be living in poverty
- Buckinghamshire residents are among the highest paid in the country, however house costs are 55% higher than the national average
- 32% of the population of Buckinghamshire live in rural areas
- There is a high level of self-employment and “small firm” employment in the county

The Supply of Childcare

- Comparisons of the number of childcare places available between the first CSA (2008) and now are difficult due to changes in data collection and classification of places
- The number of childcare places does appear to have reduced since 2008 (net loss of 301 places), in particular for out of school places for children aged over 5 years
- Data collection methods remain primarily from Ofsted registration data and completion of an annual childcare audit
- Data collection for informal/unregistered childcare continues to be problematic and dependent on ‘local knowledge’
- Childcare places provided by nannies can now be collected for those registered on the Ofsted Voluntary Childcare Register and registered nannies contribute 475 childcare places
- Quality of childcare – Ofsted data for Buckinghamshire shows a higher number of good and outstanding inspection judgements (73%) than the national average (69%)

- 348 disadvantaged children were funded to access 'free' flexible free entitlement (FFE – formerly early years or early education) places since 2009, through the 2 year old pilot project
- In 2010, 63% of FFE providers included children with special educational needs (SEN), 30 settings had over 9% of children with SEN attending and 3.6% of children attending were children with SEN
- In 2010, 10% of children attending out of school provision (excluding holiday schemes) were children with a disability including SEN
- Data on supply of childcare is collected and displayed by Primary School Planning (PPA) areas (map included on p.10)
- All areas have a wide range of opening times although some areas do not have availability for evening and weekend care
- Most areas have a reasonable range of childcare costs available with average costs ranging from £2.50 per hour up to £5.95 per hour

The Demand for Childcare

- Data collected by completion of a **Parents Survey** (web based and paper copy) which had a very low response rate
- Further research undertaken by a **Targeted Parents' Research Project** conducted by GHK Ltd
- **Employers Survey** completed
- **Survey of registered nannies** completed

Parents Survey

Note: The small sample size of responses from the Parental Demand Survey 2010 does not provide a representative sample or statistically valid data and should be treated with caution. As with the targeted parent research work and use of other consultation data, our conclusions have had to be based on assumptions and indicative findings from the research, supported by local knowledge.

In undertaking the CSA, BCC aims to gain an understanding and insight into the challenges and issues facing communities and individuals, including the children and young people themselves, in relation to their childcare needs. We also wish to explore the most effective methodologies to reach and engage with those communities that face the most challenging barriers in accessing sufficient childcare.

Findings:

- The DFE 'Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2009 Research Report (DFE RR054)' showed a national average of 73% of parents using some form of childcare
- The response to the Buckinghamshire survey indicated that average usage is less and 65.8% of parents would use some form of childcare
- Although the response to the survey was low, there was a representative spread of responses from all areas of the county, for all age groups of children and from parents of children with special educational needs
- There were some responses from parents from low income families and armed forces families

- Response from families from minority communities was very low
- Survey responses indicate that parents use a mix of types of childcare including formal (paid for) and non-formal (e.g. family/friends)
- Parents generally believe the childcare they use is of good or satisfactory quality
- Although most respondents felt there was enough childcare to meet parents' needs, a significant proportion of parents (31.1%) felt a lack of childcare prevented them working or training
- Key barriers to using as much childcare as parents would want were:
 - Affordability
 - Availability at school
 - Availability during school holidays
- Key barriers for parents of children with a disability were:
 - Meeting the child's needs
 - Affordability
 - Availability at school
- Key barriers for armed forces parents were:
 - Insufficient holiday care
 - Affordability
 - Availability for enough hours
- Key barriers for low income families were:
 - Affordability
 - Availability in school holidays
- Significant responses also indicated there were not enough places available and there was a lack of evening and weekend care
- Responses indicated parents' perception was that there were not enough childcare places in the following PPA areas (see map on p.10):
 - Beaconsfield
 - Beeches
 - Princes Risborough
 - Wing and Ivinghoe

Note: All the above areas have been recognised as not having sufficient childcare places and some strategies are underway to increase places in some areas. Further intensive market research will be required as part of the action plan for any future development of places.

