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# **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)**

**2023 to 2024**

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## 1. Overall assessment and headlines summary

This document outlines the local authority’s work in meeting its childcare sufficiency duty.[[1]](#footnote-1)

It outlines the work that is being undertaken to promote high quality Early Years provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities for two- three- and four-year-olds eligible for free childcare places.

Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient childcare for children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children) whose parents are working or parents who are studying or training for employment, this means that parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and are delivered flexibly at a range of high-quality settings.

An Early Years Education is critical to children becoming ready for school and to support their early social interactions and to form relationships with their peers.

This document will provide information about the current and projected supply and demand of childcare for particular age ranges of children, including the affordability, accessibility and quality of provision and details of how gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

Medway Council and Early Years providers have continued to work together in partnership, to support the needs and preferences of parents and providers for delivery and use of childcare.

The arrangements of childcare demand and staffing within provision, will continue to change and these new challenges will be supported through the childcare assessment as an informative document.

### Headlines summary

Medway Council have met their Childcare Sufficiency duty in 2023 by:

* Ensuring there is enough accessible Early Years and childcare provision across Medway and addressing any gaps in provision.
* Ensuring high quality Early Years and childcare provision for children aged two, three and four years of age, taking up the free Early Years education and childcare entitlements.
* Continuing to support providers in offering the extended childcare entitlement to eligible families and mapping provision for future Government extended entitlements.
* Ensuring there is sufficient Early Years childcare provision for children and families using the childcare element of working tax credits.

### Sufficiency

Medway has been providing free/funded childcare spaces for disadvantaged two-year-olds since 2013. This offer was extended to over 40% of two-year-olds and in the current data provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) the number of potentially eligible two-year-olds is 44%.

Medway is committed to supporting as many families as possible to take up the offer of free or funded places for an eligible two-year-old. Currently, there are sufficient registered places to accept all of the potentially eligible two-year-olds in Medway.

In the summer term 2023, there were vacancies in all of the childcare sectors for three- and four-year-olds and this included13 new providers who registered with Medway as a funded childcare setting from January 2023.

Since September 2017, Medway has provided funding for eligible families to access the 30 Hour entitlement. The Department for Education (DfE) estimated that there would be 2100 eligible families in Medway.

With an average take up of 80%, this would equate to approximately 1,680 children taking up a place across the year.

In 2023, Medway have exceeded the expected take-up rate with 95% of children using their extended entitlement.

The Early Years Sufficiency Team have supported settings in sustainable quality provision through working in conjunction with the commissioned service of Medway Early Years Limited (MEY).

Families have been supported in seeking childcare places through the Family Information Service at Medway Council and Local Offer.

## 2. Demand for childcare

### Population of Early Years’ children

Numbers by age **(birth data and school services forecast)**

In total, there are **17,272** children under the age of 5 years living in our local authority.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Age | Number of children |
| Age 0 | 3194 |
| Age 1 | 3428 |
| Age 2 | 3343 |
| Age 3 | 3620 |
| Age 4 | 3687 |

### Childcare places

The total number of full-time (FTE) registered childcare places across Medway is 6,092

There are approximately 14,078 children aged 1, 2, 3 and 4 years of age in Medway.

This is broken down as 3428 children aged 1 year, 3,343 children aged 2 years and 7,307 children aged 3 and 4 years.

**9 to 23 months**

The new Government extended entitlement of 15 hours of free childcare for children aged 9 to 23 months will start from September 2024. The Government expected take-up rate is 60%.

Currently, 880 children aged 9 to 23 months are already in a private fee-paying childcare placement and are therefore deducted from the expected 60% take-up, the remaining places potentially required will be, **588 FTE**.

**2 Years of Age**

The new Government extended entitlement of 15 hours of free childcare for children aged 2 from working families, will start from April 2024. The Government expected take-up of this new entitlement will be 75% and equates to **702 FTE** places.

Currently the government informs Medway Council that approximately 44% of 2-year-olds from families receiving some additional forms of Government support will be eligible for a part- time funded childcare place and equates to **735 FTE**. The combined total of places required for 2-year-olds will be **1437 FTE**.

The new extended offer of 30 hours childcare for all 2-year-olds of working families, will not be introduced until September 2025.

**3 & 4 Years of Age**

The government informs Medway Council that of the 7,307 children aged 3 and 4 years, approximately 2,100 of these children will potentially be eligible for a funded 30-hour childcare place of which the Government expect an 80% take up which equates to **1680**.

The remaining 5,627 children aged 3 and 4 years of age, are all eligible for a funded universal 15 hour part-time childcare place. This is calculated as **2,813 FTE**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Potential requirement of  full-time equivalent places for children aged 2 years | Potential requirement of 30-hour places for children aged 3 and 4 years | Potential requirement of full-time equivalent universal offer places for children aged 3 and 4 years | Potential requirement of full-time equivalent place for children aged 9 to 23 months. | Total |
| **1,437** | **1680** | **2,813** | **588-September 2024** | **6518** |

The total number of full-time equivalent registered childcare places offered across Medway is 6,092. The number of full-time equivalent places currently required is 5930, meaning there is full sufficiency projected until September 2024.

