

Lancashire County Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

April 2024 - March 2025

Lancaster





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Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 places a statutory duty upon local authorities to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) is a county wide review of the supply and demand of childcare, take up of funded provision, the availability of places, the quality and cost of provision. The information has been broken down into area reports for ease of reading, this provides the reader with an overview at a localised level.

Methodology

In order to gather up to date, accurate childcare supply data, we carried out an online survey with childcare providers. We also surveyed a sample of parents throughout Lancashire to ascertain demand including childcare needs, opinions and trends. As it is not possible to include data for all parents and providers in Lancashire, the information in this report should be seen as a guide to local provision, rather than being conclusive. It is also important to note that any figures represent a snapshot in time. Some tables will have blank cells as we may not have all provider types in each area, or the data has not been supplied by the providers. Caution should be given where there is only one provider type in that group. Data from the termly census and headcount claims is used to map the take up of funded childcare places and Ofsted data is used to identify the quality of childcare in Lancashire.

Types of Childcare

Childcare includes Childminders, Day Nurseries, Pre-Schools, Nursery Units of Independent Schools, Breakfast Clubs, After School Clubs, Holiday Schemes, Maintained Nursery Classes, Maintained Nursery Schools, and School Governor Led Provision (section 27).

Registered Childcare: Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It regulates childcare for children from birth to 18 years of age. Ofsted operates two registers:

The Early Years Register: If a provider is caring for children from the age of birth to 5 years for more than two hours a day, on more than fourteen days per year they must register with Ofsted on the Early Years Register and meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The Childcare Register: A childcare provider must register on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register if they provide care for children aged 5 to 8 years for more than two hours a day on more than fourteen days per year. A childcare provider will be on both the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register if they care for children under and over the age of 5 years. Some childcare providers who care for children over the age of 8 years, who provide care in the child's home, are activity based i.e. sports coaching or for very short periods of time can join the voluntary part of the childcare register.

Schools

Maintained Nursery Classes and Governor Led Provision (section 27) are included within an overall school inspection and are not required to have a separate Early Years Ofsted registration; however, they must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework.



Overview of Government Childcare Initiatives in Lancashire

Over the past year, several new government initiatives have been introduced to support the expansion of childcare provision. The following section provides a summary of these initiatives and outlines how they have been implemented across Lancashire to create new childcare places and enhance existing provision.

Extension of Early Education Funding

- From April 2024, eligible working families with two-year-old children have been able to access 15 hours of Early Education Funding per week.
- From September 2024, this entitlement was extended to include working families with children aged 9 months and above.
- From September 2025, eligible working families will be able to access 30 hours of Early Education Funding per week, starting from when their child is 9 months old until they begin school.

To support this expansion, capital funding has been allocated to increase the availability of places for children under the age of two and for two-year-olds in priority areas.

During this year, we have supported 26 projects and created 289 new early education places for children aged two and under.

National Wraparound Programme

The National Wraparound Programme is to support families returning to work or increasing their working hours by improving access to before and after school childcare. To achieve this, the programme provided both capital and revenue funding to:

- Establish new wraparound childcare provision,
- Expand the number of places in existing settings
- Extend provision hours to meet the core offer of 8:00am to 6:00pm.

During the autumn term, capital & revenue funding was allocated to 27 projects across Lancashire, resulting in the creation of 575 new wraparound childcare places. In addition, revenue funding has been made available to support operational costs, including staffing, resources and other running expenses. Over the course of the year, 109 projects have received revenue funding, contributing to the creation of 1880 additional childcare places across Lancashire.

The programme is helping to ensure that families across Lancashire have access to flexible, affordable childcare to enable them to access work or training.

School Based Nursery Capital Funding

Between October and December 2024, schools were invited to apply to the Department for Education for capital funding to support the development of school-based nursery provision.

