

Home > Residents > Education and schools > Early years and childcare > **Childcare sufficiency assessment**

Childcare sufficiency assessment

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[Skip to main content](#)  

On this page

[Overall childcare sufficiency assessment and summary](#)

[Our Plans and Actions for 2020](#)

[Demand for childcare](#)

[Supply of childcare](#)

[Funded Early Education](#)

[Prices for childcare](#)

[Quality of childcare](#)

[Parents views](#)

[Area level breakdown](#)

[Methodology](#)

[Further information](#)



Overall childcare sufficiency assessment and summary

Blackpool Council is required by law to "report annually to elected members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and make this report available and accessible to parents." We have published this latest assessment dated January 2020, in order to meet this duty.

In this report, we have made an assessment of sufficiency using data about the need for childcare and the amount of childcare available. We have also included feedback from local parents about how easy or difficult it has been for them to find suitable childcare.

We use this information about childcare sufficiency to plan our work supporting the local childcare economy.

Overall Childcare sufficiency in Blackpool:

Places

- Our data shows that Blackpool has sufficient places for funded two, three and four year olds. Data was collected during November and December 2019.

Quality

- Five providers were rated by Ofsted as inadequate or requiring improvement at August 2019. All other providers in the town were rated good or outstanding.

Views of Parents and Carers

- A survey of Parents was undertaken during November 2019, and the overall findings were favourable.

Financial sustainability

- Some providers have expressed concerns that the hourly rate is insufficient. Funding is decided by the Department for

Education. The Department for Education has announced increases in funding for the financial year 2020/21. Blackpool Council is also reducing its central expenditure thereby allowing further funding to be passed through to providers. Consultation took place with providers during January 2020.

- Blackpool Council's Business Development team also provides advice on marketing and business planning to providers and has a range of training available.

The overall childcare market

- The provider market has remained reasonably static over the previous year. There has been a decline in the number of new Childminders entering the market although this has not had a significant impact on capacity.

Identified gaps

- Overall there are less vacant places in the north of the town. Sometimes parents may need to travel further to find a place. The Early Years team provide support where a parent may have difficulty in finding a place.
- There are limited choices available for atypical hours childcare (outside 8am to 6pm on weekdays). The Early Years funding team can provide brokerage support to parents who might encounter difficulty in finding a suitable place.

Our Plans and Actions for 2020 - 2021

To ensure that there are Sufficient Childcare Places

We want...	Why...	How...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that there are sufficient easily accessible childcare places available across Blackpool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help children develop social and everyday skills and benefit from early education • To enable parents to take up employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain termly vacancy data from providers and monitor fluctuations and any problem areas • Assist parents having difficulty finding suitable provision through telephone support and the FYI directory website
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain and develop our relationships with our Early Years Providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So that we can support and maintain a professional and well trained Early Years workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing support visits to providers to ensure that funding is being used and allocated appropriately • By providing provider information events • Provider email information bulletins

To ensure that Childcare provided is good quality

We want...	Why...	How...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the views of parents and carers are considered and that there is a mechanism in place to provided ongoing feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So that childcare provides positive outcomes and impacts on the lives of children and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking an annual parental survey and sharing the results with the local provider market so that potential problem areas can be identified and areas of good practice shared
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that there is access for children with additional needs in all settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So that parents have local access to fully inclusive childcare where practical to do so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that providers are available of the support available through the SEND Inclusion Fund and the Disability Access Fund • The Inclusion Team will continue to provide support and guidance to providers

To ensure that Childcare funding is accurate and timely

We want...	Why...	How...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that funding is accurate and timely To ensure as reasonably possible that the local childcare market is financially secure and viable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So that there is a sufficient range of Early Years providers offering a range of choices to parents So that we have accurate business data and intelligence to inform our future plans To meet our statutory obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing our internal processes and systems to ensure we make the best use of technology To continue to monitor our central expenditure and achieve savings where possible To continue to work with the Early Years Provider Strategic Group to ensure that there is a collaborative and partnership approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that there is adequate information to providers about the range of grant funding, supplements and support available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So that providers can make the best and most appropriate use of funding to ensure sustainability and provide a quality service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the quality of advice and information available to providers online Providing easily accessible policies and documentation

To ensure that parents are accessing childcare

We want...	Why...	How...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that parents take up their entitlement to free childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So that childcare provides positive outcomes and impact on the lives of children and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifying parents of two year old children of their potential eligibility to free childcare Provide support to help parents find a suitable childcare place Provide publicity and marketing of childcare to parents by attending events and providing printed information at key locations, libraries, GP surgeries etc Continuing to promote the FYI directory website and the Blackpool Local Offer online directories

Demand for childcare

Population of children

In total there are 8365 children in Blackpool under the age of five living in Blackpool who may need childcare. School age children may also require childcare before or after school, and/or during school holidays.

