

Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency Report

2020 – 2021



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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	3-4
Sandwell Population Data and Ward Map	5
2019 CSR Action Plan Achievements	6-7
Quality Early Years and Childcare in Sandwell	8
Quality Improvement	9
Ofsted Inspections	10-11
Childcare in Sandwell at start of lockdown	12-17
School Wraparound Survey	18
Childcare Costs in Sandwell	19
Monitoring Childcare during Covid-19 Pandemic	20-23
Support Given during Covid-19 Pandemic	24-27
Funded Places for 2,3 and 4 year olds	28-31
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	32
Findings and Recommendations	33

INTRODUCTION

The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area. Working with providers from the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors, the local authority aims to create a strong, sustainable and diverse childcare market ensuring there are sufficient places to meet the needs of parents.

The Department for Education published a revised [Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance](#) for local authorities in June 2018 which states that:

*local authorities **are required** by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, 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 disabled children).*

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should consider what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means. They must consider the local childcare market, work force, quality and capacity of childcare, schools and expansion and sustainability of childcare provision in the local area.

The local authority must report annually to Elected Council Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents.

This report is Sandwell's seventh annual Childcare Sufficiency Report for Elected Council Members and will be made available and accessible to parents and include the information required in the Statutory Guidance.

Sandwell's sixth annual Childcare Sufficiency Report (CSR) was completed and published in October 2019. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan (CSAP) was developed based on the recommendations of the CSR. The plan is monitored by the Early Years Strategic Group and achievements against the actions are detailed later in the report. This year the plan has also been monitored by the Director of Education, Employment and Skills Management Team on a quarterly basis and this will continue.

Upon completion and approval of this report, a CSAP will be developed, implemented and monitored termly by the Early Years Strategic Group. Any outstanding actions from the previous CSAP will be included.

For the 2020-21 report, however, the Childcare Act (2006) duties around Childcare Sufficiency must be placed within a global and local context.

The Covid-19 global pandemic and the national lockdown on 23rd March have had and continue to have a massive impact on families lives and childcare businesses.

The childcare market changed overnight and as the Covid-19 measures have gone through, and continue to go through, different phases, the local childcare market has also dynamically changed. The expectation is that these changes will continue throughout the lifetime of the virus.

Job Retention, business grants and sustainability funding, fluctuations in demand for childcare places as schools closed and then re-opened in phases, Government guidance on social distancing and PPE, keyworker, vulnerable children and shielding status, all these have had an impact on the childcare market in Sandwell.

It is impossible to predict how the local childcare market will look in the next 6 months. There are many uncertainties around the global pandemic which will certainly impact on the local economy. Demand for childcare and in particular 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours places is highly dynamic and is likely to fluctuate as we go through the phases of the pandemic from lockdown to post lockdown. Furlough and redundancy could mean family circumstances decline with an impact on demand for 2 year old places as more families claim Universal Credit and become eligible for the funding, which is allocated to the 40 % most disadvantaged children. Childcare providers will make business decisions on their viability and sustainability which will impact the local market. The ending of Government policy on job retention schemes, business grants and business rates holidays will also play a part in shaping childcare in the future.

Families changing needs will also shape the demand for childcare, especially as the economic impact of Covid-19 begins to be felt with likely rising unemployment and the increase in parents working from home in the next 6 months. The demand for paid for childcare and wraparound services may well be affected. However, new housing development in the borough could also mean regeneration and increased demand for childcare.

It is also difficult to predict how many families will return to using formal childcare after the lockdown and how many may choose to use informal childcare instead. Using informal childcare such as Grandparents will be impacted by Government direction on shielding. There may well be an increase in homeworking and part-time working which will also have an impact on demand for childcare places. We may also see a decline in the use of childcare because of parental confidence and a desire to keep their children safe by reducing the number of 'bubbles' they are in.

This report, therefore, can only consider what is already known about the childcare market in Sandwell. It can look at what childcare was available on 23rd March as the lockdown began and what happened through the early phases where keyworkers and vulnerable children were being supported, then the gradual re-opening of schools and the out of school and holiday provision during the summer. It can also consider what is likely to be the scenario as schools re-open in September although the situation is fluid, and these scenarios will inevitably come with a caveat that things may change and change rapidly. Local or National lockdowns may well be a feature of the next 6 months and the childcare market could then be as it was on 23rd March.

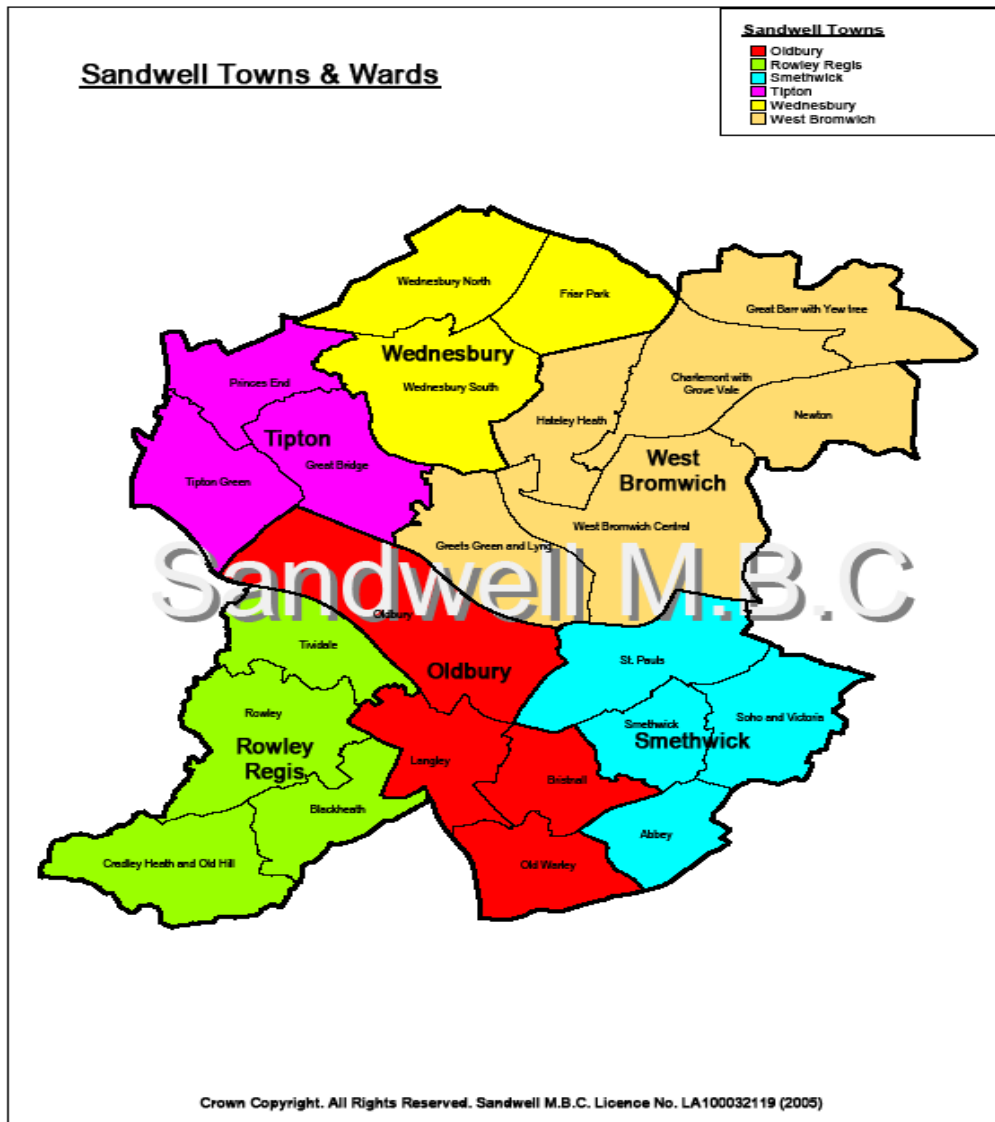
The aim of the report is to present a summary of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell and to consider what the childcare market might look like during 2020-21. The report will consider the ongoing impact and risks to childcare sufficiency. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan will then be developed from the findings of the report.

