

South Gloucestershire Council

REPORT TO: CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT,
NOVEMBER 2023

CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2023/24 (ALL WARDS)

Purpose of Report

To receive and approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2023/24.

Recommendation

That Cabinet be recommended to:

- i) approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2023/24*
- ii) approve the actions for the next 12 months as set out in paragraph 22 of the report.*

Policy

1. Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents or parents that are studying or training in their area. Under that Act, local authorities were originally required to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years. South Gloucestershire carried out the required assessments in 2008 and 2011.
2. Since 2013 an annual report is to be made available and accessible to parents. In subsequent guidance, the manner of reporting is no longer prescribed. Local authorities are therefore able to determine the appropriate level of detail in their report. This guidance has now been included in the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities dated April 2023, which sets out the areas the report should include. This is the eleventh annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report for South Gloucestershire.
3. The local authority's duty to assess sufficiency of childcare provision was repealed under Section 86 of the Children and Families Act 2014. However, the local authority still has a duty to secure sufficient childcare and to provide information and advice about that childcare to elected council members, parents and childcare providers. This report enables the local authority to demonstrate how it is meeting these duties.
4. The statutory guidance sets out what local authorities should consider when assessing whether there is sufficient childcare in their area. To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should take into account:
 - what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means in their area; and
 - the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
 - the state of the local labour market including the sufficiency of the local childcare workforce;
 - the quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise;
 - encouraging schools in their area to offer childcare from 8.00am until 6.00pm and in school holidays;

- encouraging existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market if needed.
 - encouraging providers to take a sustainable business approach to planning and signpost providers to resources to support them, for example, the [business sustainability tool kit](#) and the [National Day Nurseries Association Early Years Business Zone tools](#).
5. Local authorities are required to ensure that parents are provided with information about their child's entitlement to early education and childcare options in this area so that they may take up provision. This includes:
- information on the 15-hour free places for two-year-olds, the universal 15-hour free entitlement for three- and four-year-olds and the extended 30 hour free entitlement for working parents of three- and four-year-olds, and the eligibility criteria for these entitlements;
 - information on local provision and options;
 - issues around the application process and eligibility;
 - Tax Free Childcare and requirements of HMRC;
 - eligibility checking procedures for childcare;
 - information on the quality of providers based on Ofsted inspection.
 - of the local authority procedures to check eligibility for free places for two-year-olds, to check eligibility for 30 hours free childcare for foster children and to verify their eligibility for the extended entitlement.

Background

6. Free early education for all 3- and 4-year-olds was increased to 15 hours per week in September 2010. From September 2013, this was extended to 2-year-olds from low income households (based on entitlement to a range of income based benefits), children who are looked after by the local authority, have been through the care process, or have high level SEND). With effect from September 2014, eligibility was extended to around 40% of 2-year-olds (approximately 260,000 children nationally. This was extended further to 2-year-olds in working families with effect from September 2023.
7. With effect from September 2017, the entitlement to free early education was extended to 30 hours per week for 3- and 4-year-old children of eligible working families. Tax Free childcare was also fully rolled out to parents of 3- and 4-year old children in September 2017.
8. Further childcare entitlements are being introduced phases. The new entitlements are:
- from April 2024, all working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week
 - from September 2024, all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old can access 15 hours per week
 - from September 2025, all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old can access 30 hours free childcare per week
9. South Gloucestershire will need to plan for these increased entitlements.
10. The majority of pre-school provision in South Gloucestershire is in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. As at September 2023 there were 129 groups and 129 childminders in South Gloucestershire. The local authority therefore has a key role in commissioning provision and working with PVI providers to secure sufficient provision. Currently there are a limited number of nurseries in our primary school sector with only 18 currently providing this.

