

Newcastle upon Tyne Childcare Sufficiency Report 2021



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Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 (section 6)¹ places a duty on Local Authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare in order to enable them:

- to take up or remain in work, or
- to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

Alongside this, section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 states that Local Authorities have a duty to assess whether the childcare provision in their area is sufficient to meet demand and to keep those assessments under review which also includes reporting on holiday care, quality of provision and affordability.

This report looks at the childcare market in Newcastle in 2021 taking into account demand, supply, and occupancy in settings paying attention to early years funded places, and the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

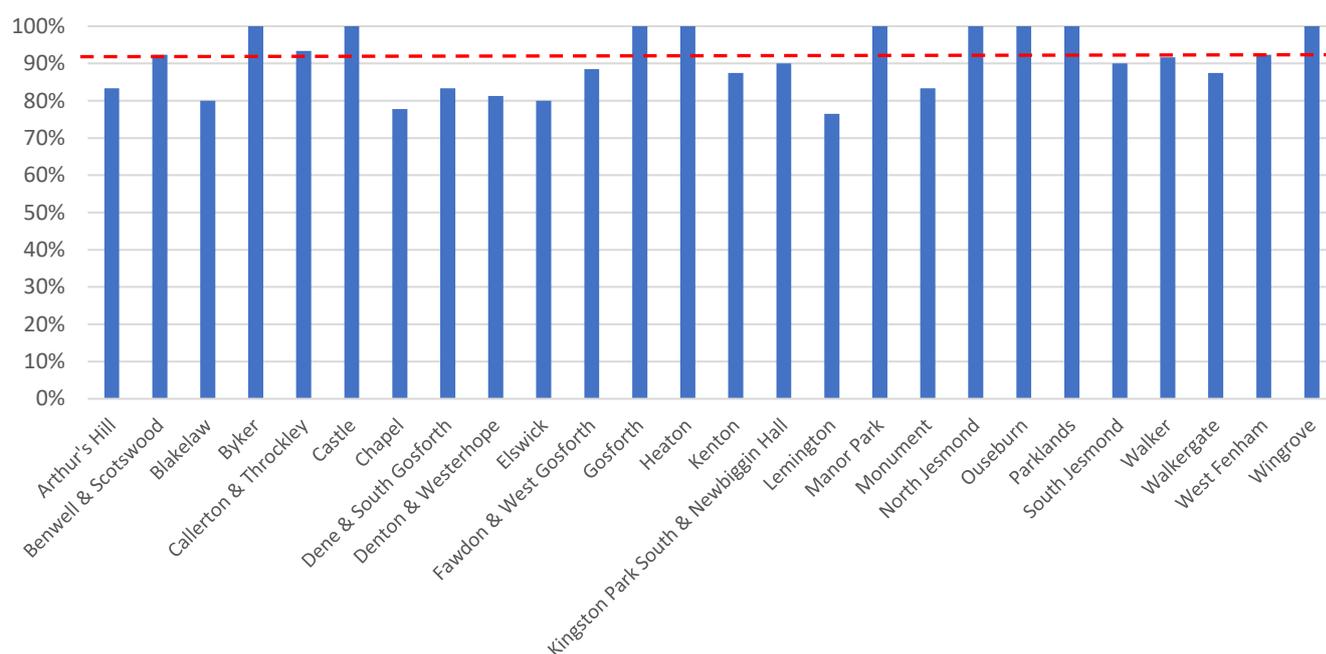
Methodology

This report is based on information collected by Newcastle City Council and published data from a range of sources including Ofsted, Office of National Statistics (ONS), Department for Education (DfE). Its primary aim is to assess whether Newcastle, has sufficient childcare to meet current demand.

To enhance the data already available, audit information was collected from childcare providers in the city. Questions were designed to capture information about flexibility and costs.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents>

Figure 1: Percentage of providers who completed the audit, by ward



Providers were asked to complete online surveys to tell us more about their settings. The overall response rate this year was 92%, an increase of 22% from our last report². Completion by provider type was much more evenly spread than last year, ranging from 79% to 100%. In the out of school club sector response rates increased from 35% to 79% this is a rise of 44%. This was achieved through:

- more frequent communication with all settings due to Covid-19,
- more time spent supporting settings to complete their surveys.

Key Findings

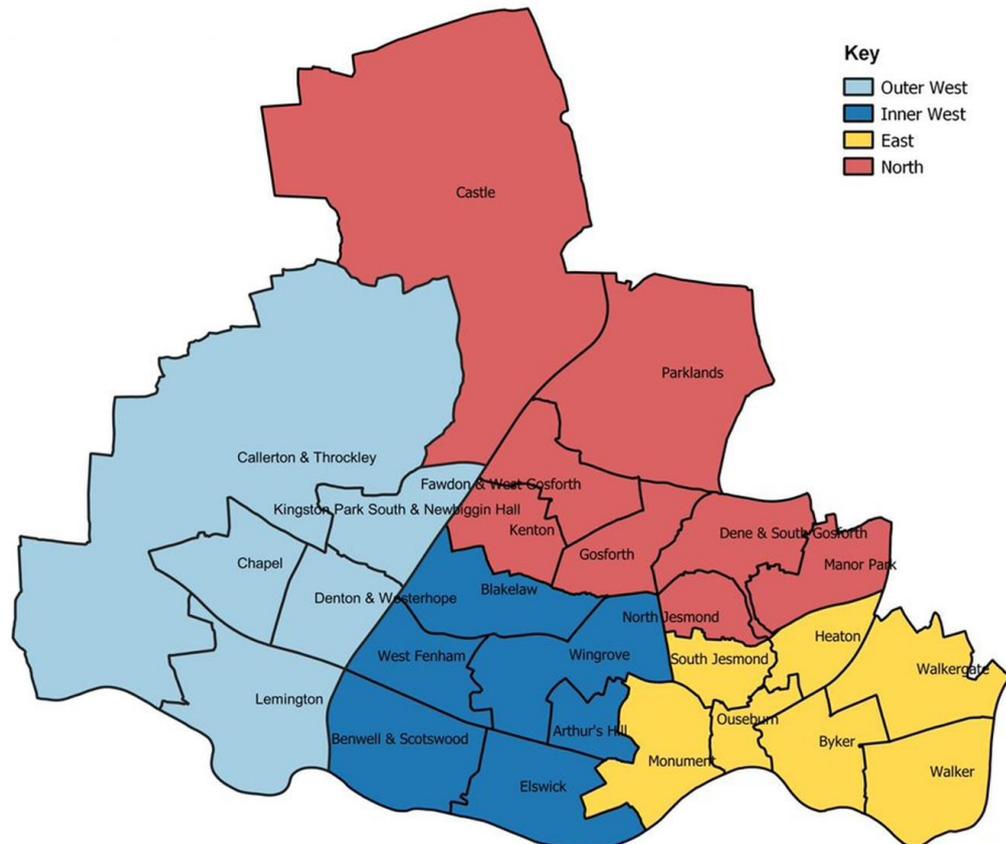
- The percentage of children accessing their early education in good or outstanding settings has increased year on year for the last 3 years and remains above the national average, (98% or 928 two-year-olds, compared with 97% nationally, 95% or 5,655 three-and-four-year-olds compared with 93% nationally).
- 92% of providers responded to the survey this was an increase of 22% from the previous report.
- 96% of settings who have been inspected are rated good or better by Ofsted in line with the national percentage, also 96%.
- The proportion of eligible children accessing their two-year-old offer has risen in 2022 and is now higher than it was pre-Covid-19.
- The number of providers and places has decreased since our last report, however the report demonstrates that the level of early years and childcare provision in the City is sufficient to meet demand.

