



Assessment of Childcare Sufficiency 2011

Strategy and Action Plan

March 2011

Blackpool Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Strategy and Action Plan 2011 - 2014

This strategy and action plan should be read alongside the Childcare sufficiency Assessment 2011 and/or the Summary document 2011.

The Childcare sufficiency assessment 2011

Background

Section 11 of The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on the local authority to carry out an assessment of the sufficiency of childcare in Blackpool. The duty gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market and to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work; or undertake training or education leading to work.

This assessment maps the supply and assesses the demand for childcare in the area and seeks out parental, minority groups and employer opinions. The gaps are identified and categorised as age, geographical, specific area, affordability, specific needs, time, type, employer, information, perception, quality and choice.

Methodology

Geographical areas for this assessment are at (MLSOA) Mid-layer Super-Output area. Childcare supply data is sourced from the Blackpool Family information service. Primary research included parent, provider and employer telephone survey and questionnaires and parental focus groups. A comparison of the resulting data tables was made to locate any potential gaps that exist in the childcare market.

Population

There are around 24,000 children aged 0 - 14 (and to 17 for disabled children) living in Blackpool for whom the Council must secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents, or parents in education or training. The number of children is declining steadily, however births have increased recently.

The BME population is small (5%) with the largest group being from Poland. More than one-third live with a lone parent, and around 30% in a workless household, with unemployment being higher than average and deprivation levels higher than average with significant pockets of disadvantage. 70% of women are economically active.

In Blackpool there is more part time and shift working than the UK average and Blackpool has a larger percentage of women in part time jobs. Wages are 25% lower than the national average.

Demand

Unmet demand is assessed by two complimentary methods, an analysis of vacancies (less than 15% spare capacity means settings are unlikely to be able to accommodate more children) and consultation with parents about their childcare needs. 58% of all types of provider were consulted and 84% had some spare capacity but only 41% had a full time vacancy and 43% had a part time vacancy. Out of school clubs had most full time vacancies. Only 7% of places are vacant on a full time basis.

Supply

There are 223 childcare settings of which 159 are OFSTED registered: 93 childminders, 57 Full Day Care providers, 29 After School Clubs and 23 holiday clubs. 5,700 places are offered, that is 1 for every 4 children (June 10). Compared with other similar authorities this is relatively high. Supply is unevenly spread but Blackpool is a small urban area. Mostly, there is less childcare in the more deprived areas.

Over two-thirds of families with pre-school children use childcare, with day nurseries most commonly used, there is one place for every 3 children.

After school care 5 - 14 has 1:15 places and Holiday care 1:19 children. Average cost is £3.04 per hour. £135 for full day care and £32 for after school care. Holiday care costs around £100 per week.

Approach to the analysis

Relating the supply of childcare to demand is a complex calculation that involves many variables. The most obvious method is to identify theoretical gaps geographically and to examine current levels of provision in the different areas - and plan to 'bridge the gap' between the current level of provision and the Blackpool average.

There are four key tables in the childcare sufficiency assessment that have been used to identify and analyse the key gaps.

- Appendix 2 in the full document

The population data which shows a breakdown of the estimated population in each area by age group, giving a profile of how many children there are potentially in each area for the different types of provision.

- Figure 51 in the full document, Figure 19 in the summary document

The theoretical gaps in childcare based on average levels of provision. This table provides an indication of the number of additional places of each type of childcare that could be required in order to provide a minimum level of provision of each type. The table uses population data by area and the number of childcare places per 100 children against the Blackpool average for the different care types.

- Appendix 1 in the full document

The Childcare demand Index data table which takes the cumulative percentage for each data set and provides an indication as to the likely level of demand for childcare services (high or low) in each area. The average demand index for Blackpool is 7.0. Therefore those areas with a score of greater than 7.0 are likely to experience higher demand and be able to sustain higher levels of market-led childcare.