The Issues

11. Each year the Local Authority measures supply and demand for early year's education provision. An annual early years census is taken, which measures the number of hours of free education attended by individual children at each setting. The summer term is when there is greatest demand for places. In October, information is also gathered from OFSTED registrations and inspections; and parents are consulted on their requirements. The following sections describe the issues that have been identified in the last year.
12. **Sufficiency of Places:** Details of the number of places per 100 children by ward and age are provided in **Appendix 1**. It shows that there are three wards where the level of provision is below the recommended 17 places per 100 children under 5 years of age. These are Woodstock, Dodington and Yate North. There are, however sufficient early years places within walking distance. This highlights the limitation of reporting sufficiency data at ward level. Details of sufficiency and availability of places in adjoining wards are as follows:
 - **Dodington** has 9 places per 100 children: there is capacity in the adjoining wards Yate Central (79 places per 100 children) which has one of highest number of places per 100 children in the area and Chipping Sodbury and Cotswold (52 places per 100 children);
 - **Woodstock** has 8 places per 100 children: there is capacity in the adjoining Parkwall & Warmley ward (76 places per 100 children), which has one of the highest number of places per 100 children in the area.
 - **Yate North** has 16 places per 100 children: there is capacity in the adjoining wards Yate Central (79 places per 100 children) and Chipping Sodbury and Cotswold Edge (52 places per 100 children);

Bitton & Oldland Common, at 18 places per 100 children, is just above the DfE target, however due to 1 closure in 2022 in which the provision has not yet been re-instated, this dropped from 38 places per 100 children in 2022. There is capacity in the adjoining wards Boyd Valley (82 places per 100 children), which has the second highest number of places per 100 children and Parkwall & Warmley ward (76 places per 100 children).
13. In the 2022/2023 report, the Council identified three wards with fewer than 17 places per 100 children. Dodington and Bitton & Oldland Common Wards lost a setting due to a closure. This decreased the sufficiency and these provisions have not yet been reinstated. Note: Each registered place can accommodate two children at 15 free hours per week, so there is potential demand for 50 places per 100 3- and 4-year-olds universal funding, plus 25 places per 100 extended hours for working families, plus 20 places per 100 two-year-olds.
14. **Take-up of Places:** A key priority for this academic year was to maintain the high take up of places by eligible 2-year-olds pre-COVID. This reflects that participation rates reduced from 90% in Autumn/Spring terms 2019/20 to 78% in Summer 2021 owing to COVID-19. As a result, the number of children taking up a place reduced to 522 from 574. Spring/Summer 2022 figures report a take-up of 75% (the national figure was 72% for 2022), which represented a very slight decrease compared to 2021/22. This is due to the minimum wage being increased but the income threshold criteria remaining the same, resulting in less families being eligible for childcare.
15. In Summer 2023, 72% have taken up the entitlement, with 421 of those eligible taking up a place. The number of children eligible has decreased, which could be as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic easing restrictions and more parents returning to work, as well as minimum wage being increased but the income threshold criteria remaining the same, resulting in less being eligible. The national figure is 74% of take-up for eligible 2-year-olds.
16. This level of participation has been achieved by the Council's outreach activities which include:

- letters, emails and direct phone calls,
- publicity campaigns to increase awareness of entitlement and encourage take up;
- promotion on the council website
- promotional events and
- by our Outreach Worker visiting events.

The canvassing tasks we used to complete have stopped time, as they were time consuming and had limited impact. Through recent communication changes we are now able to contact families directly by phone and email rather than door knocking and this has been beneficial in explaining entitlements to parents.

17. **Quality:** Under DfE regulations published in August 2014, 2-year-olds should be offered placement in a setting which is “good” or better, and 3- and 4-year-olds should be offered placement in a setting which is at least “requires improvement”.

The latest available Ofsted grading’s as at 06/10/2023 are:

<u>Grading</u>	<u>Groups</u>	<u>Childminders</u>
Outstanding	18	11
Good	82	98
Requires Improvement	6	0
<u>Inadequate</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub Total	107	109
% Graded Good or better	94%	95%

The following settings have not had a full Ofsted inspection.