² Newcastle upon Tyne childcare sufficiency report 2019:
<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/early%20years%20and%20childcare/2019%20SCA%20Final.pdf>

- The 0-5year old city-wide population has fallen.
- The childcare sector in Newcastle has shown exceptional resilience, flexibility and dedication throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Demand

City demographics



Newcastle upon Tyne is predominantly urban, broken up into 26 wards. The overall population is approximately 300,820 an increase of around 11,000 since 2014³. Population change is a mix of natural change (births and deaths) and inward (within the UK) and outward (international) migration.

NOMIS (see glossary) Official Labour Market Statistics show that the employment rate in Newcastle stands at 69.5% of the working-age population, significantly higher than 64.7% in 2014, this is still lower than the national employment rate of 75.7%. The rate and number of people in employment in Newcastle is at a historically high level, but recent falls indicate that the trend of a strengthening labour market may have levelled off.

In terms of ethnic diversity Newcastle continues to become more diverse, particularly amongst younger age groups, where 1 in every 4 school age child is from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) household.³ For a full city profile please see [Newcastle upon Tyne City Profile](#).

³ NFNA Newcastle upon Tyne City profile: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/your-council-and-democracy/2021%2004%20NFNA%20City%20Profile.pdf>

Newcastle has recently launched a new way of working to support families. Children and Families Newcastle brings together a range of partners and services so they can support children and families to get the help and support that they want and need at the earliest opportunity. The city has been divided into 4 localities as shown on the ward map above.

Table 1: Newcastle population (2020)

Age	Number of children
Birth to 5	15,987
Primary school (age 5 - 11)	24,663
Secondary school (age 12 - 19)	22,457
Total	63,107

Population change

The 0–5-year-old city wide population decreased by 6% from 2016 to 2020, however ONS population estimates suggest this decrease should flatten out and begin to increase again over the next few years. Overall predictions are a slight decrease in the school age population (as current early years children move on to school), and a slight increase in 0-5 years population in the coming years.

The table below shows that Castle ward is the only ward that has seen an increase in population every year. This is likely to be due to the housing development in this ward, and may be replicated in other housing developments, predominantly to the North of the city.

Figure 2: Ward level change in 0-5 population 2016-2020

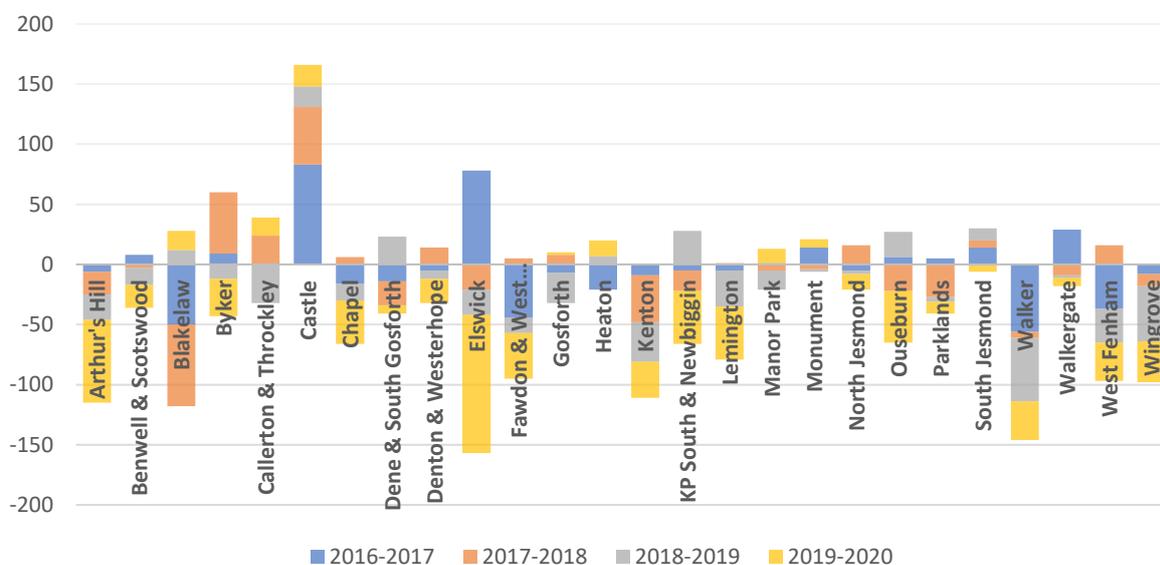


Table 2: Children with disabilities

Age	Number of children
Birth to 5	449
Primary school (age 5 - 11)	3,805
Secondary school (age 12 - 19)	2,363
Total	6,617

Supply

Providers and places

At the time of auditing (Summer 2021), there were a total of 386 providers offering 11,950 early education and/or childcare places to children aged from birth to 8 years plus across Newcastle. However, it is difficult to calculate an exact total number of places for children under the age of 5 years. This is because some providers care for both school age and younger children, and number of places are recorded per setting rather than split by age. The number of providers offering day care is 169, this includes pre-school playgroups, full day care and childminders.

Ofsted registered childcare falls into 2 categories:

1. Childcare on domestic premises, childminders and home childcarers or nannies. Nannies form part of the city-wide childcare offer, however they are not required to register with Ofsted meaning the number operating is unknown.
2. Childcare on non-domestic premises is further broken down locally into the following types:
 - a. Pre-school playgroups, offering sessional, term time only care for children below school age
 - b. Full day care, offering full days (8am-6pm) including some school holidays for children below school age
 - c. Out of school clubs offering before and/or afterschool care, for school age children
 - d. Holiday clubs offering day care in school holidays, for school age children

Table 3: Number of Ofsted Registered childcare providers, by childcare type

	Providers	Places	Average per Provider
Childminder	141	988	7.01
Childcare non-domestic			
Full day care	40	2,856	71.40
Pre-school playgroup	35	1,022	29.20
Out of school club	25	1,035	41.40
Holiday Club	2	160	80.00
Total	243	6,061	24.94

Table 4: Number of Ofsted registered childcare provider offering wrap around care, by childcare type

	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Childminders	104	107	100
Full day care	4	4	6
Out of school clubs	16	21	13
Pre-school playgroups	2	1	0
Total	126	133	119

The overall number of childminders has decreased since our 2019 report. There have been 25 resignations and 6 new registrations. The number of places being delivered by childminders across the city has fallen by 119 or 11%. Covid-19 has played a role in this decrease with 64% childminders reporting their occupancy was different from pre-Covid-19 levels. 97% of these reported there had been a reduction and only 3 childminders (4.2%) reporting an increase. The most typical reason given for reduced childcare need was changes in working arrangements giving parents more flexibility. This would suggest that the use of childcare, particularly for wrap around or out of school care has changed. What is less clear at this stage is if this change will remain.

