



Isle of Wight Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011

Final Report
March 2011



RESEARCH

Contents

Executive Summary.....	I
Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	15
Chapter 2 – Overall Findings.....	22
Chapter 3 – Supporting Information: Provider Survey.....	37
Chapter 4 – Supporting Information: Parents Survey.....	50
Chapter 5 – Supporting Information: Employers Survey.....	74
Chapter 6 – Supporting Information: Children and Young People Survey.....	80
Chapter 7 –Key Gaps, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	90

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Public Consultation on Draft Report

Appendix 2 – Draft Action Plan (to be reviewed in 6 months of date of publication)

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- The schools and the children and young people who contributed via group discussions;
- The childcare providers who responded to the telephone survey.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Local Authorities are required under the Childcare Act 2006, Section 6 to ensure that there is sufficient, quality, flexible, sustainable childcare for parents and carers. The Childcare Act 2006 defines childcare sufficiency as 'sufficient to meet the requirement of parents in the (Local Authority's) area who require childcare in order to enable them:

- a) To take up or remain in work
- b) To undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.
- c) May have regard to any childcare which they expect to be available outside their area.

In order to meet the sufficiency duty local authorities are required to undertake a detailed assessment of the supply of, and demand for, childcare in their area. Qa Research was commissioned to undertake the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment on behalf of the Local Authority. The assessment included research and consultation with parents / carers, children and young people, employers, and providers.

This document presents the key findings of the assessment in line with nine indicators of sufficiency:

- Sufficiency of Places
- Range of Provision
- Quality
- Flexibility
- Accessibility (geographical issues)
- Knowledge and Information
- Affordability
- Inclusivity/Meeting Particular Needs
- Sustainability

Context

The Isle of Wight is situated within the South East Region of Great Britain and covers an area of 145 square miles. A population of 132,731 was identified at the last Census in 2001 with children (aged 15 and under) forming just under a fifth of the population (18%)¹. Despite many young people migrating to the mainland to pursue higher education and career opportunities mid-year population estimates for 2009 suggest the population of the Island has now increased to circa 140,200². Whilst a large majority of the Island's population is White British (96.8% according to the 2001 Census) the black and minority ethnic population has been growing in recent years.

Employment data suggests 72% of those aged 16-64 on the Island are economically active which is lower than the figures for the South East region and Great Britain (80% of men are thought to be economically active compared with 64% of women)³. With a reliance on industries like tourism and the seasonal employment tied in with this the Island experiences lower than average wages - weekly/hourly wages for the Isle of Wight are less than the South East region and Great Britain overall.

The 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation identified that the Isle of Wight is the 8th most deprived Local Authority of the 67 districts in the South East, the top seven most deprived areas are urban areas.

¹ http://www.iwight.com/isle_working/statistics/population/census_update_population.pdf

² <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431803/report.aspx?town=isle%20of%20wight#tabrespop>

³ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431803/report.aspx?town=isle%20of%20wight#tabrespop>

The Isle of Wight is divided into 3 localities (North East Wight; South Wight and West and Central Wight) and eight Children’s Centre areas. Information at locality level is most useful due to the size of the Island and the feasibility of statistics being available for small geographic areas.

At the time of this report the schools on the Island are undergoing a period of substantial change. The education system is moving from 3 tier (primary, middle and high) to a 2 tier system (primary and secondary). As a result, many schools are moving sites and/or amalgamating. This directly affects childcare providers, especially those on school sites. It is important to keep this in mind when reading the report as many comments and qualitative data alludes to this.

Methodology

In total:

- 419 telephone surveys were completed with parents/carers,
- 21 depth telephone interviews were completed with employers,
- 104 telephone surveys were completed with providers,
- 8 focus groups (4 with children and young people and 4 with parents/carers) were also carried out.

The assessment also uses MiMo - two models of analysis initially conceived and developed by Qa Research and Leicestershire County Council. These tools have been developed with a view to maximising and giving meaning to the different aspects of data relevant to the CSA and include Formula Tables to help predict and manage demand for childcare and the Sufficiency Tool which analyses key secondary data to give a picture of sufficiency across a number of indicators. Further information about MiMo can be found in the full CSA report.

Please note that whilst most of the primary data collection took place in June and July 2010 some of the provider surveys were by necessity completed in early September 2010. As such the research is reflective of a specific period of time. It should also be noted that there is sometimes a difference between perceptions of parents and the understanding of current sufficiency by the Local Authority. The Local Authority acknowledges this difference and appreciates that a range of views are held by different stakeholders. Some quotes have to be viewed in this context and there is merit in their inclusion in the report.