The introduction of the new 9 to 23 months entitlement from September 2024 will impact supply with a shortfall of 426 FTE places when using expected Government take-up rates. Each provider would need to create a further 3 FTE places to meet expected take-up.

Medway vacancy rates are a snapshot and often change rapidly. In some cases, providers may have a vacancy which is only available for a specific age group, or for a particular part time arrangement. In general, vacancy rates are higher in the autumn, when children move to school.

Medway Council Early Years Sufficiency team have currently received no communications from parents/carers stating they are unable to find a universal or extended funded childcare place for their child.

Population projections - local authority based by single year of age

The table below shows the population projections until 2030

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age** | **2023** | **2024** | **2025** | **2026** | **2027** | **2028** | **2029** | **2030** |
| 2 Years | -19 | -28 | -31 | -10 | -12 | -13 | -13 | -12 |
| 3 Years | +16 | -19 | -28 | -30 | -10 | -12 | -12 | -12 |
| 4 Years | **-117** | +17 | -20 | -27 | -29 | -10 | -11 | -13 |

## 

## 3. Medway CSA Action Plan 2023 to 2024

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Key** | **Action required** | **Timeline** |
| To sustain a high-quality childcare market.  A focus on Childminders | Annual review of CSA  Childcare occupancy and cost reports coming directly from providers using the sufficiency report on the provider portal.  Ofsted information on registered provision from download directly linked to the Synergy System.  Work with existing providers to manage the market through support offered to maintain a robust business model that supports childcare places in remaining sustainable and creating new places to meet the Government extended entitlement.  Appropriate training opportunities and briefings offered to all Medway Childcare Providers, with a focus on Childminder support and updates through briefings.  Quality of Childcare Provision supported and monitored by MEY | September 2023  September 2023  Daily  Ongoing  Throughout the year  Throughout the year |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| To map and place plan sustainable Early Years provision to meet demand of the new Government entitlements from April 2024. | Continue to work with the School Organisation team, to ensure that in wards where there are new housing developments planned, that potential childcare needs are considered.  Stimulate the market by signposting new potential developers/providers to ward areas that would benefit from additional childcare providers.  Publish business support for potential new providers on the Family Information Service Directory.  Signpost to MEY business support  Signpost providers to available funding streams to support sustainability with the cost of living. | Ongoing |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2-year-old provision | FIS Outreach and Medway Media team to promote the extended Government 2-year-old offer of funded childcare.  Work in partnership with Medway digital team using the Government Toolkit, to promote the extended childcare offer through social media, Radio Advertising, Electronic Media Boards in town centres. | Ongoing  November 2023 through to spring. |
| 3- to 4-year-old provision | Monitor the fluctuation in the housing market within wards to ensure that changes to demographics are being supported by changes to provision. | Sept 2023 to Sept 2024 |
| Sufficient Wraparound Care available to families. | Advertise and promote Wraparound Care on the Family Information Service Directory (FISD) to support families in seeking provision.  Complete annual survey returns issued through Coram to highlight the average cost of Wraparound Care and use the survey results to implement a consistent information audit on the FISD. | On-going |
| To ensure that SEN children and those with additional needs can access their childcare entitlements. | Ensure that providers are aware of funding they can potentially access to support and adapt to meet children’s needs. | On-going |

### 

### Disability Access Funding

In 2023, there have been 59 children qualifying for Disability Access Funding (DAF) and these children have accessed the funding at 37 different providers.

The Ofsted outcomes for providers that have been inspected, show that 91% of settings with children who are accessing DAF funding, have an inspection grading of Good or Outstanding.

## 4. Supply of childcare

### Number of Early Years’ providers and places

In total, there are 229 active Early Years’ childcare providers in our local authority, offering a maximum of 6,092 full-time Early Years’ childcare places:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of provision | Number of providers |
| Childminders | **100** |
| Nursery classes in schools | **41** |
| Private, voluntary, and independent Day Nurseries and Preschools | **88** |
| Total | **229** |

Children may attend childcare full time or part time. In some cases, two or more children attending part time may use one full time equivalent place. For example, one child may attend in the morning and one child may attend in the afternoon.

This results in more children accessing places than is noted as the setting’s maximum registered number.

#### Access to providers

Parents in Medway employ a variety of models for accessing childcare including provision close to home, parental preference, provision on key work routes, public transport routes and provision in relation to school locations.

#### Location of childcare across Medway

#### Registered childcare provider types by area

## 5. Funded early education

### Introduction to funded early education

Some children are entitled to free childcare, funded by the government. These entitlements are for 38 weeks per year.

**Current Offer**

* Children aged 2, whose families receive certain benefits (including low-income families in receipt of in-work benefits), or those who meet additional non-economic criteria, are entitled to 15 hours per week. Nationally, about 40% of 2-year-olds are entitled to this offer, but the proportion varies by area.
* All children aged 3 and 4 are entitled to 15 hours per week until they start reception class in school.
* Children aged 3 and 4 where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to 30 hours per week until they start reception class in school.