The overall number of childcare providers on non-domestic premises is 102, 6 fewer than last year. Following the trend from our last report most closures have been in the pre-school playgroup sector. 9 pre-school playgroups, offering 208 places have closed. 2 new providers have opened on existing sites, replacing 66 places, leaving a net reduction of 7 providers and 142 places, across 6 wards, predominantly in the Outer West and North of the city. It is likely that Covid-19 has played a role in this reduction, with 46% of providers reporting a change in occupancy because of the effects of the pandemic. This is a continuing trend from our last report, and it is possible that the pandemic is not the only contributing factor. As smaller businesses, pre-school playgroups are far more vulnerable to slight fluctuations in occupancy. The combination of existing vulnerabilities, other providers offering more flexible provision and Covid-19 has meant that some pre-school playgroups and childminders have struggled to continue to operate. The good news is that 34% of

pre-school playgroups reported an increase in demand, saying they are more established in the area and have seen an increase in uptake with the lifting of Covid 19 restrictions.

In the out of school club sector there have been 2 closures resulting in the loss of 35 places. However, 1 out of school club has opened offering 10 places giving an overall loss of 25 places. Half of the out of school clubs reported a reduction in numbers due to Covid-19, with only 1 reporting an increase.

In the full day care sector, there has been 1 closure comprising 40 places and 2 new providers resulting in 81 new places, thus resulting in a net increase of 41 places. Full day care is the only sector where there has been an increase in both number of providers and places.

Table 5: Number of schools offering nursery and pre-school playgroup provision

	Playgroup		Nursery	
	Providers	Places	Providers	Places
Nursery schools	3	140	3	414
First schools	0	-	6	198
Primary schools	10	156	53	1,853
Middle schools	0	-	0	-
Independent schools	0	-	5	132
Special schools	1	12	2	16
Total	14	308	69	2,613

Table 6: Number of schools offering wrap around and holiday care

	Breakfast		Afterschool		Holiday	
	Providers	Places	Providers	Places	Providers	Places
Nursery schools	1	16	1	16	0	0
First schools	3	86	3	86	0	0
Primary schools	45	2,424*	23	943*	6	252
Middle schools	2	120	2	120	0	0
Independent schools	3	68	5	133	2	54
Total	54	2,714	34	1,298	8	306

* 3 schools indicated there was no limit

There are 4 nursery schools (following wide consultation 1 of the 4 will close at the end of the academic year 2021/2022), 9 first schools, 63 primary schools, 1 all-through school and 4 middle schools. In addition, there are 3 special schools and 5 independent schools. Of these, 69 (80%) have nursery provision and 14 (15%) have pre-school playgroup type provision, i.e., offering early education and childcare to children from the age of 2.

The overall picture of out of school care within schools has not changed significantly since our last report. 54 (63%) of schools run breakfast clubs, and almost half of these are sponsored by the Greggs foundation. 84% of the sponsored breakfast clubs are in the 10% most deprived area measured by Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) ⁴. Both sponsorship and other forms of deprivation funding have allowed 26 schools to offer breakfast club provision for free. 34 (40%) of schools run after school clubs and 8 (10%) run holiday clubs.

Numbers of places in school based out of school care were collected and are shown above. This however is not necessarily the maximum number of places that are available, this will be variable and dependent on space and staff available within each school.

For a breakdown of providers and places by ward please see the Appendix table.

Ages and opening times

Different provider types tend to cater for particular age groups (see glossary for description), however there are no set rules and as providers flex to meet the demands of parents for business sustainability purposes, age range by provider type becomes less distinct. Some providers even offer more than 1 childcare type within a typical day, for example pre-school playgroup provision during the school day and out of school club provision before and after school. This means that different cohorts and different aged children are being cared for at different times.

80% of childminders, 94% of full day care, 12% of pre-school playgroups and 1 school offer care for children from birth. Typically, but not always, childminders and full day care providers care for children from birth, however other provisions can offer this as well. The 12% of playgroups that offer childcare from birth are settings that are term time only and / or offer a shorter day than 8am-6pm. 88% of pre-school playgroups, 25% of nursery schools and classes, 10% of out of school clubs and 1% of childminders provide their childcare offer to children aged from 2 years. All independent schools, 50% of out of school clubs, 75% of nursery schools and classes and 6% of full day care, care for children from the age of 3 only. 41% of out of school clubs and 19% of childminders care for children from statutory school age only. At the other end of the spectrum, all pre-school playgroups, 83% of full day care and 7% of childminders do not care for children over 5.

Childminders, as a group, continue to offer the most flexibility in terms of age range and opening times. Of those that completed the audit, 86 (74%) open before 8am, 28 (24%) open after 6pm, 12 (10%) open Saturdays and 7 Sundays (6%). 93 (80%) care for children below school age, 8 (9%) of these said they only care for children below school age meaning the other 91% care for both early years and school age children. 20% of childminders said they care for school age children only.

Full day care settings are generally open from 8am to 6pm, although some open slightly earlier and some close later. These settings tend to offer full or half days and most are open all year round. Pre-school playgroups often offer three-hour sessions

morning, afternoon or both with some offering longer days, better matching the school day and allowing parents eligible for 30 hours to use their full entitlement in 1 setting. Some work with other providers to offer full day care.

Out of school clubs offer care before and after the school day, and some offer care during the day in school holidays.

In the school sector, more schools are taking two-year-olds than have done in previous years, and more are offering full time nursery places, although some offer 15 hours per week over 2.5 or 5 mornings or afternoons.