- Figure 52 in the full document, Figure 20 in the summary document

Supply and demand analysis by area This shows the level of supply of Early Years care and Out of school care along with the demand level for each type of provision by area. This table uses the Childcare demand index results from Appendix 1 to determine:

- where development of more childcare may be needed and would be sustainable
- where it is unlikely that the market will develop childcare places
- where the market is functioning and market forces will meet supply with little intervention
- where it is possible that there is sufficiency of childcare or there is possibly an over-supply

KEY GAPS

The key gaps have been extracted from the Childcare sufficiency assessment 2011

Age Gaps	
<i>0 - 2years</i>	Some providers report that they have low or no vacancies for 0 - 2s which could indicate that demand is not being met in some areas and could justify expansion. An increase in 2 YO funding would exacerbate any shortfall.
<i>3 and 4 years</i>	Childcare for 3 and 4 year olds is widely available.
<i>Early Years Free entitlement</i>	The amount of childcare for children in their early years is quite high with at least one childcare place for every 3 children. Given that each registered place is on average used by 1.5 children, around 4,500 children could be served by the early years childcare places in Blackpool. There are plenty of places for 3 and 4 year olds to receive their early education entitlement and take up of free places seems to be universal.
<i>School age provision 5 - 11</i>	The greatest unmet need is for holiday care. Most schools have access to after school care but there may be insufficient capacity in some areas.
<i>Older children 11+</i>	There is no childcare provision for this age group in Blackpool. Childcare for older disabled children is likely to be age-inappropriate alongside younger non-disabled children.

Geographical Gap

Across Blackpool, childcare is unevenly spread with some areas having much more than others. However, as Blackpool is such a concentrated urban area, the low levels of childcare in some areas may not necessarily mean that childcare is inaccessible to parents, as within a short distance there is usually some provision available. There is a choice of childminder or group care in most areas. The childcare demand index data and the theoretical gaps in childcare based on average levels of provision and the supply and demand analysis by area when considered together show that there could be additional Early Years, After School and Holiday club places required in a number of areas where demand is high and likely to be sustainable in terms of socio-economic indicators and supply is relatively low in relation to the population in that area.

The areas below would need to be cross-referenced with updated vacancy data to determine a final strategy.

Specific Area Gap	
	Blackpool 001 - None
	Blackpool 002 - 13 Early Years Places.
	Blackpool 003 - 54 Early Years Places; 14 ASC Places; 37 HC Places
	Blackpool 004 - 101 Early Years Places; 20 ASC Places; 49 HC Places
	Blackpool 005 - 50 ASC Places; 40 HC Places
	Blackpool 006 - 14 HC Places
	Blackpool 007 - 77 Early Years Places; 46 HC Places
	Blackpool 008 - 152 Early Years Places; 25 ASC Places; 49 HC Places
	Blackpool 009 - 32 ASC Places; 52 HC Places

	Blackpool 010 - 61 Early Years Places; 25 ASC Places
	Blackpool 011 - 178 Early Years Places; 65 ASC Places; 52 HC Places
	Blackpool 012 - 14 ASC Places; 2 HC Places
	Blackpool 013 - 41 ASC Places; 33 HC Places
	Blackpool 014 - None
	Blackpool 015 - 73 Early Years Places; 55 HC Places
	Blackpool 016 - 5 ASC Places
	Blackpool 017 - 6 ASC Places; 32 HC Places
	Blackpool 018 - None
	Blackpool 019 - 34 ASC Places; 4 HC Places
	Total: 169 Early Years Places; 211 ASC Places; 216 HC Places

Affordability Gap	<p>Wages in Blackpool are low, being nearly 25% below the average for the UK and 20% less than the North West, whereas fees for Full Day Care for example are only 17% less than the national average and 5% less than in the North west. In general the cost of all types of childcare is below the average for England and similar to other areas for the North West.</p> <p>Whether or not childcare is affordable depends on a range of factors including housing, and other household costs. Clearly early years childcare is more expensive than Out of school care and the proportion of income spent on childcare for lone parents is higher than for couples.</p>
Specific Needs Gap	<p>A significant number of disabled children are taking up places in mainstream childcare settings - particularly in the early years although the figure is slightly lower than amongst the general population. Use of childcare by older disabled children is very limited even though parents say it is needed.</p> <p>Parents of disabled children are less likely to work with childcare being a considerable barrier to them gaining employment. Some care for disabled children may not be appropriate for the child's developmental or social age, while a perceived lack of trained or specialist staff deters some families from using childcare for their disabled children.</p>
Time Gaps	<p>37% of parents said there was a problem of availability at times when they needed it. Weekend and shift workers, especially those on rotating shifts have particular issues. Some parents who work regular hours said that finding childcare open early or late enough was often difficult.</p>
Type Gaps	<p>The supply of holiday provision is by far the least-provided service, most areas having a range of the other types of provision. Holiday provision averages only 1 place per 19 children and 6 of the areas have no provision in their area although travel between each area of Blackpool is small. It is notably lacking in the North of the district. Most primary schools are served by an out of school club, but, some may not have sufficient places to meet demand.</p>
Employer Gap	<p>Employers have some issues with lack of flexibility in existing childcare provision, in particular for NHS staff on rotating shift patterns.</p>