The objectives are to produce a baseline of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell on March 23rd, and report on how the supply of childcare places continues to be affected by the pandemic. The report will also show progress on the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours funded places and an update on previous recommendations from the 2019-20 Childcare Sufficiency Report.

In producing the report, the previous methodology has had to be revised. Public Health Sandwell were unable to provide current birth data as their staff resources were fully committed to the Covid-19 public health emergency. Previous year's figures have had to be used instead as a guide to allow estimates of demand for places. All other data is provided by the Family Information Service (FIS) and the Quality Early Years and Childcare Team (Early Years)

Sandwell Population Data and Ward Map

The 2018 mid-year estimates show that Sandwell has 327,378 residents. Under 5's now make up 9% of Sandwell's population (28,971).



6 Towns	24 Wards
Oldbury	Oldbury, Langley, Bristnall and Old Warley
Rowley Regis	Tividale, Rowley, Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill
Smethwick	St Pauls, Smethwick, Soho and Victoria, Abbey
Tipton	Princes End, Great Bridge, Tipton Green
Wednesbury	Wednesbury North, Wednesbury South, Friar Park
West Bromwich	Greets Green and Lyng, West Bromwich Central, Newton, Hateley Heath, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Barr with Yew Tree

2019 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REPORT ACTION PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

The 2019-20 Action Plan had 9 actions, as follows, all of which have been met.

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision

Early Years continues to provide:

- support visits to childcare settings
- advice and information under the Retained Function Duty - Childcare Act 2006,
- pre-Ofsted registration, unannounced and Ofsted feedback visits.
- Childminder Briefing Sessions
- termly Early Years Network Meetings

They also deliver mandatory courses on:

- Health and Safety, SCSP approved Safeguarding child protection,
- Quality Improvement and Narrowing the Gap
- the Early Talk Boost Project.

2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places

During the first quarter (September-December 2019) there were:

- 19 support visits to Requires Improvement settings
- 23 support visits to Inadequate settings.

Between September 2019 and March 2020 there were

- 4 Inadequate funded settings.
- 1 Day Nursery became Inadequate and 1 remained Inadequate.
- 2 Childminders became inadequate.
- 3 Day Nurseries Requires Improvement

9 Ofsted inspections undertaken with funded provision during this period

- 1 Outstanding,
- 4 Good,
- 1 Requires Improvement
- 3 Inadequate

3. To extensively market and promote the Family Information Service Hub and the help available with childcare costs to families across Wednesbury. (Friar Park, Wednesbury North and Wednesbury South Wards)

- 2 events in Friar Park contacting 15 parents
- 3 events in Wednesbury North contacting 40 parents.
- FIS did not attend any events in Wednesbury South.

4. To work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to address the need for more holiday provisions.

- Early Years continues to work with schools in these wards funding Holiday Playschemes during October and February Half Term School Holidays.

5. To work with the school that has no access to out of school care - Hanbury in Greet Green and Lyng ward (before school club)

- From the Schools Survey carried out by FIS in February 2020, Hanbury Primary currently states there is no demand from parents for a breakfast club. However, Early Years have been supporting a new provider establishing a new provision in the immediate area. This is still to be registered with OFSTED

6. To use a wide range of direct and indirect marketing as well as extensive outreach, to increase the take up of 2 year old funding

- Job Centre outreach sessions in West Bromwich, Oldbury, Smethwick and Tipton to promote the take up of 2 year old funding.
- Outreach Event in King's Square West Bromwich to promote childcare options
- Job Centre outreach event in Wednesbury Hub

The Local Authority regularly receives DWP lists and sends out letters to qualifying families on these lists.

- 218 funded settings in December 2019:
- 43 schools funded
- 79 childminders funded
- 96 private and voluntary providers funded
- 1516 children accessing an ELT place
- 78% of eligible families took up a place

Early Years continues to promote the take up of the 2-year-old Offer (ELT). A marketing plan is in place with scheduled means of marketing and promotion at specific times. Facebook and Twitter are widely used to get across key messages.

7. To monitor the take up of 3 and 4 year old 15 hour funded places in the maintained sector (schools) and gauge the impact of 2 year old funding and 30 hours funding on school nurseries.

Data analysis shows that schools are seeing a decline in the take up of nursery places which may in part be due to families accessing 30 hours and 2-year old places in the private and voluntary sector. The PVI sector may be more flexible in meeting family's needs.

In December 2019:

- 282 funded 30 hours places allocated in schools
- 1849 30 hours funded places allocated in PVI sector
- Early Years are supporting 6 schools to offer 30 hours provision from September 2020

8. To monitor the take up of 3 and 4 year old 30 hours funded places to address any potential shortfall

- Early Years continues to support schools to identify any potential shortfall in funded places.

9. To prioritise the following wards which have been identified as having more than one childcare gap, Greet Green and Lyng and Wednesbury South, to increase access to childcare in these wards.

- Outreach event in Greet Green and Lyng to promote childcare options to parents.
- 1 new day nursery opened in Greet Green and Lyng Ward registered for 24 places
- 1 site visit undertaken in Wednesbury South ward to develop an out of school club.
- Proposed childminders in both wards

Quality Early Years and Childcare in Sandwell

Early Years provide information, advice, support and training to the early years and childcare sector.

The Early Years Workforce Strategy identifies that Ofsted results and improved outcomes for children are linked to a highly qualified workforce and high quality provision.

Childcare settings must have a well-trained, qualified and professional workforce who understand the needs of all families including the most vulnerable children and families.

The team offer advice and support on:

- career options in the early years and childcare sector
- childcare business start-up and sustainability
- childminder business start-up and Ofsted registration
- short course training programmes
- child protection and safeguarding concerns
- Ofsted registration and inspection

A termly online training programme supports quality of teaching practices, awareness of mandatory safeguarding requirements and ongoing development and sustainability of early years and childcare provision.

The training programme is produced in partnership with the Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Team, Play Service and Sandwell MBC Health and Safety and is delivered by internal/ external local support agencies and professional training providers. All training reflects the local and national changing needs of the Statutory and PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) Early Years and Childcare sector. This enables providers to fulfil their legal duties as detailed in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, Ofsted registration and inspection and Local Authority requirements.

Childcare providers, schools, children centres, and foster carers can purchase training packages to suit their needs. Child Protection and SEND remain key priorities and are currently provided free of charge in partnership with Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) and ISEY.

Sandwell continues to provide Level 4 progression modules focusing on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and supporting the most vulnerable 2-year olds.

Sandwell's early years recruitment web pages attract numerous people considering childcare careers.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, training courses and briefing sessions were offered online, and this is a trend that is likely to continue with virtual classrooms and web based training packages offering flexible learning. An audit of providers IT capabilities is being undertaken so that training and meetings can be conducted on the most appropriate platforms.

Quality Improvement

The Early Years team provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to new and established early years and childcare provision including:

- Support visits to settings Ofsted graded Inadequate and Requires Improvement.
- Good and Outstanding termly visits from the Local Authority area QTS
- Support from the Funding, Workforce and Development Team.
- New provider support from initial enquiry to final registration
- Advisory site visits and recruitment support
- Support with registering to deliver funded places
- 2,3 and 4 year old funding audits
- Advice on Local Provider Agreement to deliver funding
- Quality Support monitoring
- Safeguarding monitoring
- Child Development monitoring through supporting settings to make accurate assessments

Equality and Inclusion

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards that all early years' providers must meet to ensure equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Early Years engage with childcare settings to promote and embed equality of opportunity into practice, as part of their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. They do this by delivering a range of training programmes, giving one to one support, advice and guidance, holding network meetings and advising on social media and information accessibility.