Blackpool Population of children that may need childcare

Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5 -11	Age 12 - 14
1774	1709	1709	1808	1563	11537	4604

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are also entitled to support with childcare up to the age of 18 (age 14 for children who do not have a special need or disability).

Blackpool population of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Age 0 - 4	Age 5 - 10	Age 11 - 15	Age 16 - 19
52	271	332	165

Changes to the population

The Early Years (0-4 years) population is reducing slightly by approximately 75 children overall per year due to a small reduction in the birth rate. This trend is predicted to continue. The percentage of live births in the town (6.1% of the total population) is the same as the average for England.

Supply of childcare

Number of Early Years providers and places

Type of provision	Number of Providers	Number of Registered places	Number of full time available places	Vacancy Ratio
Childminders	54	372	30	8%
Maintained and school nursery	18	602	88	14%
Private, voluntary and independent nurseries	43	1936	494	25%
Overall	115	2910	612	21%

- The data provided was correct to the best of our knowledge at November 2019
- Some childminder places may also be available to older children
- Full time places are 30 hours per week and sometimes maybe shared by more than one child, eg one child may attend a place in the morning and a different child may attend in the afternoon
- The vacancy ratio is the percentage of available places compared to the number of registered places compared to the number of registered places
- For private, voluntary and independent nurseries and childminders the number of registered places represents the maximum number of children who can be on the premises at any given time. In practice many providers choose to operate below their number of registered places

Vacancy rates are a snapshot and often change. In some cases providers may have a place that is only available for a particular age group or for a particular part time arrangement. We ask providers to report vacancies to us so that we can help promote them and help parents find a suitable place. We also ask for this information to help with our sufficiency assessment. Some providers choose not to provide this information. In general vacancy rates are higher in the autumn when children move into school.

Providers offering school age support

Breakfast clubs	After school clubs	Holiday clubs
26	34	16

Some childminders also offer support to school age children. Tracking of childcare for school age children is difficult because not all of this type of provision is registered with Ofsted. It is possible to have under counted this provision. Parents may also use provision that is not considered child care, for example sports or arts clubs after school or in the holidays.

Funded Early Education

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

- All children aged 3 and 4 are entitled to 15 hours per week (570 hours) until they start reception class in school
- Children aged 3 and 4 where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks (1140 hours) until they start reception class in school
- Children aged 2 whose families receive certain benefits (including low income families in receipt of in-work benefits), or those who will meet additional non-economic criteria are entitled to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks.

Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement. They may choose to split their hours between two providers. With the agreement of the provider parents may also spread hours across the year, for example rather than taking 15 hours for 38 weeks a year they could take 11 hours for 52 weeks a year instead (570 hours maximum).

Take up percentages

The proportion of children benefiting from Early Education compared to the population is as follows:

Percentage of population accessing Early Education

Age	Blackpool % of children	England % of children
Age 2 years	76%	68%
Age 3 and 4 years	95%	94%

A breakdown of [availability by area](#) is available.

Prices for childcare

For Early Years childcare outside of funded entitlements we report on the average childcare prices per hour advised to us by settings. There may be variations on price based on the number of hours a family uses, with reductions for longer hours or reductions for family groups. There may also be additional charges for extra services such as lunch which are not included in the prices. Providers decide their own charges.

Prices have remained reasonably constant since our previous assessment. Prices charged in Blackpool are generally lower than national averages. Some providers charge extra for meals and snacks.

Childcare average hourly prices

Type of provision	Under 2 years	2 year olds	3 and 4 year olds
Childminders	£4.17	£4.25	£4.15
Maintained and school nurseries	£4.00	£3.71	£3.74
Private, voluntary and independent nurseries	£4.56	£4.45	£4.26
Overall	£4.35	£4.29	£4.14

Childcare for school age children tends to be more expensive than early years children because this takes place during the evenings or weekends.

Quality of Childcare

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who will give them an overall grade for the quality of their provision. Childminders and private and voluntary providers are included on the Early Years register and schools and stand alone maintained nursery schools are included on the Schools register. The grades for both registers are equivalent. Schools with nurseries have an overall inspection grade for the whole school.