Information Gap	Information is not always getting to the parents who need it, particularly first-time parents. 6% of children in Blackpool live with non-parent carers, the needs of grandparents with caring responsibilities requires specific attention, such as claiming tax credit support and childcare information.
Perception Gap	There is a strong perception in Blackpool amongst non-working parents that 'work isn't worth it' if childcare has to be paid for.
Quality Gap	57% of parents said the quality of formal childcare services in Blackpool is high. Overall 65% were satisfied. The type of provision with the highest satisfaction rate were childminders followed by After school clubs and nurseries. Parents rated informal care from grandparents, relatives and friends lower suggesting that this option may be chosen due to cost rather than preference.
Choice	51% think there is a a good choice of childcare locally; 31% think the choice is not good; 10% commented on the lack of holiday care for school aged children. There were very few comments about the lack of pre-school care

Blackpool Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011 Action plan

Approach to action planning

Each gap has been considered in the light of the national and local context and developments since June 2010 when the majority of the research was undertaken, and the list below shows the key questions considered in deciding whether to develop a strategy to address a gap via the childcare sufficiency action plan.

Sufficiency gaps

Is the gap preventing parents/carers working or returning to work or accessing training or education?

Is the gap affecting take of the Free entitlement?

Is the gap affecting take up of childcare by families with disabled children?

Will market forces take care of it?

Will the market respond and fill the gap without intervention by Blackpool Council?

Is it a strategic priority gap?

Will addressing the gap help to meet our strategic priorities?

Will it improve outcomes for families?

Is it reasonably practicable?

Is the gap experienced by a critical mass of parents?

Is it 'reasonably practical' for Blackpool Council to tackle the gap?

Business Drivers

Blackpool has a relatively high supply of childcare places compared with similar authorities. (1:4 places) The birth rate in Blackpool is experiencing a rise but is expected to be stable over the next 20 years. The level of take up of the free entitlement for all 3 and 4 year olds is almost universal so there should be little change in demand for 15 hour places.

Funding for provision for disadvantaged 2 year olds is due to increase over the next 3 years which will increase demand for 15 hour places beyond the size of the current 2 year old pilot scheme.

If the recession continues both demand and supply will be expected to reduce, as the recession improves occupancy rates will improve in a smaller market.

The reduction in tax credit support from 80% to 70% could reduce demand if part-time workers give up work and full time workers reduce their hours.

Timescales and Monitoring

This action plan covers the period April 2011 to April 2014 with a particular focus on April 2011 to March 2012.

The action plan will be monitored by the Early Years and Childcare Management Team.

The strategy going forward

Geographical and Age/Type gaps

Using the supply and demand index table, the theoretical geographical gaps for all types of provision and age groups, that were originally identified in the research, are narrowed down to just those that may be able to sustain new places if they were to be created because demand in the area is high and supply is low as follows:

Blackpool 002 - 13 Early Years Places.

Blackpool 003 - 54 Early Years Places; 14 ASC Places; 37 HC Places

Blackpool 004 - 101 Early Years Places; 20 ASC Places; 49 HC Places

Blackpool 005 - 50 ASC Places; 40 HC Places

Blackpool 009 - 32 ASC Places; 52 HC Places

Blackpool 012 - 14 ASC Places; 2 HC Places

Blackpool 017 - 6 ASC Places; 32 HC Places

Blackpool 019 - 34 ASC Places; 4 HC Places

Total: 168 Early Years Places; 170 ASC Places; 216 HC Places

The Early years team will continue to work closely with the Planning department to ensure due consideration is given to the possibility of over-development in any one type of provision and will carry out detailed consultation with providers in the locality.

