

Report to People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report Title	Funded Childcare Provision and wraparound Care needs assessment Report (Childcare Sufficiency Assessment)
Date of Meeting	Thursday, 30 January 2025
Report Author	Andrea Winstone
Corporate Director	Executive Director Children's Services
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Appendices (if any)	1. Childcare Needs Assessment 2. Equality Assessment Form

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report:
- 1.2 The Childcare Act 2006 gives councils a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area and all local authorities have a duty of securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents to enable them to: take up, or remain in, work.
- 1.3 Section 12 of the act places a duty on English councils to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents. Section 13 places a duty on councils to provide information and advice to childcare providers.
- 1.4 The Department for Education (DfE) require councils to "report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents".
- 1.5 The Childcare Funded Childcare Provision and Wraparound Childcare
- 1.6 Needs Assessment (appendix 1) is a statutory report that must be published on the Council's website and updated annually. This report is produced to meet these statutory duties.
- 1.7 In this report the local authority has assessed sufficiency using contemporary data about the need (demand) for childcare and the amount (supply) of:

- 1.8 early years funded childcare, including aligned to the extended funded entitlements and;
- 1.9 before school and after school wraparound childcare.
- 1.10 The Childcare Funded Childcare Provision and Wraparound Childcare Needs Assessment identifies by ward where there is sufficient early education and childcare and wraparound care and where additional provision needs to be developed.
- 1.11 Each ward has been given a 'sufficiency' RAG rating - **as of Autumn 2024** - as follows:

Red	Supply and/or demand themed analysis indicates that this is a priority ward of focus - for funded and/or wraparound childcare sufficiency planners of Thurrock Council.
Amber	Supply and/or demand themed analysis indicates that this is a ward of continued focus/review - for funded and/or wraparound childcare sufficiency planners of Thurrock Council.
Green	Supply and/or demand themed analysis indicates that this is a lower priority ward of focus - for funded and/or wraparound childcare sufficiency planners of Thurrock Council.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, the Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 review the Funded Childcare Provision and Wraparound Childcare Needs Sufficiency Assessment to understand the supply and development requirements of early education, childcare and wraparound care in Thurrock.
- 2.2 consider the Council's duty towards early year's education and childcare in any new strategic developments.

3. Commissioner's Comments

- 3.1 n/a

4. Proposals – the rationale and evidence for the recommendations

4.1 Local Policy Context

- 4.2 The Annual Assessment links with the following Council vision and priorities:

4.3 Vision - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

4.4 Priorities:

4.5 People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live, and stay.

4.6 Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

4.7 Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

4.8 National Policy

4.9 The context for the report begins in March 2023, when the Department for Education (DfE) announced an expectation that from September 2024, parents/carers across England could expect to see an increase in the number of wraparound childcare places for primary school aged children of 5-11 years - and therefore this would apply to the Thurrock locality.

4.10 The DfE continue to intend that all/carers parents who need it - including working parents - can have access to wraparound care, either from their primary school or from another 5-11 years out of school hours provider in their local area, by September 2026.

4.11 Term-time wraparound childcare is defined as childcare that ‘wraps around’ the conventional school day, both before and after it. It does not refer to school-delivered themed clubs, like for example, football club, netball club, arts club etc. This provision can be offered by schools and can be run on a school site or at another setting in the area.

4.12 It should not require parents to pick their child(ren) up from school and drop them off at another location. It should support them with their working day and their working hours between 8am-6pm.

4.13 In February 2024, the DfE continued to set out its vision in the document: Wraparound childcare: guidance for schools and trusts in England. The document described how there are “many benefits to wraparound childcare, for children, families and schools.

These can vary by school and circumstances, but may include”:

- *enabling parents to work or study.*
- *supporting vulnerable children*
- *offering enriching activities that children enjoy*
- *attracting parents to a school*
- *supporting a soft start to the school day and attendance*
- *investing fees into the school or community facilities.*

4.14 That document also outlined how Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient wraparound childcare places in their area, and that, therefore, they should work with schools, Multi Academy Trusts and Private, Voluntary, and Independent (PVI) early education and childcare providers (including childminders and early years providers) to do so - using Government funding to set up new provision and expand existing provision, where needed. In addition, the document reiterated that primary schools are expected to:

- respond to their community’s wraparound needs.
- consider and respond to parents’ requests for their school to deliver wraparound childcare.
- support the Local Authority to understand parental demand and, where relevant, existing wraparound provision.