Childcare provision on the Isle of Wight

The childcare provision on the Isle of Wight is, in the main, provided by the private, voluntary and independent sector (PVI sector).

There are 60 childcare providers which include breakfast clubs on school sites run by schools; of these providers 53% operate term time only.

- 35% provide childcare to children aged 0-2 years
- 65% provide childcare for children aged 2-4 years.
- 32% provide access to breakfast clubs
- 42% provide access to after school clubs
- 38% provide access to a holiday club

In addition there are 96 childminders and homecarers providing childcare at home.

Sufficiency Score

The sufficiency tool used assesses the Local Authority’s childcare sufficiency as being overall ‘green’. There are some areas which currently show amber and red within the overall grading.

The sufficiency score for the Isle of Wight is high; the overall score using the Sufficiency Tool is 73.6 out of a possible 92.8.

An overall score that is in excess of 75% of the possible score produces a ‘green’ rating.

Figure I.1 Overall Sufficiency Score

OVERALL - Sufficiency Score = 73.6 (92.8)																													
6.0					24.8						14.0						3.0		9.0			5.0		5.0		6.8			
Su1	Su2	Su3	Su4	Su5	FI1	FI2	FI3	FI4	FI5	FI6	HQ1	HQ2	HQ3	HQ4	HQ5	HQ6	In1	In2	Af1	Af2	Af3	IK1	IK2	Ac1	NP1	NP2	RT1	RT2	
3.0 3.0					5.0 5.0 3.8 5.0 1.0 5.0						5.0 5.0 1.0 3.0						3.0 3.0		1.5 5.0 2.5			5.0		5.0		5.0 1.8			
Sustainability					Flexibility						High Quality						Inclusivity		Affordability			Information/Knowledge		Accessibility		Number Of Places		Range/Type	

The Local Authority has received ‘green’ ratings overall for baskets to indicators relating to;

- Sustainability
- Flexibility
- Affordability
- Information/Knowledge
- Accessibility Number of Places

2 baskets of indicators received ‘amber’ ratings;

- Inclusivity
- High Quality

These should be the Local Authority’s focus when looking to secure sufficient childcare in the future.

2 out of the 21 indicators received ‘red’ ratings. These concerned;

- Flexibility (FL5) - the proportion of afterschool clubs which open until at least 6pm
- High Quality (HQ4) - the proportion of early year’s settings that are graduate led

These again should be areas for focus in terms of securing childcare sufficiency.

The overall scores for each Locality were;

- West and Central - 77.4 out of 92.8
- South Wight - 76.8 out of 92.8
- North East Wight - 69.4 out of 92.8.

Sufficiency of Places

Findings from the MiMo formulas which look specifically at place data suggest that the Local Authority is broadly sufficient in terms of the number of places currently available/required by 2014. This is based upon a calculation using current places against vacancies and waiting lists along with current and 2014 population figures.

Figure 1.2 shows that all provider types currently have some spare capacity across all 3 localities.

Figure 1.3 showing the projected situation in 3 years suggests that the availability of pre-school/playgroups within the West and Central locality may need to be monitored over the next 3 years. The formulas suggest some potential over-supply of places, particularly in the South Wight locality in terms of breakfast/after-school clubs; pre-schools and childminders. Several 'amber' ratings have also been given warranting further monitoring.

The projected situation needs to be treated with caution as it is based on estimated population for 2014.

Figure 1.2 Spare capacity – Current situation

	Childminders	Day nurseries	Pre-school/ playgroups	Breakfast Clubs	After School Clubs
Overall	23%	14%	15%	20%	21%
North East locality	8%	13%	14%	17%	20%
West and Central locality	7%	21%	5%	11%	18%
South locality	61%	7%	29%	39%	28%

Figure 1.3 Spare capacity – 2014 Projected situation

	Childminders	Day nurseries	Pre- school/playgroups	Breakfast Clubs	After School Clubs
Overall	20%	10%	8%	18%	19%
North East locality	4%	8%	6%	15%	18%
West and Central locality	4%	16%	-4%	9%	27%
South locality	59%	2%	22%	37%	16%

Key:

	>= 20% capacity (suggesting an over-supply of places)
	10%-19% capacity (suggesting sufficiency of places)
	1-10% capacity (suggesting an area to monitor)
	</= 0% capacity (suggesting insufficient places)

Demand for Childcare

31% of parents were using some type of formal childcare. Amongst locality areas this figure ranged from 26% of parents in South Wight to 36% of parents in North East Wight.