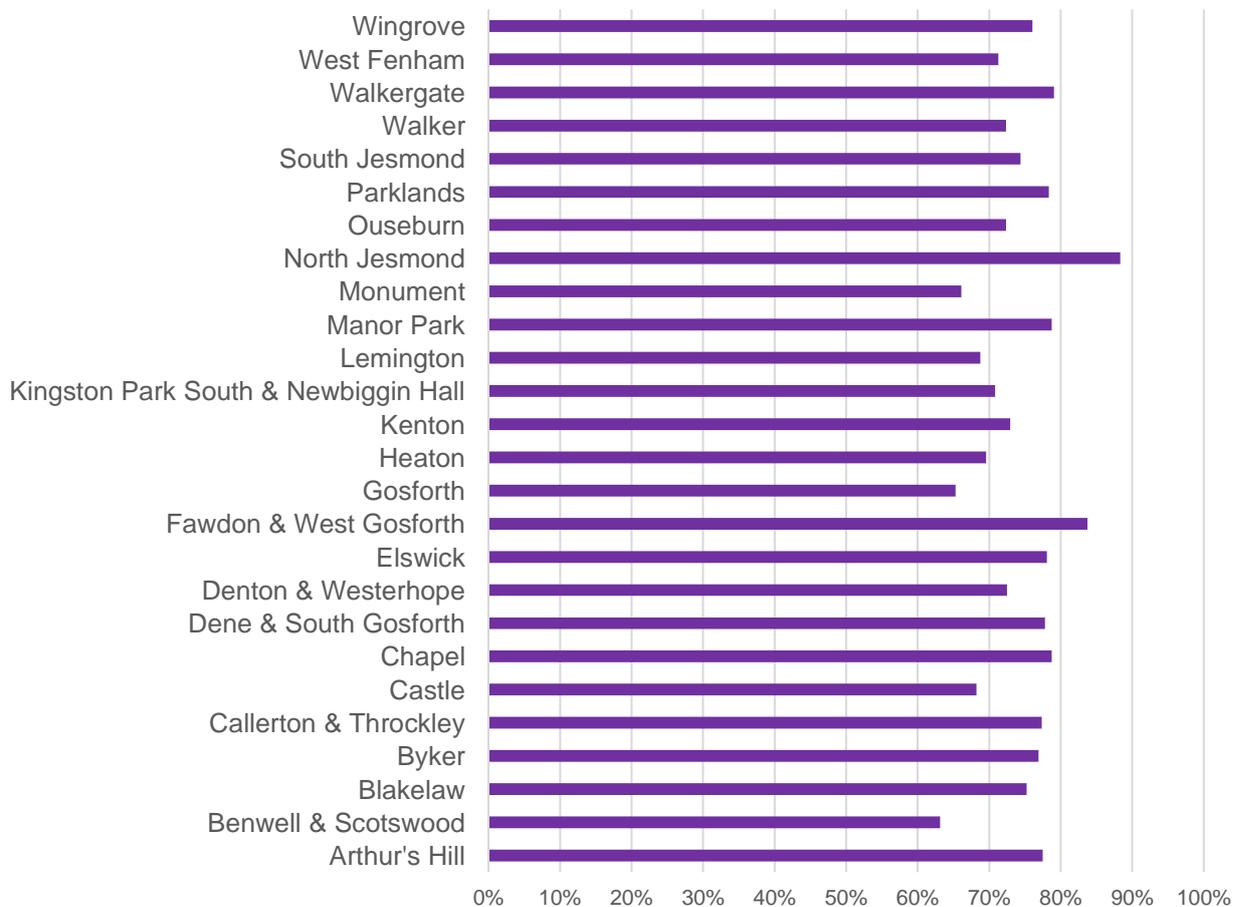
Occupancy

This year occupancy was collected in bands as follows:

- less than 30%,
- less than 50%,
- 50-60%,
- 60-70%,
- 70-80%,
- 80-90%
- 90%+.

Averages were then calculated using middle values or 5% lower in the less than categories.

Figure 3: Average occupancy by ward



Occupancy varies significantly across the city, childcare types and days of the week. Average occupancy for the city as a whole and for all sectors was 74%, this is lower than the last report (78%). Settings who stated their occupancy was lower, said it was due to the effects of the pandemic. Overall occupancy indicates availability of places, across all areas to help meet the needs of parents. Despite this, in some circumstances parents may experience difficulties finding what they are looking for.

Where setting occupancy is 90%+ it is possible that parents may struggle to get a place on the days and at the times that they require. 90%+ occupancy was reported by:

- 9% of childminders,
- 33% of PVI pre-school playgroups,
- 77% of pre-school playgroups in schools,
- 20% of full day care settings,
- 56% of nursery classes in schools,
- 24% of breakfast clubs,
- 16% of after school clubs and
- 38% of holiday clubs.

When childminders are removed, average occupancy across the city increases to 77%. Audit data for this report was collected in the Summer term 2021 where occupancy should be at its highest. The impact of Covid-19 still needs to be considered, recognising that some parents could have been reluctant to send their pre-school age children into settings. Overall it can be confidently stated that, there are sufficient places to meet parental demand in the city, however some settings, particularly in the summer term, may struggle to take on new children. Please see the recommendations for a summary of planning to further assess this issue.

For a further breakdown of occupancy by childcare type please see the appendix table.

Pricing and affordability

When comparing prices there are several other factors to take into consideration. The number of hours per day and days per week will impact on cost. In full day care settings, the more hours required attracts a cheaper hourly rate, whereas in pre-school playgroups and out of school care there is often an hourly or sessional fee. It is also important to consider what is included in the care. If care is at a higher rate but includes for example a hot meal, this may be more appealing to parents.

The final factor is what help is available to support parents with the cost of childcare. From the age of 2, some children are eligible for 15 hours of free early education and childcare for 38 weeks per year (for eligibility criteria visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)⁵). From the age of 3 all children are entitled to 15 hours of free early education and childcare, and some children are entitled to a further 15 hours dependent upon parents income and employment status (for eligibility criteria visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)⁶). In addition to these early years entitlements some parents can use tax-free childcare or childcare vouchers, others can claim some of the cost of childcare through Tax Credits, Universal Credit or Care to Learn (for more information please see [Childcare Choices](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/)⁷). It is often providers who help parents navigate what is available for them. As tax free childcare and childcare vouchers make payments directly to providers, providers must be set up and understand these schemes.