- There are more challenges and barriers for certain groups (i.e. parents of children with disabilities, parents from BME communities and low income parents) in finding suitable childcare
- Flexible Free Entitlement¹ - most parents' preference meets the current 'core' offer required by BCC²
- Awareness and usage of Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) was shown to be relatively low and had decreased since 2008
- The low take up of allowances could suggest that not all parents are aware of their entitlement to FFE education

¹ Flexible Free Entitlement (also called early/nursery education) for eligible 3 and 4 year olds

² http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/early_years/code_of_practice_ffe.page?

Targeted Parent Research Project

Project Findings and Recommendations:

Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) parents:

- Concerns about settings not reflecting a full range of ethnic and cultural diversity such as games, stories and foods
- Childcare is perceived to be expensive and 'a luxury'
- Childcare is considered to be the role of the parents, and parents have concerns about leaving a child with a 'stranger'
- Lack of suitable care is barrier to employment and to education in some cases

'Very few childminders would give him the food, tell him the stories, sing him the songs that me or my mum would give them'

Recommendations:

- ❖ Providers should better reflect diverse communities, e.g. information in multiple languages and resources reflecting different cultures
- ❖ More information is needed about opportunities for accessing and receiving support
- ❖ Greater flexibility, e.g. opening hours
- ❖ Parent Champions, face to face information source
- ❖ Free tasters, for initial access and to build trust

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) parents:

- Could not see value of childcare, or of leaving a child with a 'stranger' when it is 'free' at home
- Taking care of a child is an important role for a mother
- Geographical isolation may lead to transport issues
- Some limited basic reading skills and limited means for sending materials to GRT sites (only one mail box per site)
- 'Social distance' between families and childcare providers
- Lack of suitable childcare generally not preventing parents from working

'It's not just for parents who work who would like childcare, its good for my kids to meet other kids and learn how to play and things like that'

Recommendations:

- ❖ Information needs to be channelled through METAS Outreach Officers, crucial link to mainstream services
- ❖ Taster sessions may be a way of building trust
- ❖ More holiday provision is needed to increase child's social skills

Parents of children with disabilities:

- Lack of either specialist or mainstream childcare options for children with disabilities
- Lack of confidence to hand over the care of their child to someone else
- Lack of capacity to seek out available childcare options
- Onus on parents having the 'know-how' and being 'in the loop'
- Requirement of a formal stated need to access support services
- Changes to parent's entitlement to free early years education
- Difficulties with combining employment with caring for children
- Lack of flexible and suitable transport for children

'Children and families are expected to fit the services, rather than the services fitting the children and families'.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Mainstream provision should be more inclusive
- ❖ More pro-active dissemination of information
- ❖ More access to funds and more control over how they are spent
- ❖ Central co-ordination of services by BCC

Armed Forces Families:

- Perceived over demand for places on site
- Affordability – national wage not adjusted for local markets
- Families can be highly mobile

'I actually met my childminder here at the playgroup. She's excellent. My children would stay with her all day'

Recommendations:

- ❖ Potential for increased advertising and marketing
- ❖ A need for monitoring and review of childcare required by families living on bases so that frequent demand changes are considered
- ❖ Need for flexible application dates for pre-schools and schools near RAF bases
- ❖ Possible additional entitlements for RAF families when partner is working away, e.g. 3 hours of additional FFE

Consultation with Children and Young People:

- Children enjoyed their time in childcare settings
- They did not consider it as 'childcare', rather activity provision
- Favourite activities included playing outside, sports, arts and crafts
- Good place to make new friends
- 91 of 92 children said that they felt safe at settings, opposing general parental concerns re: child safety

'We get to play pool, and football, and lots of things – instead of sitting down and doing nothing'

Consultation with Employers:

- The majority of employers did not feel that childcare was a barrier to recruitment and retention of staff
- Overall, employers in the statutory sector (e.g. government and hospitals) offered information and staff benefits for childcare to their employees
- Employers offer flexible working and arrangements to work from home, allowing more staff to work around their other commitments and to maintain a healthy work-life balance – though these are not offered universally
- Those that employ weekend and shift working staff are likely to experience greater difficulties with employees sourcing childcare
- Comments about the best solutions for childcare support for their business include making it more affordable for parents, offering flexibility, more school holiday provision