- 65 schools initially expressed interest in accessing the funding
- 26 schools proceeded to submit formal applications
- 10 schools were successfully awarded capital funding

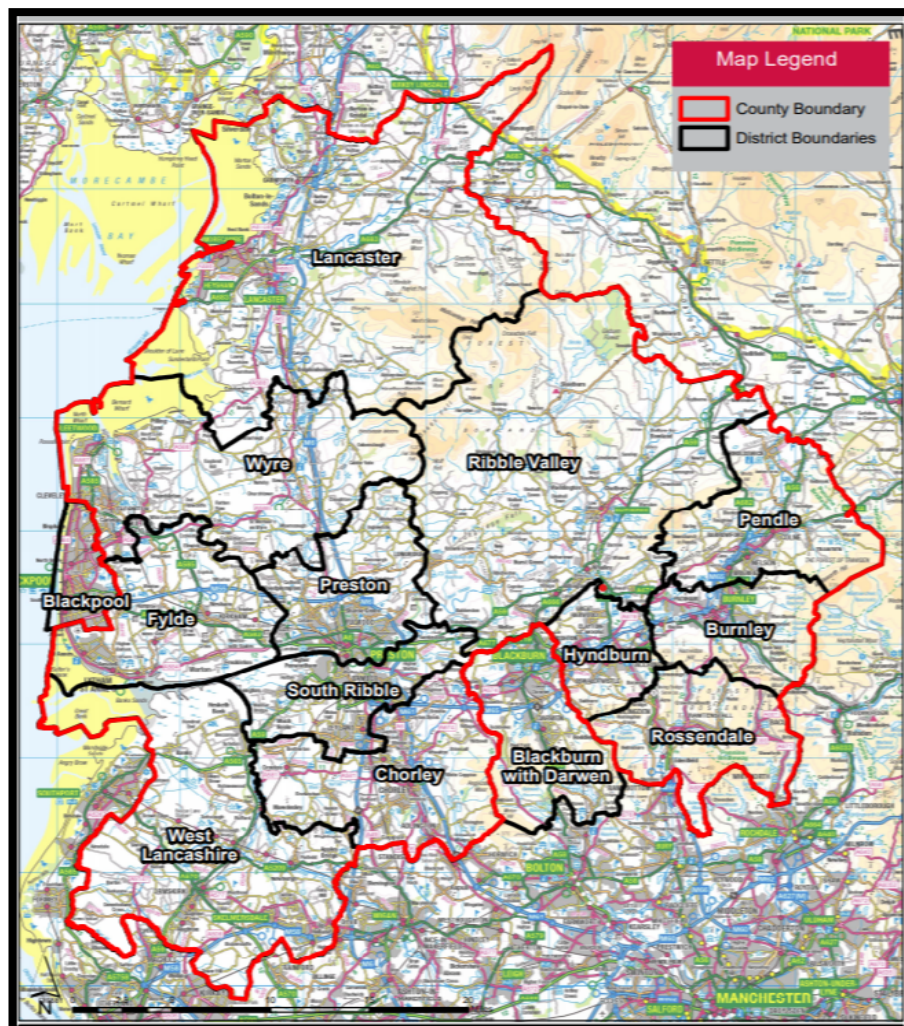
These successful projects will result in the creation of new early years places within school-based provision starting from September 2025.



Lancashire Overview

Lancashire County Council is the fourth largest County Council in the country. The population is 1,227,076. The population for 0-19 year olds within this figure is 281,290. Lancashire is made up of 12 districts. Below you can see a map of Lancashire showing the county and district boundaries.