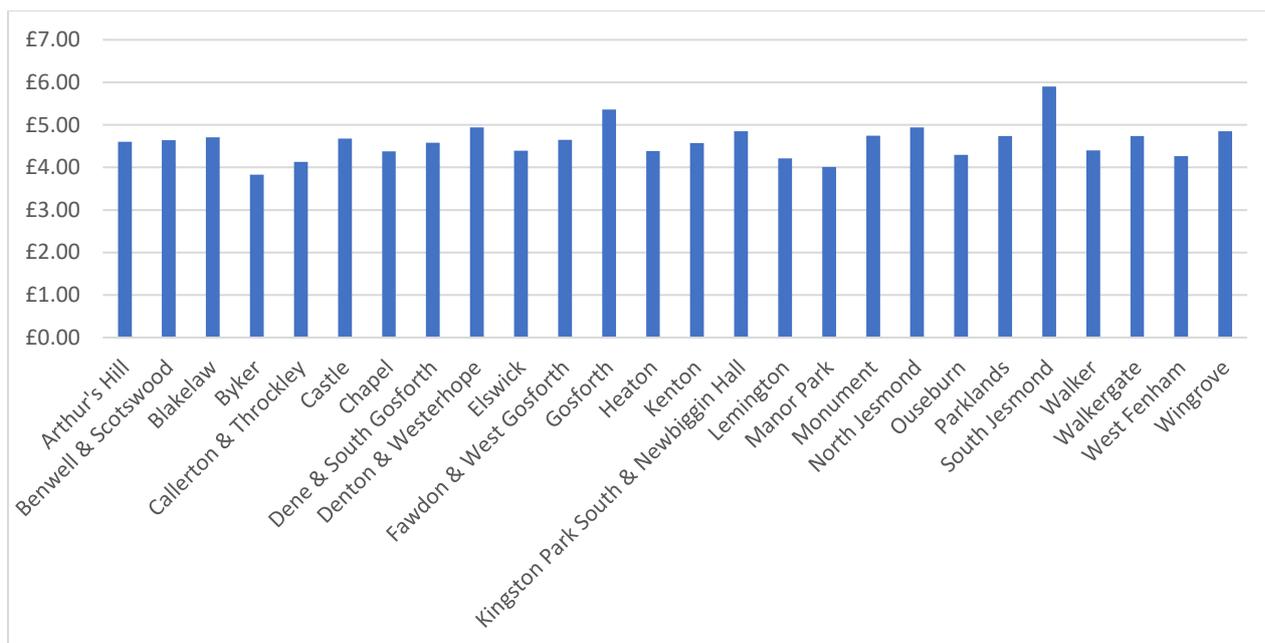
The average hourly rate for childcare in Newcastle was slightly lower than it was in the last report, £4.67. This is likely to be due to a higher response rate, particularly in the out of school sector (both school-run and PVI) who have the lowest hourly rate, of all sectors. When schools are removed average cost goes up to £4.77. In full day care the cost of care for a child over 2 years old in this calculation. It should however be noted that the cost of care for a child under 2 years old will be higher in some settings. The information below by sector shows that the lowest hourly rate (£2.29) is in a school run out of school club and the highest (£13.61) is in nursery provision in an independent school.

There is variation in cost across sectors and areas of the city:

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/30-hours-free-childcare?step-by-step-nav=f517cd57-3c18-4bb9-aa8b-1b907e279bf9>

⁷ <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>



Childminders:

- The average hourly cost of childcare with a childminder was £4.71
- The maximum hourly cost was £8, and
- The minimum was £3.

Childminders reported cost as an hourly rate, very few reported differences in rates by age however some reported different charging models for pre-school age day care, out of school care and holiday care.

Full day care:

- The average hourly rate in full day care for a child over 2 was £4.92
- The maximum was £6.40, and
- The minimum was £3.74.

Full day care settings tend to charge by the day or half day and may give discounts for full weeks. This can mean that an hourly rate is difficult to calculate, as a full-time place can be cheaper by the hour than a part time place.

Pre-school playgroups:

- The average hourly rate for pre-school playgroup provision was £4.39
- The maximum was £6.67, and
- The minimum was £3.60.

Although pre-school playgroups do charge fees, a significant proportion of their income comes from early education and childcare funding. In some cases, settings broadly match their prices to the rate given by the local authority, £4.49 rising to £4.71 from April 2022.

Out of school clubs:

- The average hourly rate for out of school club provision was £4.30
- The maximum was £5.28 and
- The minimum was £3.20.

In addition to reductions in rates for full days or weeks, some providers offer a sibling discount.

Children with additional needs (SEND)

The Local Offer

Between 2020 and 2021 the [Newcastle Support Directory](#) (including the Local Offer) was redesigned with a new website and a refined directory of providers and services was developed to better meet the needs of families in Newcastle. The aim was to produce a Local Offer which provides easy to find, up to date and accessible information about provision available for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities and their families in their local area.

Key stakeholders, including members of the Parent Carer forum, SEND team members, Health, and Social Care met and consolidated the information into the following groups:

- Activities and getting around
- Early years, childcare and social care
- Health, information, advice and support
- Education and training
- Getting it right together

Moving forward the site will continue to be updated with current information providing the best possible support tool for young people and their families.

Early years inclusion fund

Newcastle's Early Years Inclusion Fund is jointly funded from Early Years and High Needs budgets. Funding / support is available for settings to help meet the needs of children with additional emerging needs as well as high needs, promoting both early identification and intervention. Each application is assessed individually, and appropriate (often bespoke) support is offered. Support is given to meet both the needs of the child and the needs of the provider in order to plan and deliver each child's tailored provision. This can take the form of support from staff resource, equipment, training, or funding for higher staff ratios. The emphasis is always on settings offering a whole setting approach to the inclusion of individual children. Newcastle are part of the EYFS Partnership and have benefitted from Nasen's specialist support around this approach.

Where Inclusion Worker or Nursery Nurse time is allocated, these specialists will not only provide direct support to children, but also model high quality inclusive practice with the aim of up-skilling staff in the setting to ensure the provision is able to meet individual needs.

Support for Early Years SENCOs is under constant review, some examples of recent changes are:

- A document 'Universally Available Guidance for Early Years Settings' has been produced and widely disseminated.

- Early Years SENCO training has been reviewed, re-written and is now a much longer and more detailed course.
- A new Early Years SEND Support Plan has been produced and the expectation is that all settings will adopt this.
- Early Years SENCO network meetings have taken place via Teams / webinar and attendance has been slightly increased from face to face meetings.

There has not been a decrease in inclusion fund applications throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The numbers of children supported through the Early Years Inclusion Funding by academic year are:

- 2018-19 – 237
- 2019-20 - 271
- 2020-21 – 258

Quality and workforce

The percentage of good and outstanding judgements has improved since the last report and overall the rate sits at 96%. For full day care and out of school provision 100% of provision is good or outstanding followed by pre-school playgroups at 97% and childminders at 96% with schools offering pre-school provision at 94%.

School and Early Years census data 2021 tells us that 98% of funded two-year-olds, and 95% of funded three-and-four-year-olds are in a setting that was good or outstanding. This is up from 97% and 89% in 2019 and has increased year on year for the last 3 years and remains better than the national average.⁸

In Newcastle, 57% of funded two, three-and-four-year-olds are in settings that have staff with graduate status (51% nationally), this is a slight decrease from our last report, the 2020 figure was 62%.