'More childcare facilities, particularly during holiday time. Several of our staff are working mothers who occasionally have to take time off during the school holidays due to lack of someone to look after their child'

Consultation with Nannies

- Nannies who are registered with Ofsted, do provide childcare to enable parents to access work
- The main purpose of registration was to enable access to childcare vouchers
- Nannies would like support through information advice and training for Child Protection, activities for children, First Aid, Early Years Foundation Stage and networking opportunities with other nannies



Gap Analysis

Flexible Free Entitlement for eligible 3 & 4 year olds:

Planning Area (map P.10)	Undersupply of Places	Comments
Amersham	72	Loss of 110 places due to withdrawal of providers from FFE provision. Currently no unmet demand evidenced due to parents continuing to take up places as paid places. Will be monitored and consideration of ability to expand existing places to meet demand if required. Capital project at St Georges recently completed
Beaconsfield	103	Also affected as above (107 places lost) but prior knowledge of shortage of places. Working with existing provider/s to increase provision for stand alone FFE places as sufficient full day care places available.
Bourne End	6	Compensated for by over supply of 101 places in Marlow
Chesham	52	Affected to a lesser degree by withdrawals (25 places) but currently no unmet demand evidenced (see also Area Gap Analyses below)
Gerrards Cross & the Chalfonts	173	Loss of 141 places due to withdrawals but currently no unmet demand evidenced (see also Area Gap Analyses below)
High Wycombe	72	Loss of 79 places due to withdrawals and previously identified as having a shortage of places in specific areas of High Wycombe, disadvantaged wards in particular. Area plans for Early Years and School Places Planning will consider options. Current projects to develop further places underway e.g. Capital project at Downley/Maplewood.
Wing & Ivinghoe	16	Capital project at Ivinghoe to address

Area Based Gap Analysis

Identified the following needs:

Amersham Area	4 years plus childcare
Aylesbury Town	Childcare 0 – 4 years Stand alone FFE places
Beaconsfield Area	Stand alone FFE
Beeches	Stand alone FFE
Haddenham Area	4 years plus childcare
High Wycombe Area	Stand alone FFE
Princes Risborough Area	Childcare 0 – 4 years 4 years plus childcare
Wendover Area	Childcare 0 – 4 years Stand alone FFE places 4 years plus childcare

Note: All the above areas have been recognised as not having sufficient childcare places and some strategies are underway to increase places in some areas. Further intensive market research will be required as part of the action plan for any future development of places.

Next Steps and Action Planning

The gap analysis and the outcomes of the targeted research will inform the development of an action plan including both short term and long term targets. However, childcare, as already mentioned, is a volatile market and therefore it is essential that ongoing assessment and review is undertaken. Following publication of the draft CSA documents and incorporating comments received, the final CSA documents have now been published and work is underway to formulate the action plan.

We will continue to capture comments and queries and will respond to highlighted issues to individuals, where necessary. Feedback on general comments we receive will be provided via the action plan and will be published on the BCC website.

Data will continue to be refreshed on a 6 monthly cycle and reviewed internally and with partners as an ongoing process. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will be updated twice a year in May and November.

Mechanisms will continue to be improved for parents to submit their views on childcare sufficiency on an ongoing basis e.g. web based feedback form, and we will maintain the Parents Forum³ for communication and consultation.

We will continue the consultation work undertaken in the targeted research project in order to ensure the views of hard to reach communities and children and young people are considered.