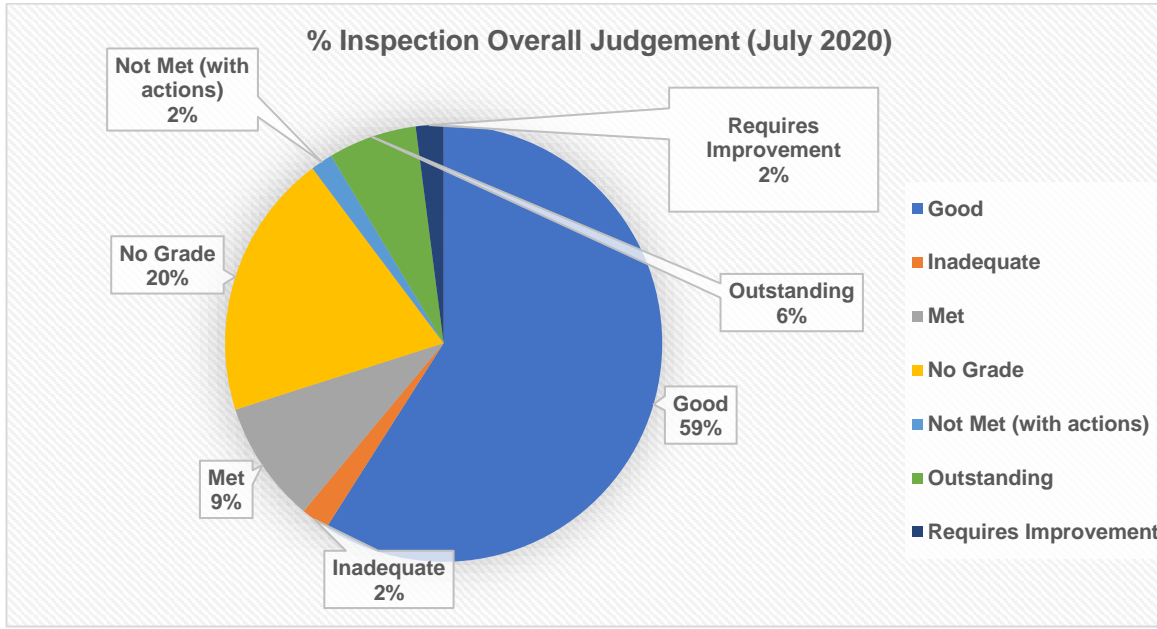
Grant Funding

The Local Authority provides funding to settings who need sustainability support. This is limited and based on an assessment process relating to quality and including Ofsted judgements. The funding is an application process which is administered through our Early years Grant Panel which was established to assess grant applications received from childcare providers.

Ofsted Inspections

Ofsted inspections were suspended on March 23rd, 2020. The last inspection report received by the Local Authority before lockdown was on 16th March 2020. No inspections were carried out up to the point on 17th July 2020 when the data was collected. The below inspections are therefore pre 23rd March 2020.

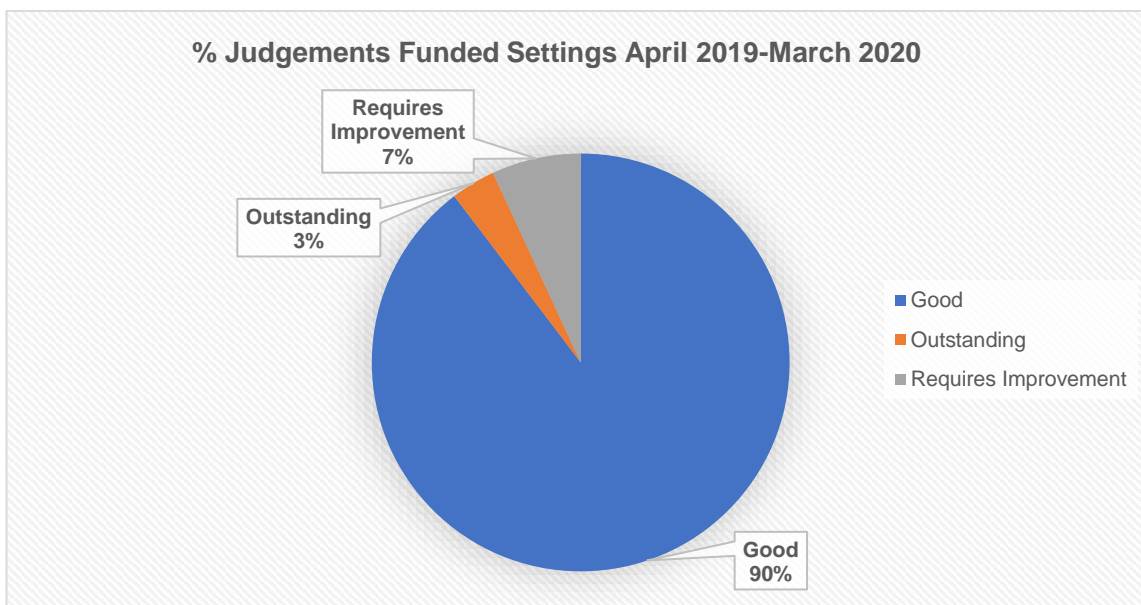
65% of all Ofsted registered providers are rated Good or Outstanding.



Funded Providers Inspection

29 providers offering 3 & 4 year old funding were inspected between April 2019 and March 2020.

93% of Funded Providers are rated as good or outstanding



Ofsted Early Years Inspections data is published on gov.uk website.

Currently data is available up to 31 March 2019.

Tables on page 10 use Ofsted data received by the Family Information Service in their daily feed between April 2019 and March 2020. The 2 data sets are sourced differently and therefore should be examined separately.

Number and % of Ofsted Early Years Inspections at 31 March 2019

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Number of providers					
	EYR providers	Total number inspected	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	61,652	50,774	10,103	38,367	1,808	496
West Midlands	5,143	4,350	783	3,351	175	41
Birmingham	945	782	108	615	49	10
Dudley	214	185	41	136	7	1
Sandwell	239	203	25	168	10	0
Walsall	160	132	16	109	7	0
Wolverhampton	157	133	13	102	11	7

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Percentage of inspected providers			
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	20	76	4	1
West Midlands	18	77	4	1
Birmingham	14	79	6	1
Dudley	22	74	4	1
Sandwell	12	83	5	0
Walsall	12	83	5	0
Wolverhampton	10	77	8	5

Childcare in Sandwell at start of lockdown 23rd March 2020.

In March 2020 Sandwell had sufficient childcare for 0-11yrs

Tables 1 and 2 show the number of childcare settings and total childcare places for 0-8 yrs. at the start of the lockdown on 23rd March 2020. These tables form the baseline from which comparisons can be made as the lockdown progressed.

Table 3 shows the ratio of early years places to children on 23rd March 2020. Overall, the ratio remained 2 children to 1 place for 0-4 yrs. in Sandwell.

Table 4 shows wraparound and pre-school provision in Primary Schools in Sandwell. On March 23rd, 2020 there was sufficient provision for 3-11 year olds.

Only 1 Primary School, Sacred Heart Primary in Tipton Green ward, has no wraparound provision. However, from the School Wraparound Survey carried out by FIS in February 2020, Sacred Heart Primary indicated they may start a breakfast club in September 2020 and currently they direct parents to Tipton Toddlers Day Nursery for wraparound.

Only 1 school in Tividale ward and no schools in Wednesbury South ward run activities during school holidays. The gap is currently filled by day nurseries and childminders in these wards. Recommendation 4 in the 2019-20 Childcare Sufficiency Report was to work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to address the need for more holiday provision. The recommendation remains to work with existing providers in these wards.