Schools and Early Years providers have four possible Ofsted grades:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

Some providers are awaiting their first full inspection. These have been excluded from the percentage calculation.

Providers rated Good or Outstanding

Type of provision	Total number of Providers	Percentage Good or Outstanding
Childminders	58	98%
Maintained and school nursery	18	90%
Private, voluntary and independent nurseries	44	95%

Parents views

A parent/carer survey was undertaken during October and November 2019. The overall findings were favourable. This will be used as a benchmark for future surveys.

Parents were asked to rate the quality of their childcare

Age group	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor	Total responses
Below school age	67 (67%)	25 (25%)	7 (7%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	100
School age	11 (38%)	11 (38%)	6 (20%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	29
Overall	78 (60%)	36 (26%)	13 (9%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	129

Parents were asked to rate the value for money paid in respect of fees paid for non funded childcare hours

Age group	Good value	Satisfactory value	Poor value	Total responses
Below school age	14 (36%)	26 (68%)	2 (5%)	42
School age	6 (20%)	17 (58%)	6 (20%)	29
Overall	20 (30%)	43 (64%)	8 (11%)	71

Parents were asked how easy it it been to find suitable childcare

Age group	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy or difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	Total responses
Below school age	36 (36%)	28 (28%)	22 (22%)	12 (12%)	2 (2%)	100
School age	7 (24%)	4 (13%)	7 (24%)	8 (27%)	3 (10%)	29
Overall	43 (33%)	32 (25%)	29 (22%)	29 (22%)	5 (4%)	129

Area Level Breakdown

Number of Providers

Area	Childminders	Maintained	Private nurseries	Total
Blackpool North	21	8	16	45
Blackpool South	10	3	12	25
Blackpool Central	23	7	15	45
Blackpool total	54	18	43	115

Ratio of available places by area

Area	Childminders	Maintained	Private nurseries	Total availability ratio
Blackpool North	7%	19%	11%	13%
Blackpool South	20%	8%	34%	30%
Blackpool Central	5%	9%	30%	22%
Blackpool total	8%	14%	25%	21%

The ratio of available places is the total number of available places that are available on a full day basis, morning and afternoon sessions throughout Monday - Friday.

For example a provider with 10 registered places that had 5 places available for each full day throughout the week would be recorded as 50% availability. There might be additional places for specific days of the week or for morning and afternoon sessions only, but this would not count towards the overall calculation.

The overall availability ratio is 21%.

Methodology

We have used the following data to compile this assessment:

- Population of children based on Nomis Labour Market datasets
- Children with EHC plans based on SEN2 Local Authority tables
- Supply of childcare: based on data provided to us by Ofsted, who regulate early years provision in schools and childcare provision. We have supplemented this with local knowledge.
- Vacancy rates: Based on providers surveys undertaken during August and November 2019
- Funded Early Education: data on take up of funded early education entitlements is based on the Early Years and School Censuses, which are undertaken every January and published by the Department for Education in the statistical collection. Data on funded early education places for two year olds is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Prices of childcare: Based on information collected from provider surveys undertaken during August and November 2019
- Quality of childcare: data on childcare quality is provided by Ofsted
- Data from providers: Based on provider surveys undertaken during August and November 2019
- Comments from parents: Based on a survey undertaken during November 2019

This assessment was published January 2020

Further information

[↑ Back to top](#)



Residents

- [Advice-and-support](#)
- [Benefits](#)
- [Blackpool-Illuminations](#)
- [Council-tax](#)
- [Education-and-schools](#)
- [Health-and-social-care](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Libraries-arts-and-heritage](#)
- [Life-events](#)
- [Parking-roads-and-transport](#)
- [Parks-and-community-facilities](#)
- [Planning-environment-and-community](#)
- [Sports-and-leisure](#)
- [Waste-and-recycling](#)

Business

- [Business-rates](#)
- [Business-support-and-advice](#)
- [Commercial-waste](#)
- [Food-hygiene](#)
- [Licensing-and-permits](#)
- [Residential-landlords](#)
- [Working-with-the-council](#)

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- [Blackpool-Council-jobs](#)
- [Citizenship](#)
- [Community-rights](#)
- [Council-meetings](#)
- [Creating-a-better-Blackpool](#)
- [Have-your-say](#)
- [Statistics-and-research](#)
- [The-Council](#)
- [Transparency-and-open-data](#)
- [Voting-and-elections](#)
- [Your-councillors](#)