Met Requirements	0	5
Not Met Requirements	0	1
<u>Awaiting Grade</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>14</u>
Sub Total	22	20
Total	129	129

This is very close to the national figure of 96% of childcare providers being judge as good or better.

18. **Children with Special Educational Needs:** Settings who provide places for 3- or 4-year-olds in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are eligible Disability Access Fund (DAF) and this is promoted by LA officers in their frequent contact with Early Years Settings. Early Intervention Officers and Portage Home Visitors work alongside colleagues in health and Children’s Centres to enable all children to secure early years placements and access to funded places. This also supports early identification of SEND for all children. A small number of applications are received each year for an education and health care plan (EHCP) needs assessment for a child in their early years. This is to secure additional funding to meet the child’s specific SEND, through an EHCP. South Gloucestershire has implemented an Early Years Inclusion Support Fund (EYISF) which provides financial assistance to early years settings to meet the needs of children with SEND from the age of 2, without the need for an EHCP. This enables children to take up places sooner and supports practitioners to meet the needs of all children, prior to a request for an EHCP needs assessment. Transition Support Funding (TSF) is an additional funding stream which has been made available to support children with SEND with their transition from pre-school into school. Funding is provided to the early years setting and the school to allocate additional resources to support individual children with this significant transition. An inclusion audit has been piloted and is now being rolled out by setting support officers to help settings to identify how they can best meet the needs of their learners with SEND.

19. **Affordability:** The entitlements to 15 or 30 hours per week free childcare for 3- and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds is free at the point of delivery. Outside that entitlement, charges are set by the individual PVI provider. The Council has no direct control over the level of charges but the general position in South Gloucestershire is in line with other

areas. The number and distribution of providers means that there is, overall, a basis for reasonable charges. However, settings are increasing charges for optional extras that are allowable under government guidance. Settings are encouraged not to charge families that cannot afford to pay for these extras (low-income families in receipt of 2-year-old funding and children in receipt of pupil premium).

20. **Impact of the Pandemic:** The local authority continued to engage with the Early Years Provider Working Group throughout the pandemic particularly when considering DfE guidance on temporary amendments to funding arrangements during the pandemic. The Local Authority continues to offer settings business advice and support specifically targeted to settings whose free entitlement funding levels do not appear to have recovered. The Early Years Sector are continuing to face challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff to posts of all grades and these issues are raised regularly with DfE.
21. **Summary of parents'/providers' views of childcare provision:** In October 2023, the Council issued a sufficiency questionnaire to parents and carers via childcare settings, parent and carer forum, Council outlets and other public offices. A total of 273 responses (up from 135 last year due to utilising additional circulation methods) were received of which 270 (99%) use formal childcare in term time. The key issues in the parental responses were:
- 53% of responses (146 responses) say that childcare arrangements fully meet their needs. 39% (106 responses) say their childcare arrangements partially meet their needs and 8% report their needs not being met (21 responses).
 - 51% of responses say it was easy to find the childcare they wanted (139 responses). 44% (121 responses) say it was difficult to find the childcare they wanted and 4% (1 response) said it was not possible.
 - When asked how childcare can be improved, parents/carers referred to issues of flexibility, affordability and childcare being offered at different times of the day. A full range of responses is provided at **Appendix 2**.
 - The majority of parents responding, (44%, 241), required childcare to enable them to work in full- or part-time employment, and (3%, 14) to enable them to study. (30%, 164) of the 273 who responded also require childcare to allow their child to develop social and learning skills and (19%, 103) to prepare their child for school.

22. Recommendations

The areas of work identified below will help improve the flexibility and ease with which parents/carers are able to find childcare. These make up the key priorities to support the sufficient, flexible, affordable provision of childcare in South Gloucestershire and are included below with their measurable outcomes.