Table 1 Childcare Settings (0-8yrs.) 23rd March 2020

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Settings
Abbey	10	4	0	2	3	2	21
Blackheath	11	3	0	0	1	2	17
Bristnall	11	6	0	4	4	4	29
Charlemont	5	2	2	0	1	2	12
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	2	2	0	0	1	1	6
Friar Park	3	2	1	0	1	1	8
Great Barr	4	5	0	3	4	5	21
Great Bridge	1	5	1	3	4	3	17
Greets Green and Lyng	4	4	0	0	1	3	12
Hateley Heath	4	2	0	1	1	1	9
Langley	7	2	0	2	3	3	17
Newton	8	2	0	0	1	3	14
Old Warley	5	1	1	0	0	2	9
Oldbury	4	4	0	1	1	2	12
Princes End	6	3	0	2	2	1	14
Rowley	6	2	1	1	1	1	12
Smethwick	5	4	1	1	1	1	13
Soho and Victoria	5	6	2	4	4	5	26
St Pauls	1	2	2	0	1	3	9
Tipton Green	1	4	0	1	1	1	8
Tividale	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
Wednesbury North	0	3	0	1	2	2	8
Wednesbury South	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
West Bromwich Central	2	6	0	0	2	1	11
Total	109	77	11	26	40	49	312

Source: FIS Database March 2020

Table 2 Childcare Places (0-8yrs.) 23rd March 2020

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Places
Abbey	162	386	0	125	260	125	1058
Blackheath	130	198	0	0	20	94	442
Bristnall	144	544	0	204	322	148	1362
Charlemont	62	155	80	0	52	38	387
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	24	200	0	0	100	32	356
Friar Park	24	119	24	0	45	45	257
Great Barr	62	494	0	113	326	187	1182
Great Bridge	6	421	25	117	186	117	872
Greets Green and Lyng	36	248	0	0	25	198	507
Hateley Heath	48	183	0	30	60	30	351
Langley	96	272	0	136	272	136	912
Newton	96	144	0	0	84	142	466
Old Warley	72	148	32	0	0	64	316
Oldbury	72	554	0	68	136	125	955
Princes End	62	168	0	89	66	49	434
Rowley	72	298	20	112	112	112	726
Smethwick	54	248	30	44	88	44	508
Soho and Victoria	66	610	44	187	374	159	1440
St Pauls	24	141	70	0	89	115	439
Tipton Green	12	384	0	56	112	56	620
Tividale	60	216	0	0	0	0	276
Wednesbury North	0	454	0	74	354	177	1059
Wednesbury South	12	200	0	0	0	0	212
West Bromwich Central	24	694	0	0	88	32	838
Total	1420	7479	325	1355	3171	2225	15975

Source: FIS Database March 2020

Table 3 Estimated Childcare for 0-4 Year Olds 23rd March 2020 by ward based on 2019 Birth Data

Ward	Estimated CHDMD Places	Estimated DN places	Estimated PG Places	Estimated MSN Places (Jan 2020)	Estimated Places 0-4 years (2020 fig)	Birth 0-4 (2019 fig)	Ratio of Children to 1 estimated 0-4 place in Sandwell (Sandwell benchmark 2:1)
Abbey	81	211	0	208	500	1020	2
Blackheath	64	154	0	120	338	888	3
Bristnall	72	315	0	208	595	828	1
Charlemont with Grove Vale	31	103	80	134	348	792	2
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	12	100	0	224	336	1003	3
Friar Park	12	87	24	256	379	981	2
Great Barr with Yew Tree	32	247	0	156	435	861	2
Great Bridge	6	267	25	320	618	979	2
Greets Green and Lyng	18	144	0	242	404	1146	3
Hateley Heath	24	131	0	224	379	1091	3
Langley	48	136	0	180	364	950	3
Newton	48	102	0	130	280	776	2
Old Warley	36	74	32	104	246	759	2
Oldbury	36	277	0	320	633	1337	2
Princes End	31	102	0	182	315	1033	3
Rowley	36	186	20	138	380	804	2
Smethwick	30	180	30	254	494	1201	2
Soho and Victoria	36	325	44	296	701	1723	3
St Pauls	12	141	70	164	387	1271	4
Tipton Green	6	200	0	160	366	1134	3
Tividale	30	108	0	190	328	921	3
Wednesbury North	0	227	0	260	487	923	2
Wednesbury South	6	100	0	60	166	826	5
West Bromwich Central	12	358	0	190	560	1077	2
Totals	719	4275	325	4720	10039	24324	2

CM= Childminders; DN = Day Nurseries; PG = Pre-school Playgroup; MSN= Maintained School Nursery

Ward	Total Primary Schools	Total Schools registered for 30 Hours	Total Schools registered to receive 3 and 4 year old funding?	Total Schools with On Site Pre-School	Total School Site Breakfast Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site After School Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site Holiday Playschemes (run by school)	Total School Site After School Activities (run by school)	Total External Breakfast Clubs	Total External After School Clubs	Total External Holiday Playschemes	Sufficient Childcare Pick-ups for Schools	Sufficient Wraparound for Schools
Abbey	4	2	2	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Blackheath	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Bristnall	6	3	4	1	6	3	1	1	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Charlemont with Grove Vale	4	2	3	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	Yes	Yes
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	5	2	4	2	4	1	0	2	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Friar Park	4	0	4	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Great Barr with Yew Tree	4	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	Yes	Yes
Great Bridge	6	4	6	0	4	3	2	1	2	2	1	Yes	Yes
Greets Green and Lyng	4	1	4	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	1	Yes	Yes
Hateley Heath	4	2	4	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Langley	3	2	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Newton	3	2	2	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Old Warley	3	1	1	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Oldbury	5	4	5	1	3	0	0	2	2	3	0	Yes	Yes

Princes End	4	1	3	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Rowley	3	0	2	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Smethwick	4	4	4	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Soho and Victoria	6	2	6	0	6	1	0	5	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
St Pauls	3	1	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Tipton Green	4	2	3	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Tividale	3	3	3	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury North	6	1	4	0	6	4	0	0	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury South	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
West Bromwich Central	3	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Mar-20													

Table 4 School Wraparound and Pre-School Provision (3-11 yrs.) by ward 23rd March 2020

Demand is currently met in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards, but these wards could become an area of concern in the future.

Wraparound Provision in Schools

Results of School Wraparound Survey carried out by Sandwell FIS February 2020

72% of schools responded to the survey carried out in January and February 2020

- 62 respondents have a breakfast club
- 53 respondents have an after school club or after school activities
- 49 of the breakfast clubs are run by the school and 13 are run by external providers
- 32 of the after school clubs are run by the school and 21 are run by external providers
- On average breakfast clubs are open for 1 hour each day
- On average after school clubs are open for 2 hours 30 mins each day
- 100% of respondents said the breakfast club opened every day
- 89% of respondents said the after school club opened every day
- The average cost of a breakfast club is £3.25
- The average cost of an after school club is £5.69

The most expensive breakfast clubs are in Charlemont with Grove Vale and Great Barr with Yew Tree wards at £6 per session

The most expensive after school clubs are in West Bromwich Central, Bristnall and Soho and Victoria wards at £10-£12 per session

9 schools indicated they have a holiday playscheme in Abbey, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Bridge, Langley, Oldbury, Soho and Victoria and St Pauls wards.

- 1 school runs a playscheme and the other 8 are run by external providers
- 7 of the playschemes run all week and 2 run some of the week
- 6 of the playschemes run during half terms, Easter and Summer.
- None opened at Christmas
- On average holiday playschemes are open for 7 and a half hours per day
- The average cost for a holiday playscheme is £19 per day
- 20 schools are registered for Tax Free Childcare with 48 families accessing TFC
- 11 schools have a parent and toddler group on their school site
- 51 schools indicated their wraparound care would continue in the next 12 months.
- Schools in 5 wards indicated their wraparound would not continue in the next 12 months: Princes End, Soho and Victoria, St Pauls, Wednesbury North and West Bromwich Central.
- Schools in 3 wards didn't know if they would carry on with wraparound care in the next 12 months: Bristnall, Hateley Heath and Oldbury.
- Sacred Heart Primary in Tipton Green ward said they may open a breakfast club in September 2020.

65% of schools indicated they would direct parents to other services if they could not provide wraparound care. 37% would direct families to the Family Information Service

Childcare Costs in Sandwell

Tables 5 and 6 Coram Family and Childcare Costs [Survey](#) 2019, which was carried out in December 2019. It shows the average cost of childcare in Sandwell and the West Midlands.