⁸ Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting year 2021: [Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting Year 2021 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov.uk)

Figure 4: Ofsted grades

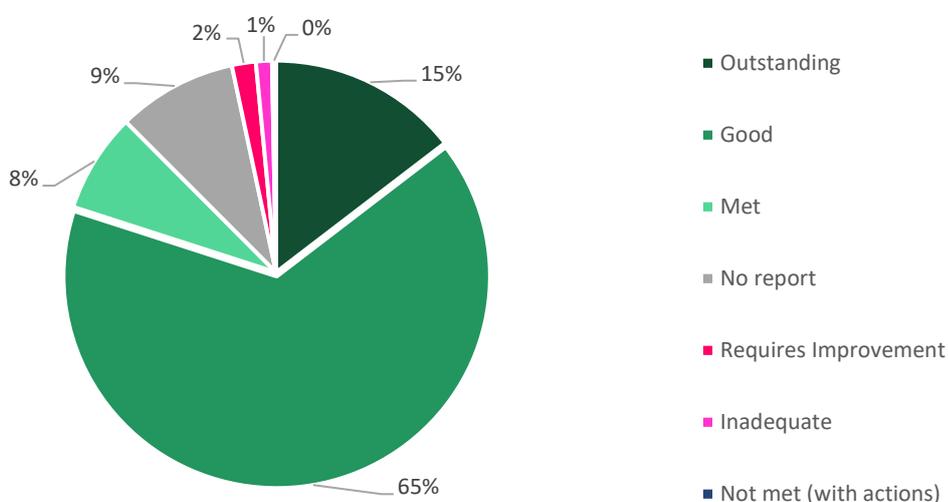


Table 7: Ofsted grade by provider type (Providers who have not been inspected have been removed)

	Good or better (2021)	Good or better (2019)
Childminder	96%	93%
Full day care	100%	97%
Out of school clubs	100%	100%
Pre-school playgroups	97%	94%
Schools*	94%	90%
Total	96%	94%

*Including nursery schools, primary, first and special schools.

As a result of the pandemic Ofsted inspections were suspended from March 2020 until September. Throughout the pandemic providers were forced to work differently to ensure children and staff were kept as safe as they could be, this particularly impacted for a time for some children who were unable to access childcare and for some children this has contributed to delayed developmental progress particularly in areas of speech, language and communication and personal social and emotional development. Working in partnership with parents continued to be high priority, with settings working hard to engage with parents using creative measures including use of the outdoors and ensuring remote access to support. Providers are now working to reinstate customary practice and providing additional support to children and

parents in order to assist children and families in their recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

In addition to the effects of the pandemic a revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced in September 2021. This has introduced quite a deep change. In the past EYFS through Development Matters has set a detailed curriculum and requirements for observing, assessing and tracking children's progress. It has now been recognised that some of those requirements drove practitioners to keep unnecessary volumes of paperwork that did not impact on the support of children's development. As a result, Development Matters has been reduced, settings are encouraged to identify their own curriculum, which is appropriate for children that attend, and practitioners are encouraged to use their professional skills knowledge and judgements to identify how individual children are developing rather than spend time recording their progress. While this recognises the skills and expertise of early years teams and their leaders it does place a new responsibility on them which many settings will need to work up to.

DfE have recognised that early years and childcare settings have faced some particular challenges including addressing the effects of missing out on the consistent opportunities to learn and develop that attendance at early years and childcare settings would have given them. As a result, DfE have introduced the Covid-19 Recovery Experts and Mentors Programme. This will deliver training and then coaching support to enable settings to support children on their recovery.

Funded entitlements

Targeted two-year-old entitlement

Between 30 and 40% of two-year-olds are eligible for fifteen hours of funded early education, for 38 weeks of the year. Based on estimates for Spring 2022 it is expected that take up will return to normal levels and expect it to be significantly higher than the national average.⁹ This is following declining take up rates over the last 3 reported years, and significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

⁹ Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting year 2021: [Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting Year 2021 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov/uk)

Table 8: take up rates for two-year-olds

Year	Newcastle Take-up	National Average	% above the national average
2022	82% estimate		
2021	72%	62%	10%
2020	81%	69%	12%
2019	85%	68%	17%
2018	103%	72%	31%

From 2020 to 2021 both locally and nationally the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions in place appeared to have had a significant impact on take up of all early education. This may have been even more significant for disadvantaged and non-working families. In January 2021 the country was in its third national lockdown with 'stay at home' instruction in place, schools were closed to the majority of students, (although early years and childcare remained open).

Newcastle has worked extremely hard to ensure that eligible two-year-olds take up their early years education and 2022 figures are so far extremely positive, indicating rates are back to pre-Covid-19 levels. The Early Years Sector Support (EYSS) Team will continue to look at methods to keep take up at such high levels.

While take up rates continue to be high and have improved, the actual numbers of eligible two-year-olds has declined. This is a combination of both a reduction in two-year-old population and a reduction in the proportion eligible as the income criteria has stayed the same over last 6 years whilst earnings have increased.

Universal offer

Table 9: take up rates for three-and-four-olds

Year	Newcastle Take-up	National Average	% above the national average
2021	92%	90%	2%
2020	96%	93%	3%
2019	96%	93%	3%
2018	95%	94%	1%

All three-and-four-year-olds are eligible for 15 hours of funded early education, for 38 weeks of the year or term time. This is available from the term after a child's third birthday until the child starts school. Funded hours can be used all year round to suit parental need. Nationally take up rates for three-and-four-year-olds fell during 2021 to 90%, this is anticipated to have been an impact of Covid-19, prior to this, rates had been relatively stable for the 3 years. In Newcastle take up rates also fell in 2021 but have remained at least 1% above the national average for the last 4 years.

Extended entitlement

In addition to the universal offer some three-and-four-year-olds can access an additional 15 hours of early education and childcare if they meet the eligibility criteria as set out in guidance from DfE¹⁰.

The way the government reports on early years funded entitlements has changed so it is harder to see changes in this sector. But the data suggests a similar fall in take up for extended entitlement and universal entitlement in 2021. Though there is some evidence to suggest the decline in the PVI sector was less pronounced than in the school or childminder sector.

Early years pupil premium (EYPP)

EYPP was introduced in 2015 and is additional funding for children who are accessing the universal entitlement and meet the eligibility criteria as set out by DfE in the Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities on the provision of early education and childcare. Newcastle will continue to work hard to maximise take up through, easy transition for funded two-year-olds and collaborative working with the Free School Meals team to ensure, as far as possible, families only need to apply once, and automatic allocations can be made.

Response to Covid-19

As the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic began to build early in 2020 the EYSS team shared guidance and advice that came from Department for Education (DFE). Increasingly this involved interpreting complex DFE guidance and fielding complicated enquiries from early years and childcare providers about the implications of guidance and how to manage some individual situations. Going into first national lockdown in March 2020, the EYSS team prioritised the distribution of early education and childcare funding. This involved frequent engagement with providers alongside continuing to share information and support individual enquiries. In line with DfE guidance the team ensured that providers received their expected funding allocations. During national lockdowns, where only key workers were permitted to attend workplaces, the team set up a brokerage system to ensure that the children of key workers could find placements if their usual settings had closed. Where possible, these key workers did not incur any additional cost.