Early years places would only be considered in parts of:

- Norbreck,
- Ingthorpe
- Bispham
- Greenlands

After school places and holiday club places in parts of:

- Bispham/Norbreck
- Greenlands/Park
- Layton/Warabreck/Greenlands
- Park/Layton
- Marton/Tyldesley
- Waterloo
- Squires Gate

2 year olds

Blackpool has a relatively high amount of pre-school care that caters for 0 – 3 year olds, but low vacancy rates suggest that there may be some unmet need for this age group. Further investigation will be required to establish if there is still demand and a shortage of places by carrying out a needs analysis by further consultation with parents in areas which report low vacancy rates.

3 and 4 year olds

Places for 3 and 4 year olds are widely available and take up of the free entitlement is almost universal in Blackpool. It is considered that there is no need to create further places for this age group in any area.

5 – 11 year olds

Further investigation by consulting with parents is required into the demand for After School places in areas which report low vacancy rates and then to establish which providers could take up the unmet demand.

Holiday Care – all ages

A key gap is recognised for holiday care provision, but in the past parents have been reluctant to access provision, possibly due to cost. A needs analysis should be carried out to determine the demand for

holiday care in all areas and the willingness of parents to pay fees at a sustainable level, and also to establish if there is a misconception by parents about the requirement by the Council to ensure sufficient holiday care for working parents, as opposed to summer activities for children.

12 – 17 year olds

Previous consultation has shown that although parents may want this provision for their children at around age 12 to 13, children of this age do not wish to access formal childcare and has led to poor take up and a lack of sustainability. Youth service action plan may be more appropriate.

If further consultations point to the need to create places, these will only be supported in the areas listed above.

Affordability and Perception Gap

The current work needs to continue to inform parents about the support available to cover child care costs in order to reduce the perception that 'work doesn't pay'. The Early Years team will work closely with the new Outreach team for Worklessness on reducing real and perceived barriers to work. Specific support for parents on low incomes or moving back in to work and facing registration fees, deposits and advance payment is not available under the current budgetary restrictions.

Specific Needs Gaps

Parents of disabled children are less likely to work than other parents, and cite childcare as a considerable barrier to them gaining employment. Also some of the care for older disabled children may not be appropriate for the child's developmental or social age as there is no provision for 11+ age group. A perceived lack of trained or specialist staff deters some families from using childcare for their disabled children.

The Early Years SEN Team work with the PVI sector to support the SENCOs to ensure appropriate provision is made for all pre-school children with additional needs, including behaviour management. Inclusion is happening very successfully in many of our early years and childcare settings and there has been training offered to all providers on a wide range of SEN and inclusion issues to support this. There is a turn over of staff in the role of SENCO in some settings which means continuity of support and training received is not always present.

Some work needs to be done on informing parents of the availability of high quality childcare for their disabled children, and the training that staff can access and have received. In particular information should be available on the specialist childminder network members who have undertaken extra training and development to provide childcare and additional services for children with additional and complex needs particularly for children under 8.

Time Gaps and Employer Gaps

The NHS reports that those parents on rotating shifts experience difficulty in securing a childcare place. This is acknowledged as a difficulty for providers to accommodate. Childminders are generally the most flexible providers but this limits the choice of parents. Further consultation with NHS parents directly, and providers is required to establish the extent of the problem.

Information Gap

The FIS needs to specifically target first time parents, non-parent carers and grandparents to ensure that they are able to access support and information on the full range of topics and particularly on claiming tax credit support.

Quality Gap

Although 57% of parents said the quality of formal childcare services in Blackpool was high and overall 65% were satisfied, work needs to continue to raise the profile of formal registered care in Blackpool amongst parents. The quality of the adults directly impacts upon the quality of the setting and so the

outcomes for the children. We will continue to support settings to develop the quality of their provision and training for staff.

Choice Gap

51% think there is a good choice of childcare locally; 31% think the choice is not good. Further consultation should be carried out towards the end of the life of the action plan to establish if the measures introduced have had an impact on this.