Target	Actions / Activity	Success indicator
Increase the number of settings, schools and academies offering early years provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local schools and academies to help establish early years provision on more school sites. • Support schools and academies to extend their age range to accommodate nursery provision. • Remove barriers to provision through supporting accommodation changes. • Monitor the increasing need linked to housing development 	Increase in number of schools offering early years provision
Increase early years places in priority areas including areas where there are higher numbers of deprived pupils or those with SEND.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a survey of providers and map where needs are highest to prioritise them. • Work with providers to encourage eligible parents to register for early years pupil premium funding. • Provide support to increase the capacity available in areas where sufficiency is lowest. • Target support towards areas with highest pupil premium or SEND to increase places. 	Sufficiency survey shows increases in places where capacity is low and where there are more SEND and pupil premium pupils.
Develop a provider guide on options and models of childcare provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a guide including implications for governance, finance, flexibility of approaches and accountability to support settings. • Provide information on alternative models to encourage providers to be flexible about provision being offered. 	Guide produced and circulated to providers
Maintain high take-up of places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach Worker to directly contact working families that are eligible for EY places, particularly for eligible 2-year-olds, those working families that are eligible for 30 hours per week and those 2- year-olds in working families that became eligible for 15 hours per week from April 2023. 	Increase in take-up of provision for working families is in line with new entitlement expectations.
Improve quality of provision in early years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the creation of a Childminder Agency in order to increase oversight of the quality of local childcare provision. • Align the work of advisers with school reviews in vulnerable schools to provide appropriate challenge to improve provision where required. 	Number of settings judged good or better by Ofsted is at least in line with national.
Publicise childcare options to families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the free childcare webpage on the public website to ensure the data is accurate to enable families to be able to find the free childcare options available to them, as well as local provision. 	Website information checked and confirmed as accurate at 6 monthly intervals.

There is a longer term aim to also improve the recruitment and retention of staff and we will need to further develop our approach to this. We will continue to work with the Childminder Recruitment Working Group and with partners to develop ideas to increase the number of childminders in the local authority and to support early years care to be seen as a career choice.

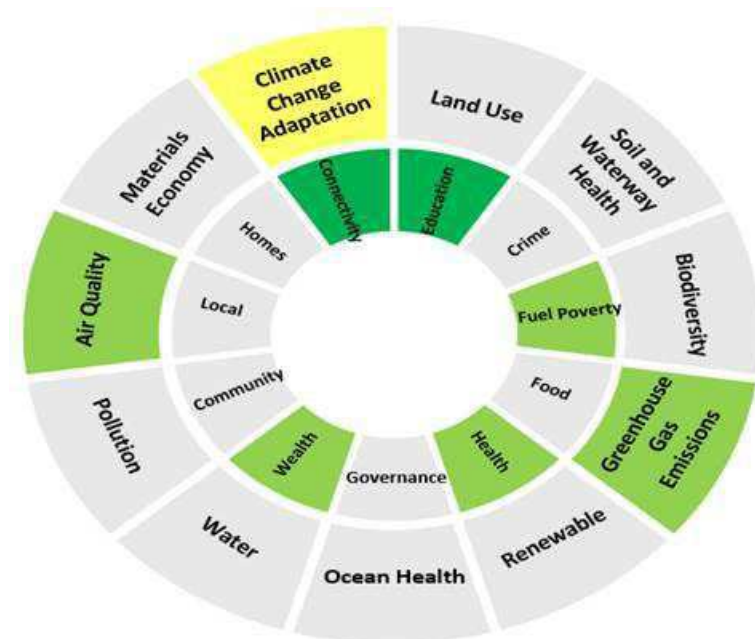
Consultation

23. Early years census forms were completed by 212 childcare providers with details of the number of places available at their settings and a headcount of the number of children claiming funding for their free early education entitlement in week beginning 16 January 2023.
24. In October 2023, all providers were contacted and asked to inform parents of the online childcare sufficiency questionnaire. 273 responses were received. This is an increase of