**New Extended Offer from April 2024**

Starting from April 2024, existing childcare support will be expanded in phases. By September 2025, most working families with children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support.

The changes are being introduced gradually to make sure that providers can meet the needs of more families. This means that:

From **April 2024**, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours childcare support.

From **September 2024**, 15 hours childcare support will be extended to eligible working parents of children from the age of 9 months to 3-year-olds.

From **September 2025**, eligible working parents of children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare a week.

Parents do not have to use all of the hours of their funded entitlement. They may choose to split the hours between providers.

With the agreement of their provider, parents may also spread hours across the year. For example, rather than taking 15 hours for 38 weeks a year they could take just under 12 hours for 48 weeks a year.

### Take up of funded early education.

The number of individual children attending an Early Years setting at some time throughout the year.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Age | Medway |
| Age 2 | 1207 |
| Age 3 and 4 | 6908 |
| Age 3 and 4 (30 Hour Place) | 3195 |

The maximum number of children attending an Early Years setting at any one time in the largest term (Summer 2023)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Age | Medway |
| Age 2 | 631 |
| Age 3 and 4 | 5337 Equivalent to (2669 FTE) |
| Age 3 and 4 (30 Hour Place) | 2315 |

### 

### Providers offering 2-year-old funded early education places

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of provision | Number of providers in Medway | Number of Providers offering two-year-old places | Percentage of Providers offering two-year-old places |
| Childminders | 100 | 100 | 100% |
| Nursery classes in schools/Acad | 41 | 9 | 22% |
| Private, voluntary and independent nurseries | 88 | 88 | 100% |

#### 3- and 4-year-old funded entitlement applications

Parents who think they are entitled to a 30 hour extended hours place apply for this online through the Government’s Childcare Support [website](https://www.childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/par/app/invitedtotrial).

The same website is used to apply for tax free childcare and parents can apply for either or both.

If a parent is eligible, the system creates a code which they can use with their chosen childcare provider. If they are ineligible, they will still be entitled to the universal 15 hours of early education and childcare.

### Providers offering funded early education places

Providers are paid using government funds for delivering funded early education. They are not required to offer the Government funded hours to parents, but of course parents may choose to use a different provider if they do not.

The percentages show the total percentage of providers offering funded places for specified ages.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of provision | Number of providers | Offering Age 2 targeted | Offering Age 3 and 4 universal 15 hours | Offering  Age 3 and 4 – extended 30 hours |
| Childminders | 100 | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Nursery classes in schools | 41 | 22% | 100% | 100% |
| Private, voluntary, and independent nurseries | 88 | 100% | 100% | 100% |

## 6. Cost of Early Years Childcare

For early years childcare outside the funded entitlements, we report on average prices per hour, reported to us by settings.

There may be variations to prices based on the number of hours a family uses, with reductions for longer hours, or discounts for sibling groups.

There may be additional payments for additional services such as lunch and other meals which are not included in these prices.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Price per hour | Private, voluntary and independent nurseries | Childminders |
| 0 and 1 year olds | £6.72 | £4.96 |
| 2 year olds | £6.72 | £4.96 |
| 3 and 4 year olds | £6.04 | £4.96 |

## 7. Quality of childcare in our area

### Ofsted inspection grades

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who give them an overall grade for the quality of their provision.

Childminders and private and voluntary providers are on the Early Years Register, and schools and standalone maintained nursery schools are on the schools’ register. The grades for both registers are equivalent.

Schools with nurseries have an overall inspection grade for the whole school and most also have a separate early year’s grade.

Both schools and early years providers have four possible Ofsted grades: ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’, and ‘inadequate’.

Some providers are still awaiting their first full inspection. These providers are excluded from our calculation below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of provision | Total number of providers inspected | % achieving good or outstanding |
| Childminders | 95 | 91% |
| Nursery classes in schools | 40 | 98% |
| Private and voluntary nurseries | 80 | 91% |

Total number of providers achieving a good or outstanding Ofsted grade is 94%

## 8. Methodology

* Unless otherwise stated the data comes from the Summer Term 2023. This is generated from the data provided in the May Headcount and data held in the Medway Family Information Service Directory.
* Number of children: based on Medway population projections and the ONS.
* Supply of childcare: based on data provided to us by Ofsted, who regulate Early Years’ provision in schools and childcare provision.
* Vacancy rates: based on the number of registered places against actual places filled by children across Medway in the different childcare sectors.
* Funded early education: data on take up of funded early education entitlements is based on the Early Years and Schools Census, which are taken every January and published by the Department for Education in the statistical collection *Education provision: children under five years of age.* Data on entitlement to a funded early education place for 2-year-olds is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.
* Price of childcare: based on the data held in the Medway Family Information Service Directory
* Quality of childcare: data on childcare quality is provided by Ofsted and collated in the Synergy data base.

### Other formats and languages

For other languages, large print, braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

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You will need to supply your name, your postal address and state the format and title of the publication you require.

1. Sufficiency is defined as meeting the needs of local parents who require childcare in order to enable them to take up or remain in work or undertake training or education that will lead to work. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)