Table 5

Average Childcare Costs in Sandwell 2019		
Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time = 50hrs
Childminders = under 2's	£106.25	£212.50
Childminders = over 2's	£87.50	£175
Day nurseries= under 2's	£113.65	£227.30
Day nurseries= over 2's	£107.50	£215
Out of school care		£81.90
Childminder after school		£72.49
Holiday Playscheme		£125

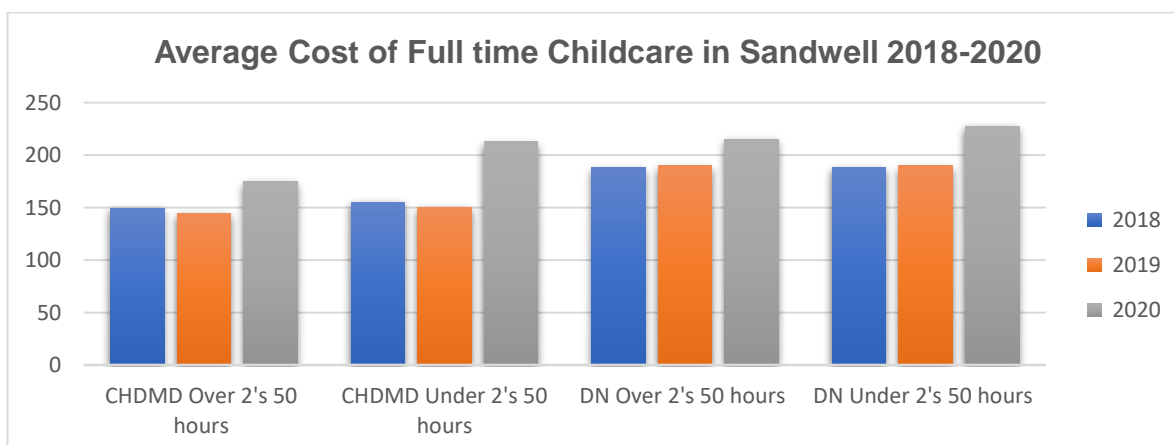
Source: Coram Family & Childcare Survey 2020

Table 6

Average Childcare Costs in the West Midlands 2019		
Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time
Childminders = under 2's	£104.47	£204.67
Childminders = over 2's	£101.77	£201.49
Day nurseries= under 2's	£116.25	£238.19
Day nurseries= over 2's	£113.02	£219.76
Out of school care		£59.90
Childminder after school		£65.36
Holiday Playscheme		£130.66

Source: Coram Family & Childcare Costs Survey, 2020

The average cost of a full time place in a Day Nursery or Childminder for a baby or toddler before universal entitlement at 3 years has risen significantly in the last year. Reasons for this rise in Sandwell are not known, but in general increased staffing costs and overheads, funding structures which don't cover the cost of delivering childcare, business profitability, all play a part in setting a pricing structure. Even with increased charges, few childcare providers do more than break even.



Monitoring early years and childcare provision during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Department for Education (DfE) launched a data collection process in April 2020 to ensure there was up-to-date information on early years and childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The data was published as a [summary](#) on GOV.UK. The data continued to be collected beyond 1st June, to ensure that Local Authorities had information on which children were accessing provision and if there were sufficiency issues in particular areas.

DfE also asked Ofsted to monitor which providers on the early years register were open or closed. This information from registered early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak gave setting-level data required by Ofsted to fulfil its safeguarding requirements as a regulator.

Tables 7 and 8 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) on 18th May and June 1st, 2020 from DfE data collection surveys.

Table 7 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) on 18th May 2020

Type of Provision	Available for keyworkers during Coronavirus Epidemic	Closed until further notice during Covid 19 Epidemic	Regular Keyworker Children	% Open to Keyworkers
Childminder	47	38	23	65%
Day Nursery	28	46	3	40%
Pre School Playgroup	1	10		9%
Grand Total	76	94	26	52%

Town	Available for keyworkers during Coronavirus Epidemic	Closed until further notice during Covid 19 Epidemic	Regular Keyworker Children	% Open to Keyworkers
Oldbury	20	13	5	66%
Rowley Regis	12	11	6	62%
Smethwick	16	24	3	44%
Tipton	6	15	4	40%
Wednesbury	5	4	1	60%
West Bromwich	17	27	7	47%
Grand Total	76	94	26	52%

Type of Provision	Available for keyworkers during Coronavirus Epidemic	Closed until further notice during Covid 19 Epidemic	Regular Keyworker Children	% Open to Keyworkers
Maintained	5	1	1	86%
PVI	71	93	25	51%
Grand Total	76	94	26	52%

Table 8 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) available on 1st June 2020

Type of Provision	Open June 1 st 2020	Closed June 1 st 2020	Grand Total	% Open
Childminder	74	33	107	69%
Day Nursery	51	26	77	66%
Pre School Playgroup /School Site Nursery	14	12	26	53%
Grand Total	139	71	210	66%

Town	Settings Open June 1 st 2020	Settings Closed June 1 st 2020	Grand Total	% Open
Oldbury	34	10	44	77%
Rowley Regis	21	10	31	68%
Smethwick	29	16	45	64%
Tipton	13	12	25	52%
Wednesbury	8	2	10	80%
West Bromwich	34	21	55	62%
Grand Total	139	71	210	66%

Day Nurseries	Settings Open June 1 st 2020	Settings Closed June 1 st 2020	Grand Total	% Open
Maintained	7	0	7	100%
PVI	44	26	70	63%
Grand Total	51	26	77	66%

- **52% of Early Years Settings were open on 18th May 2020**
- **66% of Early Years Settings were open on 1st June 2020**
- **88% of childcare settings will be open on 1st September (based on information from FIS database 25th August 2020)**

Government Guidance updated on 27th July stated

It is our plan that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

In addition to schools re-opening, employers were also given updated guidance on safe return to the workplace. It is therefore anticipated that in September 2020 there will be an increase in take up of childcare places for early years (0-4 yrs.) as parents take up their funded entitlement or look for wraparound childcare.

DfE guidance 20 July 2020 also states that local authorities do not need to pass on universal funding to settings that do not open in September.

Table 9 88% of childcare settings will be open on 1st September.

It is difficult to predict likely demand from parents in September, but this figure could indicate there will not be sufficient childcare.

The recommendation is to work with childcare providers who do not open on 1st September to help them re-open safely and sustainably.

The DfE will continue to monitor the Early Years sector through its weekly data collection of settings that are open and closed and the numbers of children attending

Table 9 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) open or opening on 1st September 2020

Type of Provision	Open or Opening 1 st September 2020	Closed Until further notice	Total Settings	% of settings open
Childminder	89	20	109	82%
Day Nursery	74	4	78	95%
Pre School Playgroup /School Site Nursery	23	2	25	96%
Grand Total	186	26	212	88%

Town	Open or Opening 1 st September 2020	Closed Until further notice	Total	% of settings open
Oldbury	44	3	47	94%
Rowley Regis	28	2	30	93%
Smethwick	37	10	47	78%
Tipton	17	7	24	71%
Wednesbury	10	1	11	100%
West Bromwich	50	3	53	94%
Grand Total	186	26	212	88%

FIS database 25th August 2020

Table 10 only 60% of childcare providers offering before and after school clubs and holiday provision will be open on 1st September 2020. This figure does not include clubs and activities based on school sites as this data was unavailable.

Government guidance on managing school classes and health and safety will have an impact on how wraparound services can be safely delivered. This, in turn, will impact on sustainability of clubs and childminders. Again, it is difficult to predict likely demand for breakfast and after school club places in September as more families return to work, but this figure indicates there may be insufficient places. The recommendation is to work with wraparound providers to ensure they can re-open safely and sustainably.