Further Information on Childcare

If you need any information, support or advice about childcare issues, please contact Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) :

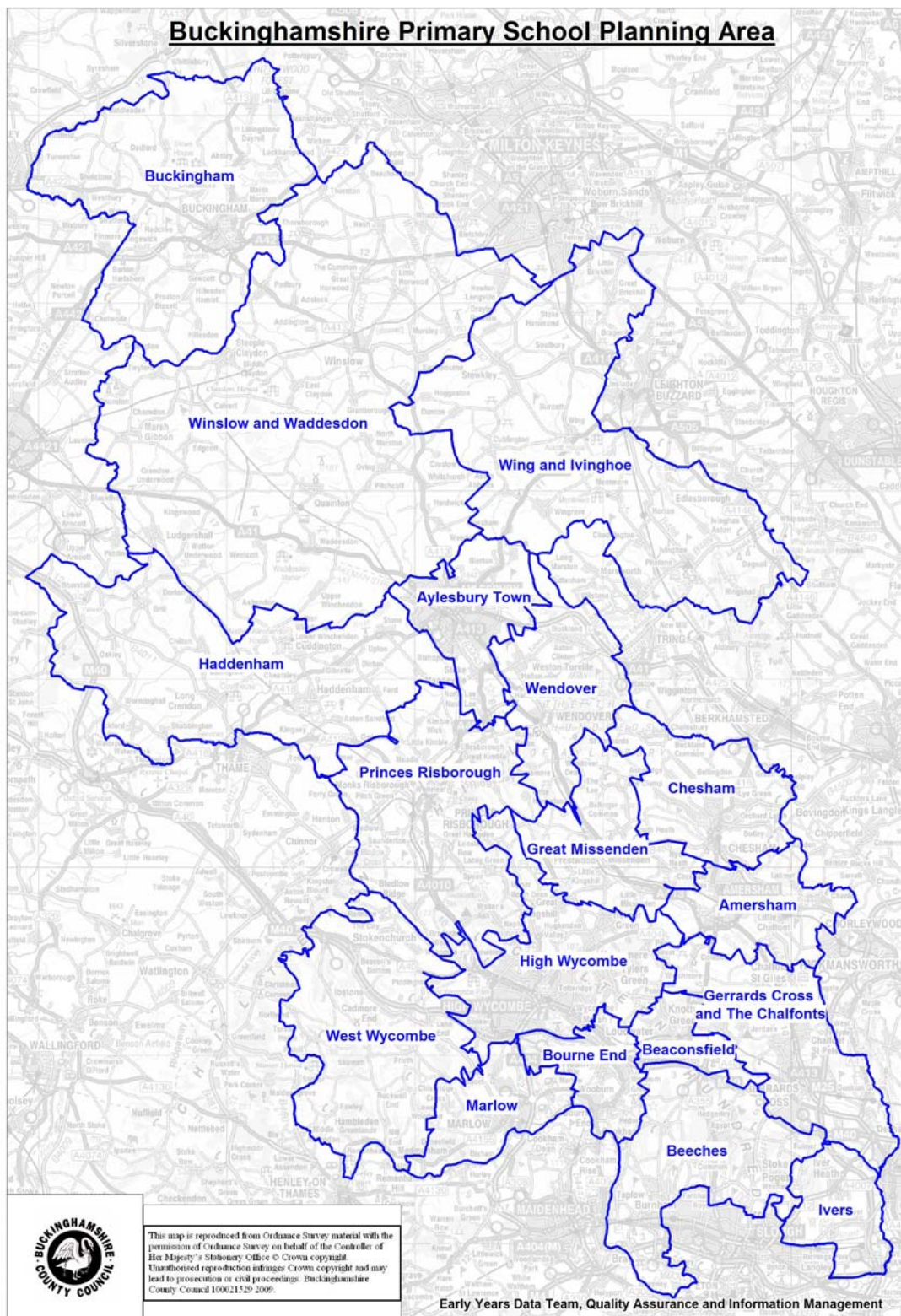
Telephone : 0845 688 4944

Email : familyinfo@buckscc.gov.uk

Web : <http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/>

³ Parents identified via the Parents Surveys willing to be consulted on an ongoing basis regarding childcare issues

Buckinghamshire Primary School Planning Area Map



Comment on the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment



The final CSA full report 2011, is available to view on the Buckinghamshire County Council webpage using the following link
http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/sites/bcc/early_years/early_years.page

Hardcopies of this document and the full CSA report will be available in Children's Centres, Libraries, District Councils and via the Family Information Service from 1st May 2011.

If you have any comments, would like to join a Parent Consultation Group, or would like to be notified about any upcoming consultation events, please contact us:

Address : Childcare Sufficiency Team
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HP20 1UZ

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