Overall, 17% of parents reported using a combination of formal and informal childcare to enable them to work/study and 28% reported purely using informal childcare.

The greatest demand appears to be for out of school care where 24% of respondents were using childcare before or after school or during the holidays.

Although, 31% of parents were currently using formal care, 40% were expecting to need some in the next 18 months. The largest increase is for after-school clubs (4% increase). However, it is important to note that parental future 'demand' should be treated with caution as circumstances will change for many parents.

The top 3 reasons given by parents for not using formal childcare related to;

- a lack of need 64%
- personal preference 61%
- cost. 10%

Fluctuations in the labour market also need to be considered as part of the CSA. Findings from the survey of employers suggest that many have put any expansion plans on hold as a result of the recession and several reported current recruitment freezes. Therefore, it seems unlikely that labour market expansion is going to have any significant impact upon the demand for childcare.

Range of Provision

Findings from the parental survey show that the most widely used childcare types are;

- after school clubs (10%)
- pre-schools (9%)

Fewer than 1 in 10 parents are using each of the remaining childcare types.

Although the Local Authority appears to be broadly sufficient in terms of the number of places/range of provision, other evidence particularly from parents within the focus group discussions highlighted a lack of activities for older children aged 9+ although of note it was generally felt 'childcare' as such would not be as suitable for older children and supervised activities are more appropriate instead.

From the perspective of employers, a lack of ad hoc care or care within the school holidays was most likely to cause difficulties for them and their employees.

Early Years Education

In total 75% of respondents with 3/4 year old children reported using their free entitlement place. Although it is likely that actual take up as known to the Local Authority will be greater than this. The main reasons given for not using any/all of the entitlement relate to not yet/no longer being eligible as opposed to other reasons. Of the 52 respondents who were using their free entitlement almost 9 out of 10 used their full entitlement (88%).

With the exception of one independent setting all early years providers as well as 4 childminders are registered for NEF funding across the Local Authority. All early years providers and 3 of the 4 childminders stated that they were able to offer the funding flexibly.

Quality

Overall, 73% of parents surveyed were very satisfied with the quality of care, with just 1% stating that they were very dissatisfied. Parents of children who are currently aged 0-2 were much more likely to mention issues relating to quality as a key selection criteria compared with parents of school-aged children.

Whilst from a parent perspective the quality of childcare available on the Island is generally high data shows there are areas for improvement in terms of the upskilling of the workforce.

The MiMo Sufficiency Tool highlights the indicator - '% of EY settings (for age 0-5) that are graduate led (excluding childminders)' as an area that needs attention, particularly for the North East and South Wight localities.

Just less than half of day nurseries within the Isle of Wight are graduate led at the moment (47%) with this proportion being lower for pre-school playgroups (30%). Smaller proportions of settings were led by someone with Early Years Professional Status (41% of day nurseries; 20% of playgroups). Data again suggests the private and voluntary sectors may need most support in developing this rather than the public sector. Playgroups are likely to need particular support factoring in their ability to pay for and retain staff with these higher level qualifications.

Positively all of the day nurseries; playgroups and breakfast clubs which were covered by the research reported that 50%+ of their staff had at least an NVQ Level 3 which suggests the Local Authority may be in a good position to meet the 2015 target. Data suggests a small number of holiday schemes and afterschool clubs in the private sector may need support to achieve this as they reported less than 50% of their employees had a Level 3 qualification or above. In terms of childminders 4 out of 10 of them held at least a relevant Level 3 qualification (42%) whilst 58% did not. Again this suggests that childminders may need more support and encouragement to pursue Level 3 qualifications.

Flexibility

97% of parents surveyed were very satisfied/satisfied with the flexibility of the care they use.

Parents who expressed dissatisfaction in terms of flexibility of care were all using out of school care. Just less than half (46%) of after school clubs surveyed were open until 6pm. Whilst all of the holiday clubs mentioned opening during half terms and Easter, one did not open during the summer and several were not open during the Christmas holidays. In the context of the parents' survey this suggests a need for more flexible opening times for out of school care particularly to accommodate the early starts and late finishes that are predominant within the tourism industry which accounts for a substantial proportion of employment on the Isle of Wight.