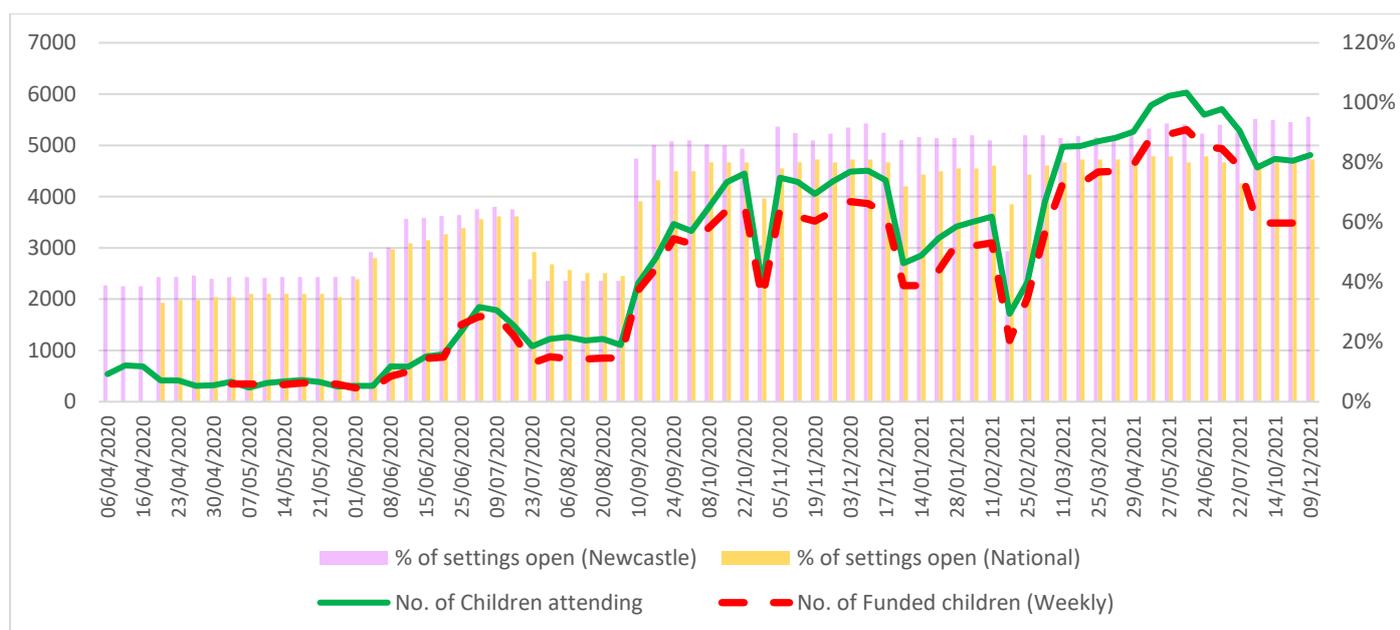
As provision began to re-open, the team continued to provide support to interpret and apply guidance. When DfE started to request the collection of data April 2020 the team added some extra questions so that providers could let the team know if they had Covid-19 cases, and if they had particular worries. The team then ensured that any comments or questions were followed up. Data collected in this way about open and closed settings, attendance of children of key workers and vulnerable children, provider concerns and cases in settings, helped us keep track of a rapidly changing situation and gave us the opportunity to report useful data to support strategic plans.

¹⁰ Early education and childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities on the provision of early education and childcare: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2>

The EYSS Team also worked with our local Public Health Team to set up an early years and childcare wrap around group to support settings in Newcastle. This meant that local guidance informed by cases could be shared. A sector specific outbreak pathway was developed so that providers would know which organisations they had to inform and how they could get additional support. This partnership was invaluable in providing consistent and well-informed information. The EYSS Team also put in place a system of contacting providers who reported cases to ensure that they felt supported. This meant that they received direct support from local Public Health and a follow up from the EYSS Team.

Although there was an established system of sharing information about cases from Public Health, the additional questions added to the DfE data collection helped us identify cases and particularly cases that had not yet been reported to Public Health colleagues.

Figure 5: Percentage of open settings and number children attending, during the Covid-19 pandemic.



As part of the audit providers were asked if there were any positive changes they had made that they planned to keep moving forward, some of the responses included:

- Smoother and more structured pick up and drop off procedures, allowing children to settle quicker.
- Better communication with parents through online tools.
- Staggered break times, meaning fewer children playing at any one time allowing play of a far higher quality.
- Increased and improved hygiene routines.

- One school started a food bank to support families.
- More activities take place outside.
- Remote learning as an option.

For example:

“We have walked to school and back daily, which has helped behaviour at school and concentration... We will keep the walking instead of using the car.”

“Have expanded my outdoor space to do more messy play activities/ science experiments/ arts and crafts.....”

Looking back and looking forward

In the last report¹¹ several recommendations for The EYSS Team were made. Due to the effects of the pandemic, it was not possible to action all of these recommendations however the following progress has been made.

1. *Continue to review and take onboard feedback from providers and partners to improve take-up and local systems, including strategies to overcome barriers for parents and employers to taking up free childcare.*

The EYSS Team has, through open communication taken onboard feedback from providers and worked closely with providers to ensure that children, particularly those of key workers could access early education and childcare at the most challenging times in the pandemic (see Covid-19 response section).

2. *Continue to monitor the pre-school playgroup numbers to ensure that parents, particularly of children accessing two-year-old or universal three-and-four-year-old funding, can choose provision close enough to make walking to and from a three-hour session logistically viable.*

The continued fall in the number of pre-school playgroup providers in the city remains a concern because a reduction in setting could lead to reduced parental choice and limit access for some families. The Early Years Sector Support Team will continue to monitor this and support existing provision where possible. The increase in take up of places for eligible two-year-old is a positive sign that families are able to find what they are looking for.

3. *Continue to monitor take-up of two-year-old places and ensure that any reductions are a result of stabilisation in the reliability of national universal credit data and not a reaction to the reduction in setting-based provision. At the same time investigate take-up in specific communities, for instance BAME families.*

¹¹ Newcastle upon Tyne childcare sufficiency report 2019:
<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/early%20years%20and%20childcare/2019%20SCA%20Final.pdf>

See above. No specific work has been done in relation to specific communities. However far better identification tools are now available allowing practitioners on the ground to identify families more easily. This work is ongoing.

- 4. Work with the out of school club sector to consider creative ways of engaging, while being mindful of the constraints of the sector.*

This was achieved through more frequent communication with all settings due to Covid-19, more time spent seeking data and greater support given to settings who were struggling, for example completing audits over the phone, and accessing basic information (opening times, costs etc) for websites and social media beforehand.