Table 10 Wraparound Childcare open or opening on 1st September 2020

Town	Open or Opening 1 st September 2020	Closed Until further notice	Total	% of settings open
Oldbury	13	7	20	65%
Rowley Regis	5	2	7	71%
Smethwick	11	17	28	39%
Tipton	12	5	17	71%
Wednesbury	12	2	14	86%
West Bromwich	15	13	28	54%
Grand Total	68	46	114	60%

FIS database 25th August 2020

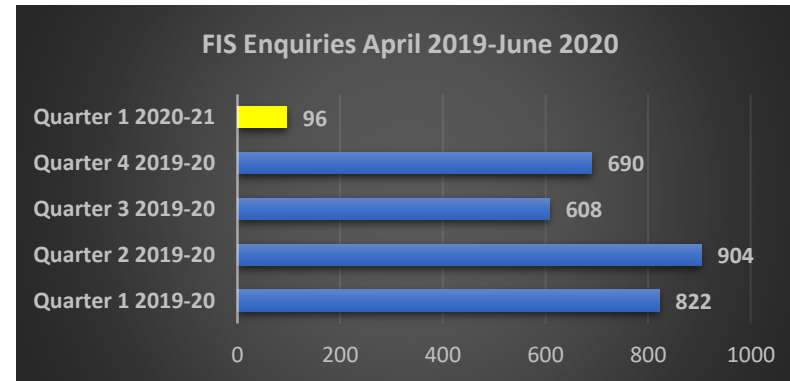
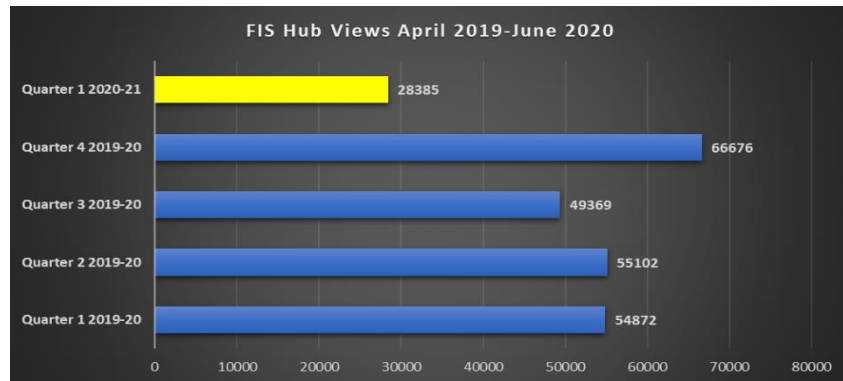
Support given to Childcare Providers and Parents during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Support given by Family Information Service

FIS continued to support Early Years throughout the lockdown.

Although total enquiries and website views fell dramatically during this period, FIS successfully adapted to new ways of delivering information to families. New pages were created on the FIS Hub with childcare information for keyworkers and learning and resources for families and providers. These pages were constantly updated. The FIS telephone helpline did not continue but an online helpline was available throughout the lockdown period.

Social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter were used extensively to get information out to families and providers, including important Government messages. Between March and May 47% of enquiries related to 2,3 and 4 year old funded places, 23% of enquiries related to keyworker childcare and 6% of enquiries were advice on other council services, including housing and school's admission. Brokerage continued with one to one support given to 10 keyworker families during April and May. The FIS team also made 40 calls to vulnerable families to assess their food and essential supplies needs.



FIS Hub website views and enquiries showing effect of lockdown in March 2020

Support given by Quality Early Years and Childcare Team during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Early Years and the Family Information Service continued to provide support for childcare providers and families during the lockdown.

Support given to Childminders

Ofsted Registered Childminders are supported with visits from Early Years. In the period from January to March 2020

- 3 childminders had a support visit 6 months post registration
- 1 childminder had a support visit 12 months post registration
- 1 childminder had a support visit 18 months post registration
- 3 childminders had a support visit pre-Ofsted inspection

After 23rd March 2020 all visits were cancelled. Childminder support carried on by phone, email, text and use of platforms such as Skype and Microsoft Teams. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues it is likely that childminder recruitment and support will carry on using these methods.

The type of support given during lockdown included advice on accessing Government grants, Government guidance on Covid-19, supporting keyworker families, emotional well-being and re-starting their business post lockdown.

Childminders are always the most flexible part of the childcare workforce and they continued to be flexible during the lockdown, maintaining contact with their families and supporting the local community with activities such as mask making, and washbags for children in hospital.

Prospective and new childminders were also supported as they worked towards full registration. 17 prospective childminders were supported towards registration and 4 new childminders were registered in Soho and Victoria and Langley wards in June and July 2020



Childminder using Zoom to keep in touch with families

Support given by Quality Early Years and Childcare Team

The Quality Early Years and Child Care Team provide a local authority statutory duty to provide advice, guidance and support to child care providers in the borough.

Between January – 23rd March 2020 the following support was given;

Support visits to Sandwell providers, including new providers, settings rated Inadequate and Requires Improvement, Ofsted preparation, quality improvement and new funded settings	215 visits Including; 19 to RI settings 23 to Inadequate
Duty calls take under the retained function to give advice, guidance and support	60 duty calls
Network meetings for all Sandwell providers	2
Training	
12 x Health and Safety mandatory courses	224 delegates
7 x SCSP approved Safeguarding courses	171 delegates
33 x Quality Improvement and Narrowing the Gap courses	624 delegates

Following the national lockdown on 23rd March our immediate concern was ensuring that sufficient child care would remain open, across the 6 towns, for key worker and vulnerable children who needed or wanted places.

To encourage settings to remain open, despite rapidly declining attendance figures and loss of paid fees, we established an emergency sustainability fund to support settings that remained open throughout the lockdown period. An approved COVID 19 sustainability plan supported;

- 5 new Child Minders who were not eligible for the Government support for the self-employed.
- 8 standalone Out of School clubs who were not able to open during the Easter and May half term holidays.
- 32 Day care nurseries who remained open but were catering for very low numbers of key worker and vulnerable children.

The early years team and the Children's Centre teachers remained in email and telephone contact on at least a weekly basis. All settings that closed were asked to work with the open settings to transfer children who still required a place. All closed settings were reminded that the children they were concerned about remained their responsibility. Settings rose to the challenge using video calling, telephone calling, social media platforms, educational electronic systems to regularly contact families and share home learning ideas. All closed settings were asked to remain in contact with the early years team and to ensure that we could contact them if we needed to.

86 recorded duty calls have been recorded during lockdown, however, the reality will be considerably higher as the vast majority of contact the team has had with the team has been made by email. The subject matter of the contact has included; advice on interpreting DfE guidance, staffing arrangements, future sustainability concerns, health and safety of children and staff, funding, safeguarding concerns, assessments of children not seen in the setting since Lockdown began. This list is not exhaustive.

To support with business and sustainability issues the team engaged with the West Bromwich based social enterprise team at Skills Work and Enterprise Development Agency (SWEDA) to provide some online advice and guidance and 1:1 business reviews for settings requiring this type of support. They also supported settings with applications made to Government funding.

During lockdown the team have ensured that all new DfE guidance was received by all providers. This often involved devising generic documentation for settings to adapt according to their individual needs. A number of support materials were produced to support schools and settings with planning an appropriate curriculum and learning environment following, and to be used alongside, Government guidance.

From May 2020 the Early Years teams adapted the training plan that was in place to enable the courses to be delivered on line.

The following Training and support sessions were delivered;

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile moderation in schools	10 schools
6 x Chat Surgeries. Schools and settings set the agenda	42 attended
Cluster meetings 1 x Oldbury & Smethwick 1 x Rowley & Tipton 1 x Wednesbury & West Bromwich	49 attended in total
3 x Transition support	41 attended
17 training events	154 delegates
Totals = 29 events	286 practitioners supported

Autumn 2020 training has now been planned to be delivered on line.

Early Years Funding for 2,3 and 4 Year Olds

In April 2020, there were 9275 funded childcare and early years places being offered by 227 early years and childcare providers (including 41 schools offering 30 hours). This compares with the 2019 figures of 12160 funded places offered by 267 providers.