This report also aligns with a second Spring 2023 Government announcement which focused on the funded early years entitlement for 9 months – 4-year-olds which *included*:

5. From April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds would be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare.
6. From September 2024 (when this assessment commenced), 15 hours childcare support would be extended to eligible working parents with a child from 9-months-old – 3 years.
- 6.1 From September 2025, support will reach 30 hours for eligible working parents with a child from 9-months-old up to school age.

This needs assessment for both types of childcare was supported by an organisation called Place Group - an early education themed project management that has significant experience of working on Childcare Sufficiency Assessments.

Place Group implemented the following methodology to produce the following needs assessment.

- 6.2 Structured telephone/virtual interviews with representatives of Thurrock's early years childcare providers, registered childminders and primary schools which focused on the themes of: (a) early years childcare places supply, observed demand and themes relevant to the expansion to the Government's funded early years entitlements and (b) the incidence of the delivery of wraparound childcare places before school and after school.
- 6.3 Two online surveys which were promoted to Thurrock-resident parents and carers of 0–11-year-olds, in September and October 2024, which invited them to provide their views on early years childcare and wraparound childcare* places - both in the present and in the forthcoming future.
- 6.4 A specific online survey was promoted (by the local authority) to parents/carers of children aged 0–4 years – and this focused (in terms of content), on the existing and extended funded entitlements for 0–4-year-olds.
- 6.5 The second specific online survey was promoted (by the local authority) to parents/carers of children aged 3–11 years – and this focused (again, in terms of content) on the accessibility to (and demand for) wraparound childcare places.
- 6.6 Analysis of contemporary demographic and socio-economic factors, including a focus on: (a) existing and forecast population levels of 0–11-year-olds and; (b) the forthcoming incidence of new housing developments, which would have a potential effect on demand for (funded) early years childcare places and wraparound around childcare places, at specific locations (i.e. wards) throughout the Thurrock locality.

6.7 Current Support to Early Years Providers from the School Effectiveness Team:

- Support pathways for new early years providers.
- Regular visit to providers to ensure quality of care and education and compliance with welfare requirements.
- Support settings with recruitment and retention of staff.
- Liaison with planning department and assets team to identify future opportunities around vacant buildings.
- Monitoring new planning applications to ensure early years provision is included in new development as and when required.

5 Alternative Options Considered

5.1

6. Consultation

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Funding is provided from the Dedicated Schools Grant Early Years Block. The Early Years local funding formula is agreed annually that provides payments to providers based on eligible children.

7.2

**Implications Verified by
David May
Date: 20/12/2024**

8. Risks

8.1 There are some identified risks to the Council either corporately or operationally. Early Years Settings and PVI's work with officers of the Council to provide early education and childcare places for parents who want them.

8.2 The risks include insufficient early education and childcare places available for working parents and therefore the Council is unable to fulfil its sufficiency duties as outlined in the 2006 Childcare Act.

8.3 The actions set out in paragraph 6.7 explain what the service is doing to mitigate this risk.

Implications Verified by

Date

9. Legal and Governance Implications

9.1 The Council has a statutory duty under s6 Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient early education and childcare for working parents. In determining whether the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet those requirements, the Council must have regard to the needs of parents in the area for childcare where working tax credit or universal credit is payable as well as the provision of childcare which is suitable for disabled children. Disability has the same definition as in the Equality Act 2010. The Council is obliged to have regard to the statutory guidance of the Secretary of State. The guidance requires that

the Council produce an annual report that is considered by elected members. The format of the report is not prescribed but the guidance suggests it covers provision for specific groups of children, supply and demand, affordability, and any gaps in provision. This report and the Childcare Needs Assessment attached as Appendix 1 demonstrate compliance with the statutory requirements to assess and also to report to members.

Implications Verified by: Helen Nicol, Assistant Director Legal & Governance

Date: 13 January 2025

10. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 10.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure equality of opportunity. This is a key principle of all early years' providers; they ensure they meet their statutory duties around offering places to all early year's children, especially those with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Part of the Ofsted requirement is to evidence how they have ensured equality of opportunity. Further information on the demand of childcare in Thurrock including data in relation to children with Special Educational Needs and or Disability (SEND), school age children and the take up funded early education places, is contained within the body of the assessment.

Implications Verified by: Roxanne Scanlon – Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

Date: 7 January 2025

11. Other Relevant Implications

12. Background Documents

Relevance Check**Budget Reduction/Service Area:****Service Lead****Date:**

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

N/A

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service that you provide?

N/A

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed? No