- 5. Continue to monitor childminder numbers, including places to assess whether the increase continues and remains sustainable across the sector, particularly as childminders continue to provide the most flexible care, and their role in the extended entitlement offer continues to grow.*

See providers and places section, the number of childminders has fallen, however the number of childminders offering funded places has once again increased which is encouraging to enable parental choice.

- 6. Conduct a parent survey to assess any unmet or poorly met demand, potential barriers to childcare, how parents wrap-around the school day (both formal and informal care) and holiday provision.*

Parental choice and patterns of childcare were significantly affected by the effects of Covid-19. The EYSS team did not want to conduct this survey through the lens of the pandemic. This work will be done once the influence of Covid-19 is no longer affecting childcare choices in a significant way, giving the added opportunity to assess any continued influence of flexible and homeworking on the needs of Newcastle families.

Final conclusion

This report illustrates that Newcastle continues to have sufficient, good quality childcare to meet current demands.

The quality of childcare and early education in Newcastle is good with most settings being good or outstanding, and this is a pattern of continual improvement. As a result, most children who receive a funded place do so in a good quality setting. This is particularly important for those receiving two-year-old funding as the criteria for this is around economic disadvantage. This is one of the cohorts of children who may particularly benefit from good quality care and education at this early stage.

Both nationally and locally it has been recognised that many children are experiencing the effects of having lived through the pandemic. The early years and childcare provision in Newcastle is in a good place to support these children and

there are good quality mechanisms to identify and address social, health and developmental issues and ensure they can access appropriate early help. Early Years and childcare providers will be supported to access DfE's Covid recovery programmes.

The Early Years Sector Support Team is reflecting on the way it worked throughout the pandemic and considering how to move forward in a way that is appropriate for the changing childcare landscape, taking into account the different demands across the three terms of the year. This will help us better understand how to support providers to offer a flexible service which delivers parental choice in any term.

Due to the pandemic, we were required to collect additional data. We also maintained much closer contact with our providers both digitally and verbally and this meant we had a rich vein of qualitative and quantitative data to draw on. We will consider which of these methods are proportionate and useful to carry forward to assess and plan for changing patterns of use and demand post-pandemic.

Recommendations

1. Refresh the sufficiency data termly, recognising that the occupancy rates increase across the year with the Summer term being the busiest where some settings may be fuller.
2. Look more closely at occupancy by area on a termly basis, recognising that pockets of the city may have limited places in the Summer term.
3. Continue to work on the recommendations of our last report that were put on hold due to the effects of Covid-19.

Glossary

Childcare on domestic premises 4 or more people who work together from one of their homes to look after children up to the age of 8 years

Childcare on non-domestic premises group childcare based outside of a domestic home

Childminders look after children up to the age of 8 years in the childminder's home

Childminding on non-domestic premises childminders can apply to work for up to 50% of their time from a venue that is not their home. If Ofsted agree they can do this, they must meet the requirements for Childcare on non-domestic premises

Full day care usually from birth to reception age, offering five- or ten-hour sessions

Home child carers a professional child carer who works in your home, caring for your child or children.

Nanny a professional child carer who works in your home, caring for your child or children

Nomis a service provided by the Office for National Statistics, ONS, to give you free access to the most detailed and up-to-date UK labour market statistics from official sources

Out of school club group care for school age children, can include a combination of before and after school and school holidays

Out of hours care childcare before 8am, or after 6pm Monday to Friday, or any childcare at the weekend.

Pre-school playgroups usually for three-hour sessions, for children aged 2 years and over

PVI Private, Voluntary and Independent sector organisations that deliver childcare

Setting collective term for any individual provision on non-domestic premises

All-through school a school that combine at least 2 stages of a child's education – typically primary and secondary – in one establishment

Wrap around care – childcare offered either side of another care offer, or the school day to extend the length of the care offer. Typically to allow parents to work 9-5 so care, including any drop offs and pickups, would be 8-6.

Appendix: Number of providers, places and occupancy by ward**

Wards	Number of Providers				Number of Places				Occupancy			
	CM	DC	S	OSC	CM	DC	S	OSC	CM	DC	S	OSC
Arthur's Hill	3	1	2	2	24	22	220	90	35%	95%	95%	85%
Benwell & Scotswood	3	4	3	5	18	136	410	251	-	75%	65%	49%
Blakelaw	5	3	2	2	28	124	220	62	45%	88%	90%	78%
Byker	2	2	2	2	11	91	70	106	65%	85%	85%	73%
Callerton & Throckley	7	0	6	3	42	0	309	281	95%	-	72%	65%
Castle	12	4	4	2	84	160	273	52	53%	69%	95%	57%
Chapel	11	3	3	1	96	101	78	39	55%	78%	95%	87%
Dene & South Gosforth	7	3	1	0	42	190	80	0	72%	72%	-	90%
Denton & Westerhope	7	4	3	3	54	179	95	91	55%	90%	80%	65%
Elswick	2	7	3	5	11	373	270	266	-	65%	83%	87%
Fawdon & West Gosforth	14	5	4	4	99	250	158	110	80%	75%	95%	85%
Gosforth	2	6	5	3	12	419	121	55	45%	65%	95%	56%
Heaton	2	2	4	2	12	178	192	112	45%	75%	95%	63%
Kenton	9	3	4	4	64	95	95	138	55%	82%	75%	80%

Kingston Park South & Newbiggin Hall	4	1	3	4	35	63	103	110	-	55%	88%	70%
Lemington	10	2	4	3	84	132	181	76	75%	75%	70%	55%
Manor Park	4	1	2	1	24	21	90	52	60%	95%	95%	65%
Monument	0	4	2	2	0	408	70	47	-	68%	95%	35%
North Jesmond	1	1	1	0	6	45	32	0	-	95%	-	82%
Ouseburn	2	2	3	2	24	109	104	59	70%	75%	65%	79%
Parklands	15	2	2	2	96	54	134	91	68%	70%	90%	85%
South Jesmond	0	4	6	3	0	287	248	96	-	78%	82%	64%
Walker	6	0	5	5	52	0	401	446	60%	-	89%	68%
Walkergate	2	2	3	2	12	103	84	65	-	85%	85%	67%
West Fenham	4	5	2	2	16	153	48	78	65%	85%	90%	45%
Wingrove	4	4	3	3	24	185	105	108	80%	73%	95%	57%
Total	138	75	82	67	970	3,878	4,191	2,881				

CM = Childminders

DC = Day care (including Full day care and pre-school playgroups)

S = Schools (who have children below statutory school age)

OSC = Out of school clubs (PVI and in schools who offer after school care)

**Data collection took place Summer 2021 – occupancy rates may still have been influenced by C