Equalities Considerations

25. This report sets out the legal framework/statutory requirement established by Government to require local authorities to secure sufficient childcare in their area for 3- and 4-year-olds and less advantaged 2-year-olds. As the statutory guidance points out, "Evidence shows that higher quality provision has greater developmental benefits for children, particularly the most disadvantaged children, leading to better outcomes". The intention is to mitigate disadvantages, break the 'cycle of deprivation', narrow gaps in children's attainment and provide a stronger basis for entering the primary phase of education.
26. This report confirms that sufficient places have been secured, including the places required for 2-year-olds from low income households. The equality duty also requires that the Council, in securing childcare places, ensures that the equalities practices of PVI providers are appropriate. This is achieved in three ways: first, through the Provider Agreement between the Council and the providers of early year's places; secondly through the visits the team make to providers and thirdly, through the Ofsted inspection framework.
27. The arrangements for free early education impact positively upon the equalities agenda within South Gloucestershire. Free early education for 2-year-olds at risk of disadvantage and those with SEND (including those in receipt of disability living allowance), alongside Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) for 3- and 4-year-olds at risk of disadvantage works to narrow the gap in educational achievement. Additional funding is available through a range of sources for vulnerable families to enable them to access early education; Disability Access Fund (DAF), Early Years Inclusion Support Fund (EYISF), Transition Support Fund (TSF) and Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) alongside their universal 15 hours per week entitlement.

Climate and Nature Decision Wheel – Childcare Sufficiency Report



Ratings		
1		Long lasting significant negative impact
2		Short term or limited negative impact
3		No known Impact
4		Short term or limited positive impact
5		Long lasting significant positive impact

Climate and Nature Decision Wheel Supporting Statement

28. **Greenhouse gas emissions** – 4 short term or limited positive impact.
The provision of local childcare places enables travel choices, making active travel to childcare possible and enabling reduced carbon emissions from shorter journeys. Efforts across the area to increase local childcare places could lead to greater reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
29. **Air quality** – 4 short term or limited positive impact.
The provision of local childcare places enables travel choices, making active travel to childcare possible, and therefore improving localised air quality. Efforts across the area to increase local childcare places could lead to greater improvements in localised air quality.
30. **Adaptation and Resilience** – 2 short term or limited negative impact
The local impacts of a changing climate will have growing impacts on the facilities where childcare is provided. It is recommended that the childcare sufficiency work include consideration in future of the potential local impacts of a changing climate and the impact on provision.

Alternative Options Considered

31. No alternative options have been considered at this stage. A mapping exercise is currently under way to look at where settings and schools may be intending to increase their provision.

Risk Assessment

Financial Implications (includes tax implications such as VAT)

32. Funding for free early education places for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant Early years Block. The 2022-23 budget to fund pre-school providers for the delivery of free early education is as follows:

	<u>£000</u>
2 year old place funding	1,603
3 and 4 year olds place funding	16,028
Deprivation funding	152
Early Years Inclusion Support funding (<i>Early Years Block element only</i>)	342
Early years pupil premium	116
Early years disability access fund	92

33. This budget is allocated based on the latest DSG Funding announcement using January 2022 census data. During 2023/24 the funding will be updated using the January 2023 and January 2024 census data.
34. Based on current projections there is sufficient budget to meet the expected nursery placement demand for 2023/24.
35. The budget for the Early Years Inclusion Support Funding which supports children with SEND (para 18) is joint funded from the Early Years Block and High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant. The total budget for 2023/24 is £1,242k (£342k from Early Years Block and £900k from High Needs Block).

Was the Finance Business Partner adequately briefed / involved with the decision process: Yes

Budgetary Impact: None

Resourcing Impact: None

Forecasting Impact: None

Other financial considerations: None

Caroline Warren – Finance Business Partner - 01454 863153

Legal Implications

36. The legal duties of the local authority are set out in the body of this report along with references to the Early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities dated April 2023. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
Maria Sweetman - Solicitor – 01454 864229

Human Resources Implications

37. There are no Human Resources implications that arise directly from this report.
Sharon Johnson – Acting HR Strategic Lead – 01454 863089.