Flexibility of care is a key concern for working parents. Findings from the parental survey show that employed parents were more likely to state they would select specific providers in the next 18 months because they offered flexibility compared with non-working/studying parents (16% compared to 5% respectively).

Almost all of the parents surveyed were using and anticipated that they would need childcare on weekdays between 6am and 7pm. Very few parents surveyed were using or required childcare outside of these hours; no one used/required overnight or 24 hour care. Half of those using childcare were using it in term time (51%) with around 4 out of 10 (41%) using it all year round. Almost 1 in 10 respondents (8%) reported they just use formal childcare on an ad hoc basis.

Overall, 82% of parents reported that their work situation had not been affected by childcare issues. For those that had experienced difficulties the most common issue was the inability to increase the number of hours worked.

Accessibility (geographical issues)

Proximity

99% of childcare users were very satisfied/satisfied with the distance of their provider from their home.

Proximity to home was the most important factor for parents when selecting childcare provision - with 28% of parents giving this response.

Parents living in South Wight were more likely to be travelling further to access childcare (with 15% of parents travelling over 3 miles) and those living in North East Wight were more likely to be using childcare close to home (90% of parents travelling 3 miles or less).

Comments about poor/costly public transport feature in the parents and employers survey findings and are highlighted within the focus group discussions. Difficulties for staff getting to and from work/childcare provision because of difficulties with public transport are discussed by employers, parents and children and young people. Again, seasonal shift work and early starts make accessibility a key issue.

Location

Providers were also invited to give comments on the sufficiency of childcare on the Island in terms of location. Many didn't feel that there were issues in terms of location and felt providers were well spread out. Although, several commented on the reorganisation of schools with some providers having to subsequently move. Providers

also commented on difficulties for parents who do not drive, which again suggests that accessibility issues may be more related to public transport.

Knowledge and Information

Within the sufficiency tool the Isle of Wight received a positive 'green' rating for the 'Information/knowledge' basket of indicators.

Three quarters (76%) of parents surveyed felt that they would know where to go for information on childcare. A range of information sources were used by respondents with the most common source being FIZ (Family Information Zone) (39%).

When prompted 79% of parents said they were aware of FIZ. 5 out of 21 employers interviewed named FIZ as their main information source of childcare information for staff; however these were larger employers with 100+ staff. This suggests that there could be some benefit in promoting FIZ services to smaller employers.

Affordability

The research identified differences in opinions regarding the cost of childcare amongst users and non-users. Whilst cost was the main actual barrier to using childcare given by non-users (10%), a large proportion of childcare users reported being very satisfied/satisfied with the cost (ranging between 77%-85%) and said the cost had not been one of the leading factors in deciding which childcare to use (6%).

Parents were most likely to agree that the average hourly rate for day nursery provision for children aged 3-5 was fair at £3.00 (85%). Respondents most frequently felt that the average hourly rate for before or after school clubs was not fair also at £3.00 (17%).

Many providers surveyed offered discounts (e.g. sickness or sibling discounts) although this was more prevalent amongst day nurseries/out of school care providers. Generally providers felt that their costs were reasonable and some stated that fees were low on the Island particularly when compared with the mainland. Although, those that wanted to increase fees thought that low wage levels on the Island prevented them from doing so.

The cost of childcare will always remain an issue for parents regardless of income and comments made throughout the research suggest that there is little that could be done at Local Authority level to overcome some of the issues relating to this.

Another initiative designed to make childcare more affordable are Childcare Vouchers. Data from the employer survey shows that 13 out of 21 employers surveyed were offering a scheme. However, levels of take-up appeared variable. Further promotion of such schemes would be beneficial amongst employees and childcare providers.

Inclusivity/Meeting Particular Needs

In total, 12% of parents surveyed had children with additional needs/disabilities. Overall, 90% of these parents said their childcare needs were fully or partially met.

The main concern expressed by these parents was that there is a lack of suitable provision for children with additional needs/disabilities, particularly out of school care and respite care. Parents within the focus groups spoke about patchy respite care, particularly those schemes involving volunteers. Sometimes parents would find that after the initial stages the volunteer would find a child with severe/complex needs too much to take on.