Blackpool Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan 2011 – 2014

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER AND PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
Supply and Demand Gaps			
Ensure sufficient provision for 0 – 3 year olds	Carry out needs analysis in areas which report low vacancies or waiting lists. Work closely with Planning Department	Early Years Business Manager Senior development worker	2011 - 2012
Ensure sufficient provision of After School club places	Carry out needs analysis via schools to establish which locations have a potential shortfall in places. Work with settings in the identified areas to facilitate access to provision.	Early Years Business Manager Senior development worker	2011 - 2013
Ensure sufficient provision of Holiday club places.	Carry out needs analysis via schools to identify parents' needs.	Early Years Business Manager Senior development worker	2011 - 2013
Ensure sufficient provision for older children 11+	Refer to Youth Service	Service manager School support and 14+	2014
By 2011 and ongoing, maintain an understanding of the current sustainability situation in the PVI sector.	Use regular PVI meetings to discuss vacancy data and sustainability issues in the sector, to highlight potential closures. Consider including sustainability questions in the provider survey.	Head of Early Years Early Years Business Manager	2011 – 2014
Affordability/Perception Gap			
By March 2014, reduce the perception that 'work isn't worth it' Increase the take up of working tax credits	Review the content and format of FIS information that informs parents about the support available with childcare costs. Ensure all new info regarding tax credits is fed out to parents and professionals Review outreach work with parents by Children's Centres	Early Years Business Manager FIS team Job Centre + Children's Centres	2011 - 2014

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER AND PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
	<p>Review information and Advice with Job Centre+ advisors</p> <p>Work with 'Worklessness' outreach team to ensure Parents are provided with all the appropriate information.</p>		
Time and Choice Gap			
<p>By March 2014, decrease the number of parents (from 37% to 30%) who report availability of childcare at the time they need it as an issue</p> <p>And decrease the number of parents (from 31% to 25%) that think the choice of childcare is not good.</p>	<p>Review provider opening time information and provide a list for parents of those settings which open outside the standard hours or who make provision for rotating shift patterns.</p> <p>Establish whether there is sufficient local provision which meets the needs of working parents.</p> <p>If necessary, work with providers on the Directory of Providers to meet need.</p> <p>Review the content and format of FIS information and the telephone Support for choice.</p>	<p>Early Years Business Manager FIS Systems and Partnership Officer Senior development worker</p>	<p>2011 – 2014</p>
Employer Gap			
<p>By 2013, assist employers to become 'family friendly'</p>	<p>Establish a family friendly award for employers which will improve parents' and employers' awareness of the Family Information Service, and increase the take up of support for childcare and the use of childcare vouchers.</p>	<p>Early Years Business Manager FIS Systems and Partnership Officer</p>	<p>2011 – 2013</p>
<p>By March 2014, increase the number of employers who know about the FIS Service.</p>	<p>Target employers who when contacted during The CSA process stated that they did not know About or have sufficient knowledge of the Family Information Service. Carry out an awareness raising initiative.</p>	<p>FIS Systems and Partnership Officer Brokerage Outreach worker</p>	<p>2011 – 2013</p>

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER AND PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
Specific needs Gap			
By 2013, ensure a better understanding of the childcare needs of families with disabled children and the barriers they face.	<p>Extract FIS enquiry data from parents of children with a disability to gain an understanding of the issues.</p> <p>Establish the extent to which needs have not been met.</p> <p>Consult with parents on their specific barriers via the disability planning record.</p>	<p>Early Years Business Manager FIS Systems and Partnership Officer Disability Planning Record Officer Early Years SEN Officers</p>	2011 – 2013
Information Gap			
By 2014 Improve information available to parents/carers of disabled children.	<p>Identify funding entitlements for parents carers of disabled children</p> <p>Review and update the content, and distribution of information sources.</p>	<p>Early Years Business Manager FIS Systems and Partnership Officer Disability Planning Record Officer Early Years SEN Officers</p>	2012 – 2014
By 2012, improve information for first time parents, non-parent carers and grandparents on the full range of topics and particularly on claiming tax credit support.	Specifically target and tailor information towards first time parents, non-parent carers and grandparents.	<p>Early Years Business Manager FIS Systems and Partnership Officer</p>	2011 – 2012
Quality Gap			
Increase the % of parents who perceive the quality of formal childcare as high from 57% to 65%	<p>Continue to ensure that providers have access to training to enable them to raise the quality of care provided.</p> <p>Publicise quality successes more widely.</p>	<p>FIS Systems and Partnership Officer Senior Development worker Training and Recruitment Officer Brokerage Outreach worker</p>	2011 - 2014