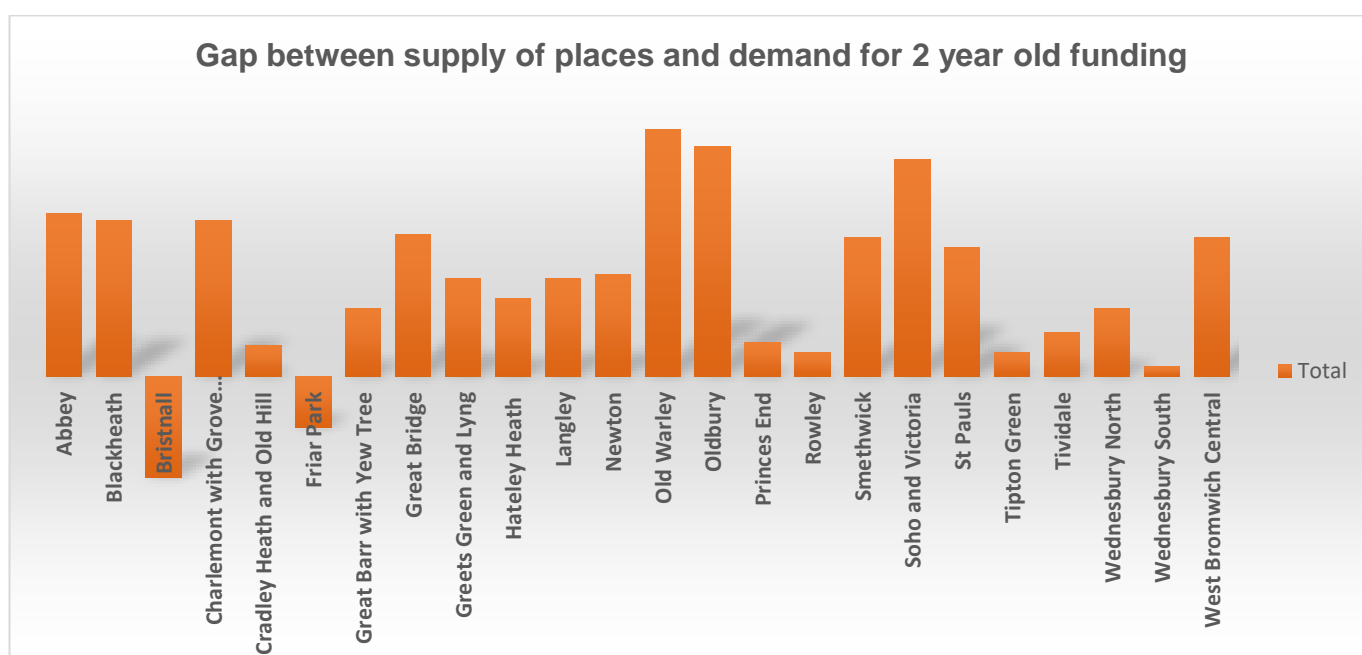
	Schools	PVI's	Childminders	Total
2 year olds places	129	1247	38	1414
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Universal)	4720	1448	27	6195
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Extended)	384	55	29	468
3 and 4 year olds (30hrs)	N/A	1152	46	1198
Total	5233	3902	140	9275

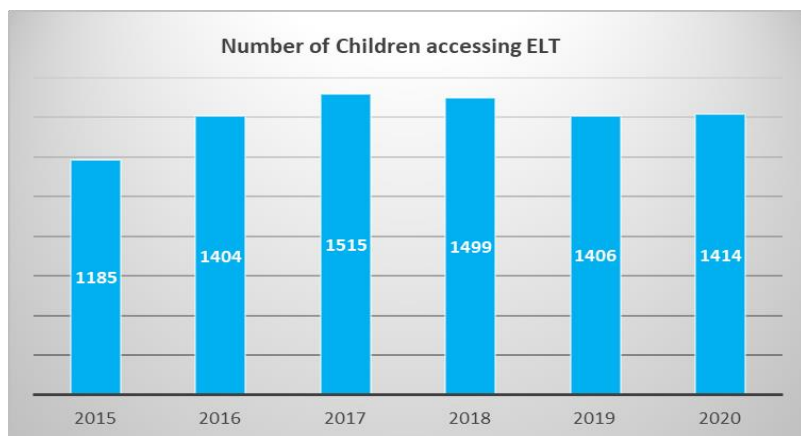
Free funding for 2 year olds

The Department for Education (DfE) in conjunction with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) provides a list of eligible families with 2 year olds every 6-8 weeks for the academic year 2019/20.

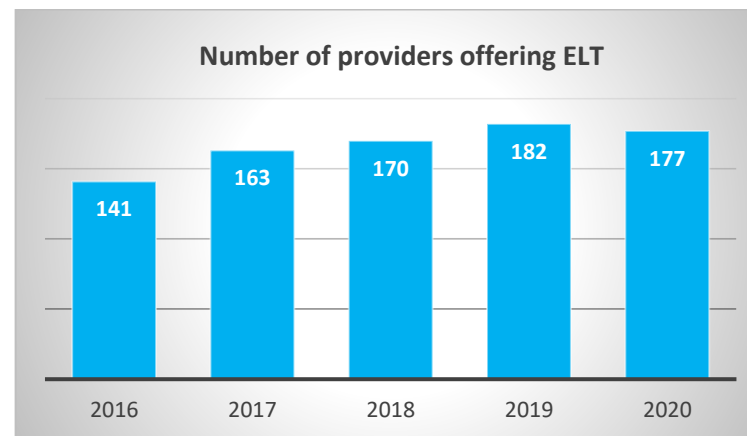
- The local authority was sent the contact information for 2067 eligible families in the 2019/20 Academic Year
- 1414 children accessed free funding for 2 year olds in Spring Term 2020 (April)
- 68.5% of eligible children were accessing 2 year old funding in April 2020
- 1.5% increase in take up of 2 year old funding from 2018-2019
- 177 Providers currently offer 2 year old funded places
- Bristnall, Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Friar Park, Princes End, Rowley, Tipton Green and Wednesbury South wards had little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards

Overall there were sufficient places for Children accessing 2 year old funding





2 year old funding take up in Sandwell 2015-2020



Providers offering 2 year old funding in Sandwell 2015-2020

		England				Sandwell			% +/- change from 2018-2020
		2018	2019	2020	% +/- change from 2018-2020	2018	2019	2020	
Extended entitlement	Number of four year olds benefiting	80,828	92,040	97,305	20	359	414	477	33
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	296,924	328,127	345,704	16	1,370	1,544	1,675	22
	Number of three year olds benefiting	216,096	236,087	248,399	15	1,011	1,130	1,198	18
Funded entitlement	Number of four year olds benefiting	656,129	651,479	650,193	-1	4,847	4,655	4,798	-1
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	1,284,632	1,277,137	1,271,544	-1	9,304	9,186	9,269	0
	Number of three year olds benefiting	628,503	625,658	621,351	-1	4,457	4,531	4,471	0
	Number of two year olds benefiting	154,962	148,751	143,439	-7	1,517	1,471	1,422	-6

Table showing 'Children benefiting by age and provider type (2018 - 2020)' from 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age' in England and Sandwell between 2018 and 2020. Source [DfE Data](#) (Gov.UK)

3 and 4 Year Olds Universal Entitlement (15 hours free funding)

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of free funding from the term following their third birthday until they start in Reception Class in the September following their 4th birthday. Therefore, some children will access up to 5 terms of early education.