Climate Emergency and Environmental Implications

38. Childcare sufficiency has been assessed using the council's Climate and Nature Decision wheel, as shown in the Issues section of the report. The wheel identified the

positive impacts of sufficiency of local childcare places on greenhouse gas emissions and localised air quality. As far as possible, local childcare provision should be enabled so that it is available on a local and accessible basis without the need for extended travel. This is in order to reduce the emissions generated from associated journeys, walking and cycling to childcare provision should be promoted. This in turn helps to reduce the air quality impact of journeys made for this purpose and to support and encourage active travel to and from facilities. It is crucial that the activities identified around generally increasing capacity, increasing capacity in marginal areas and the continued monitoring of increased need are carried out. Going forward, work should focus on ensuring that childcare places across the area match the distribution of demand and that the local impacts of a changing climate are considered in relation to the future provision of childcare places as recommended in the Decision Wheel assessment.

Lucy Rees – Senior Environmental Policy & Climate Change Officer – 01454 862224

Social Implications

39. There are no social implications that arise directly from this report.

Amie Copley - Built Environment Enforcement Manager – 01454 868551

Economic Implications

40. There are no direct economic implications identified through the recommendations outlined within this report. Given that the majority of provision is in the PVI sector, there is a requirement for an effective and sustainable commissioning role for the Council including stimulating and supporting that sector. In relation to employment, a vigorous and expanding PVI sector provides jobs and opportunities for training and development.

Ian Steele – Business Investment & Digital Connectivity Manager – 01454 868202

Privacy Impact Assessment

41. Not relevant to this report.

Risks, Mitigations & Opportunities

42. Risks of not accepting the proposals include:

- Council inability to meet the defined requirements for child-care sufficiency
- Insufficient child-care being in place to meet the needs of parents
- Schools being unable to progress increasing the age range of their pupils in order to meet our sufficiency requirements

43. Some of the planned actions provide opportunities to increase local childcare for parents thus to reduce travel and aid conveniency for working parents.

Other Implications

44. None identified.

Reasons for Decision

45. We recommend that the Council approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2023/24 and approve the actions for the next 12 months as set out in paragraph 22 of the report.

Author

Chris Sivers, Executive Director, People Department

Departmental Contacts

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Jo Briscoombe, Strategic Lead for Early Years and School Support, 01454 863349

Samantha Gardner, Business and Finance Development Officer, 01454 8623

Background Papers

Childcare sufficiency assessment Appendix 1 – childcare places available by ward.

Childcare sufficiency assessment Appendix 2 – responses from parent/carer questionnaire about availability of places

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – Appendix 1

Childcare Places Available by Ward

		Number of Early Year childcare places per 100 children					
		Total	Age in years				
			0	1	2	3	4
Total	South Gloucestershire	44	7	7	55	73	72
Area	The Chase	42	9	8	51	73	67
Area	Frome Vale	38	5	5	43	66	63
Area	Kings Forest	48	7	7	61	80	78
Area	Severn Vale	40	5	5	54	62	73
Area	Southern Brooks	48	8	7	61	77	77
Area	The Chase	42	9	8	51	73	67
Ward	Frenchay & Downend	67	24	23	68	104	98
Ward	Kingswood	52	10	9	71	94	80
Ward	New Cheltenham	47	9	7	50	84	94
Ward	Staple Hill & Mangotsfield	36	4	4	48	67	56
Ward	Woodstock	8	0	0	14	13	12
Area	Frome Vale	38	5	5	43	66	63
Ward	Chipping Sodbury & Cotswold Edge	52	8	7	54	97	85
Ward	Dodington	9	0	0	10	17	19
Ward	Frampton Cotterell	52	10	9	60	96	76
Ward	Yate Central	79	14	13	82	149	119
Ward	Yate North	16	2	2	27	25	28
Area	Kings Forest	48	7	7	61	80	78
Ward	Bitton & Oldland Common	18	0	0	24	31	29
Ward	Boyd Valley	82	14	13	100	143	126
Ward	Emersons Green	35	7	8	44	58	56
Ward	Hanham	69	9	8	102	100	108
Ward	Longwell Green	26	0	0	38	48	44