The majority of day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, breakfast and after school clubs stated that they did offer places to children with additional and complex needs. Childminders were less likely to give this response, with 79% and 69% offering places for children with additional and complex needs respectively which has influenced the 'amber' rating for Inclusivity within the Sufficiency tool. PreSchools/Playgroups were most likely to be caring for

children with additional or complex needs at the moment (82%); one to one carers (childminders and home childcarers) were least likely to be caring for such children.

Barriers to offering care for children with additional or complex needs included staffing difficulties associated with the provision of one to one care and a lack of funding to cover additional staff costs. Providers also discussed space issues (including wheelchair access) and not having the right equipment or training.

Sustainability

At the time of the research there did not appear to be a significant level of concern amongst providers regarding sustainability. However, some concerns were expressed around whether support from the Local Authority would diminish and references were made to the recent reorganisation.

Out of school settings were more likely to anticipate an increase in demand than other setting types. Just less than a fifth of the childminders who were surveyed expected a decrease in demand for their services which is a greater proportion than for any other provider type. Providers linked to schools were particularly likely to notice fluctuations in demand, i.e. if schools increase/decrease intake or as a result of parental preference for school based care.

Sustainability appeared to be more of a concern for those providers not based on school sites or linked to schools in some way as providers feel that there is a perception amongst parents that they will stand a better chance of getting their child a place at the school, although this should not in practice be the case.

Day nurseries tend to have the highest vacancy levels, with 86% of nurseries in West and Central Wight reporting vacancies. Generally, childminders reported lower vacancy levels; however there was some variation between localities, for example, 38% of childminders in West and Central Wight had a waiting list compared with 8% in South Wight.

Nationally, there has been a lot of discussion around the sustainability issues involved in delivering the free entitlement. Encouragingly, this does not appear to be a significant issue for many providers in the Isle of Wight; only a small minority of settings are experiencing sustainability issues in respect of delivering the free entitlement. For the majority of day nurseries and pre-school/playgroups the funding they received for free entitlement was at least equal to or more than their normal fee, and was more than the normal fee for all childminders surveyed. Although one day nursery and 2 pre-school playgroups stated that the funding was less than their normal fee. Childminders however noted the potential impact that 2 year old funding could have on their businesses.

Recommendations:

Flexibility

1. In terms of the gaps regarding flexibility out of school care providers should be encouraged to consult with parents regarding their requirements and in particular with a view to extending the number of afterschool clubs which open until at least 6pm.

Quality

2. a) In light of the overall 'amber' rating for quality of childcare the Local Authority will need to consider how settings can be further supported to develop their workforce. Priority should be given to the private and voluntary sectors.

b) Childminders need to be fully supported to pursue further qualifications.

Knowledge and Information/ Inclusivity

3. a) The Local Authority needs to consider how further information about the provision of childcare and activities for children and young people can be relayed to parents, particularly parents of children with disabilities/additional needs.

b) The Local Authority may wish to consider how local employers can be encouraged further to support their employees with childcare information and vouchers, particularly male-dominated industries where they may not see the relevance but where employees may benefit.

c) The information from this CSA should be shared with all relevant stakeholders; not only in terms of looking at the CSA findings but also in terms of sharing ideas about how for example schools and providers could consult with children and young people in the future using participatory appraisal techniques.

Sustainability

4. a) Childminders should be supported in relation to sustainability issues as many appeared concerned about the future.

b) Providers on school sites will need continued support in terms of looking at sustainability plans bearing in mind changes to leases taking place on the Island.

Sufficiency of Places

5. a) The Local Authority should review ward level data within the Sufficiency tool to identify specific areas of potential need within the localities discussed; particularly the areas referenced within the report as potentially having an under or over supply of different childcare types be explored further.

b) The Local Authority will need to ensure the assessment and tools used within it are kept up to date to ensure the work continues to be relevant. Gaps within the sufficiency tool should be reviewed and weightings should be reviewed regularly.

Inclusivity/Meeting Particular Needs

The Local Authority may need to work with out of school providers, particularly holiday playschemes on developing parent's confidence in providers being able to supply appropriate care for children with additional needs/disabilities.

Range of Provision

The Local Authority should work with providers to develop the offer for childcare for the 9 + age group considering the wishes of young people and the views of parents in relation to appropriate supervised activities.

8. Affordability

The Local Authority should support parents to enable them to understand the range of available benefits that support the take up of childcare and work with providers to ensure that parents are fully aware of the range local discounts that providers offer

Accessibility (geographical issues) – no specific recommendations arising from the research