In the Spring term 2020 there were;

- 4800 children eligible for the Universal Entitlement (based on available birth data)
- 3533 children accessing the funding (74%)
- Bristnall, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Barr with Yew Tree and Old Warley wards had little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards

Overall there were sufficient places for 3 and 4 year olds for Universal Entitlement



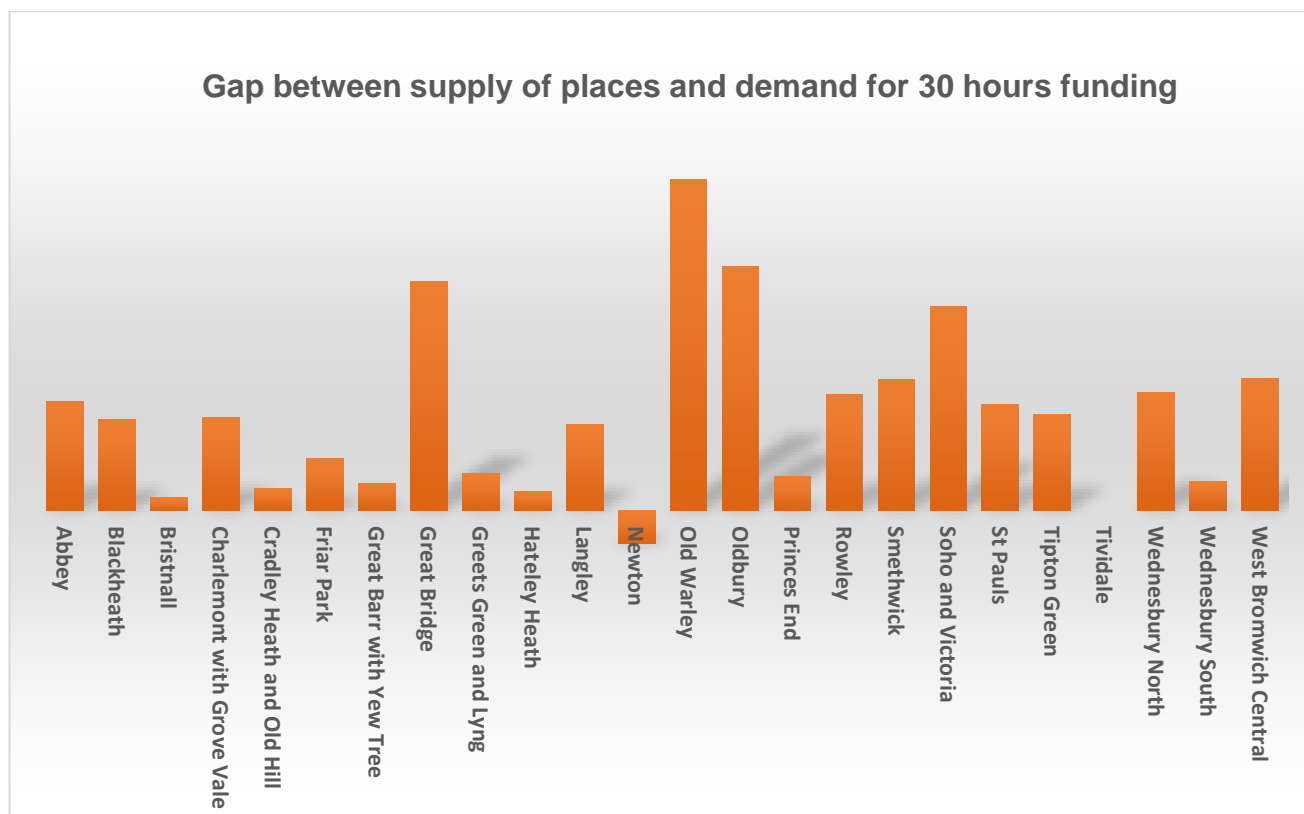
3 and 4 year olds Extended Offer (30 hours free funding)

The 30 hours free funding came into effect in September 2017 and is aimed at working families. Families who are eligible for free 30 hours are issued with a code from HMRC.

In the Spring term 2020 there were;

- 861 children accessing 30 hours
- 229 PVI and Maintained Providers offering 30 hours
- Bristnall, Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Great Barr with Yew Tree, Hateley Heath, Newton and Tividale wards have little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards.

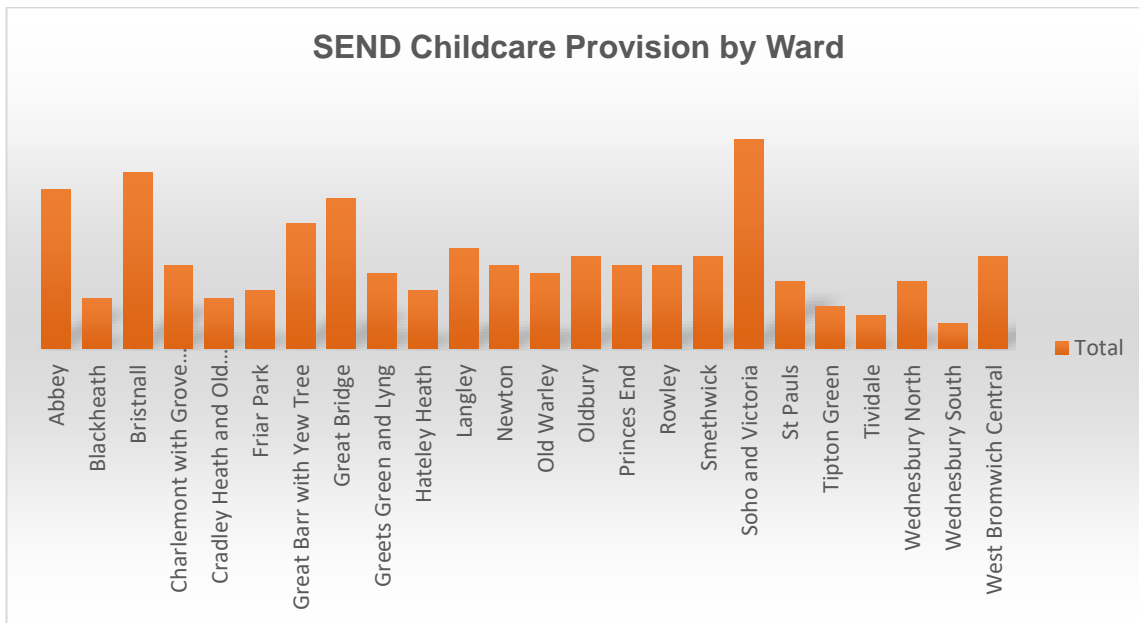
Overall there were sufficient places for 30 hours



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision

82% of childcare providers indicate that they would care for children with SEND.

All wards have providers that would care for children with SEND



The Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Service works with providers to support children to integrate into childcare and early settings. They also administer the Inclusion Support Grant and the High Needs Block Funding which enables children with SEND to have one to one support in a setting depending on the child’s level of need.

There are also 17 short break services for children with a diagnosis / Education Health Care Plan who can access these services.

From September 2020, the Local Offer website will be integrated into the Family Information Service Hub, giving families and professionals all Local Offer information on one website.

Findings and Recommendation of the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2020-21

Findings

- There is sufficient childcare in Sandwell based on current data
- Covid-19 Pandemic will have an ongoing effect on supply and demand of childcare
- 88% of early years childcare providers (0-4 yrs.) are likely to be open on 1st September
- 60% of wraparound childcare providers (4-11 yrs.) are likely to be open on 1st September
- Demand for childcare in the next 6 months will fluctuate
- There is a risk the Local Authority may not be able to secure sufficient childcare in next 6 months
- Take up of 2 year old funded places increased by 1.5% on previous year's data
- There is a lack of School Holiday provision in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards
- All wards have providers who would care for children with SEND.
- Overall, the cost of childcare in Sandwell is lower than the West Midlands
- All wards have childcare providers offering evenings, weekends and emergency childcare

Recommendations

To ensure the Local Authority meets the Statutory Duty to secure sufficient childcare, *so far as is reasonably practicable*, a detailed and comprehensive action plan will be developed to address the following 7 recommendations. The recommendations are:

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.
2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.
3. To ensure there are sufficient childcare places during the Covid-19 pandemic by working closely with childcare providers, giving them support to open safely and remain viable.
4. To monitor demand for childcare places through FIS helpdesk and childcare providers
5. To work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to address the need for more holiday provisions.
6. To continue to promote the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old funding, including 30 hours.
7. To continue to promote the Family Information Service Hub and Local Offer.