Ward	Parkwall & Warmley	76	10	10	87	140	152
Area	Severn Vale	40	5	5	54	62	73
Ward	Charfield	48	8	7	66	67	102
Ward	Pilning & Severn Beach	11	0	0	20	18	18
Ward	Severn Vale	59	3	3	77	87	110
Ward	Thornbury	38	6	6	48	60	68
Area	Southern Brooks	48	8	7	61	77	77
Ward	Bradley Stoke North	82	15	12	101	126	136
Ward	Bradley Stoke South	40	3	2	68	58	58
Ward	Charlton & Cribbs	31	7	8	36	51	54
Ward	Filton	31	5	5	34	58	50
Ward	Patchway Coniston	59	5	5	68	89	114
Ward	Stoke Gifford	44	8	7	67	72	64
Ward	Stoke Park & Cheswick	85	23	18	92	147	157
Ward	Winterbourne	26	2	2	34	48	43
Data Sources: June 23 and AHA 2022		Includes Full daycare and sessional places					
DfES target is 17 childcare places per 100 children, based on the national average.							

Numbers in red are where childcare is below 17 places per 100 children.

Childcare Sufficiency Report – Appendix 2
Responses from Parent/carer Questionnaire about Availability of Places

Do your current childcare arrangements meet your needs?

	Number of responses	
Fully	84	62%
Partially	37	27%
No	14	10%
Total	135	100%

How easy was it for you to find the childcare you wanted?

	Number of responses	
Easy	95	70%
Difficult	37	27%
Not Possible	3	2%
Total	135	100%

How could the formal childcare provision you use for this child be improved?

Different type of childcare provider	(1)
At a different time of day	(13)
More flexible sessions	(19)
More affordable	(29)
Closer to home	(6)
Closer to work	(2)
Closer to school attended by sibling	(3)
Better suited to my child's additional needs or disability	(1)
Better quality	(4)
Other	(10)

Further summarised comments made by respondents included the following:

- Lack of provision in the area (33)
- Provision meets needs (25)
- The cost of childcare is too high (23)
- Concerns about long waiting lists at some providers (13)
(this refers to provision beyond the free entitlements)
- More flexible sessions and extended opening hours are needed (9)
(including options for shift workers on 7 day work patterns requiring greater flexibility)
- Need more after school/holiday/breakfast clubs or more early years providers to be open during school holidays (6)
- Successfully accessed a place by applying early (6)
- Free childcare should be available to more families (6)
- Insufficient provision close to home (4)
- Went to provision where sibling attended (3)
- Nurseries closing due to recruitment and retention issues (3)
- Accessed provision close to sibling's school (2)
- Too many new housing developments in the area (2)

- Difficulty finding childcare in more rural areas (1)
- Difficulty finding list of providers on council website (1)
- More support for disabled parents (1)

The table below identify changes in requirements when choosing a childcare as a result of Covid 19.

When you were choosing your childcare provider was your preferred setting criteria either:

Criteria	Pre Covid		Post Covid		% Change
Close to Home	91	67%	94	70%	2%
Close to Place of Work/Study	10	7%	8	6%	-1%
Close to School Attended by Sibling	8	6%	9	7%	1%
Close to Home & Close to Place of Work/Study	7	5%	4	3%	-2%
Close to Home & Close to School Attended by Sibling	7	5%	6	4%	-1%
Close to Place of Work/Study & Close to School Attended by Sibling	0	0%	0	0%	0%
Close to Home, Close to Place of Work/Study & Close to School Attended by Sibling	8	6%	4	3%	-3%
No Response	4	3%	10	7%	4%
	135	100%	135	100%	100%

These figures show that compared to before COVID, more families need childcare closer to home than their work place or place of study, which may indicate that the pandemic is still having an impact on whether families are attending workplaces or working more often from home.