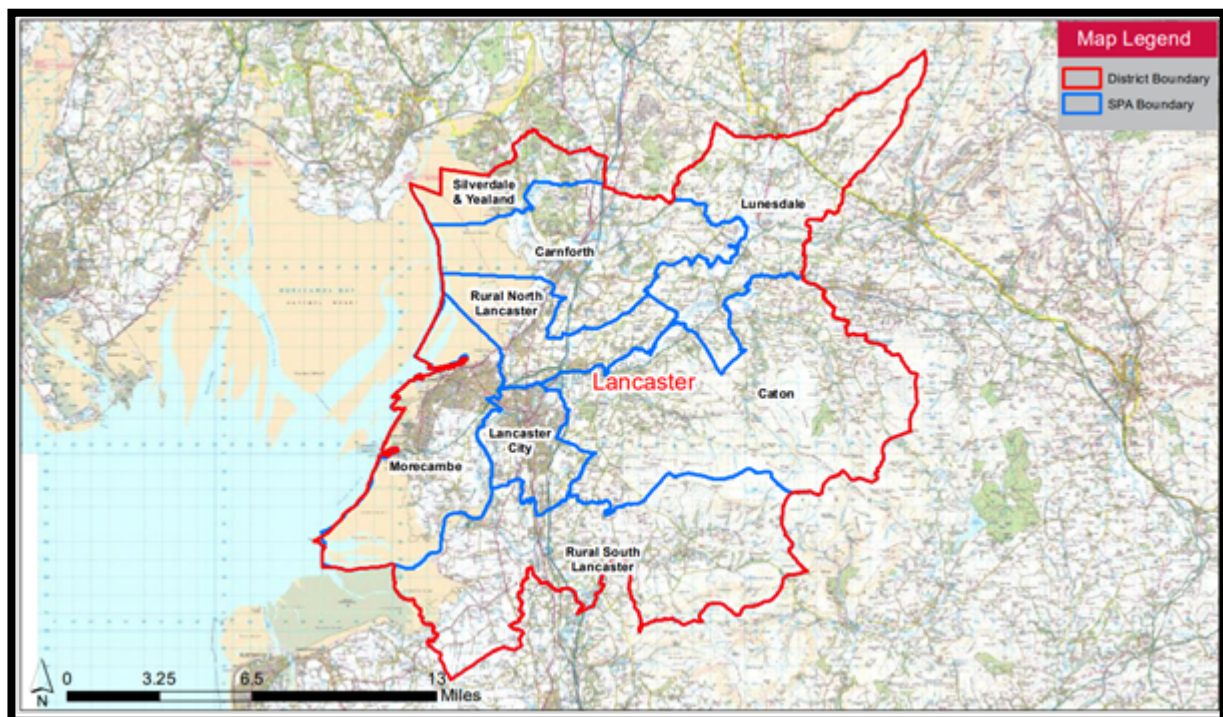
Lancashire's defining characteristics are its size and diversity. Each district has its own unique demography and geography. It is an area of vast contrasts with busy urban centres, coastal regions and large agricultural areas. For the purposes of this report these districts have been broken down further into localised geographical areas.



Lancaster

Lancaster is the second largest district in Lancashire, covering 567 square kilometres. The map below shows the local geographical areas, these include:

- Carnforth
- Caton
- Lancaster City
- Lunesdale
- Morecambe
- Rural North Lancaster
- Rural South Lancaster
- Silverdale & Yealand



Local Demographics

It is estimated that between 2018 and 2043 the population of Lancaster will increase by 9.2%, which is above the levels predicted for Lancashire.

Lancaster has a lower rate of manufacturing jobs and a higher rate of employment in the service sector. With two universities in the city, employment in the education sector is high. People in Lancaster are willing to travel out of the county to their workplace.

The table below shows population of children aged 0–11yrs.

Area	Total Population	0-1 year olds	1 year olds	2 year olds	3&4 year olds	5-11 year olds
Carnforth	8299	77	73	71	148	569
Caton	4718	48	44	40	84	349
Lancaster City	47466	428	408	437	897	3238
Lunesdale	2195	10	12	12	30	145
Morecambe	57748	562	577	634	1281	4860
Rural North Lancaster	12440	92	80	118	219	850
Rural South Lancaster	9661	55	48	43	101	383
Silverdale & Yealand	1919	3	10	5	20	93
Lancaster	144446	1275	1252	1360	2780	10487

The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that Lancaster was the 104th most deprived area out of 317 districts and unitary authorities in England.

Area	No. of wards	No. of LSOA's	IMD average rank *	IMD in 20% most deprived
Lancaster	27	88	104	No

Lancaster has a good transport network with the A6 running through the district and the M6 running parallel to it. Public transport can be easily accessed with railway stations, ferries and bus routes providing families and workers with options for commuting throughout the district and beyond.

Parental Survey

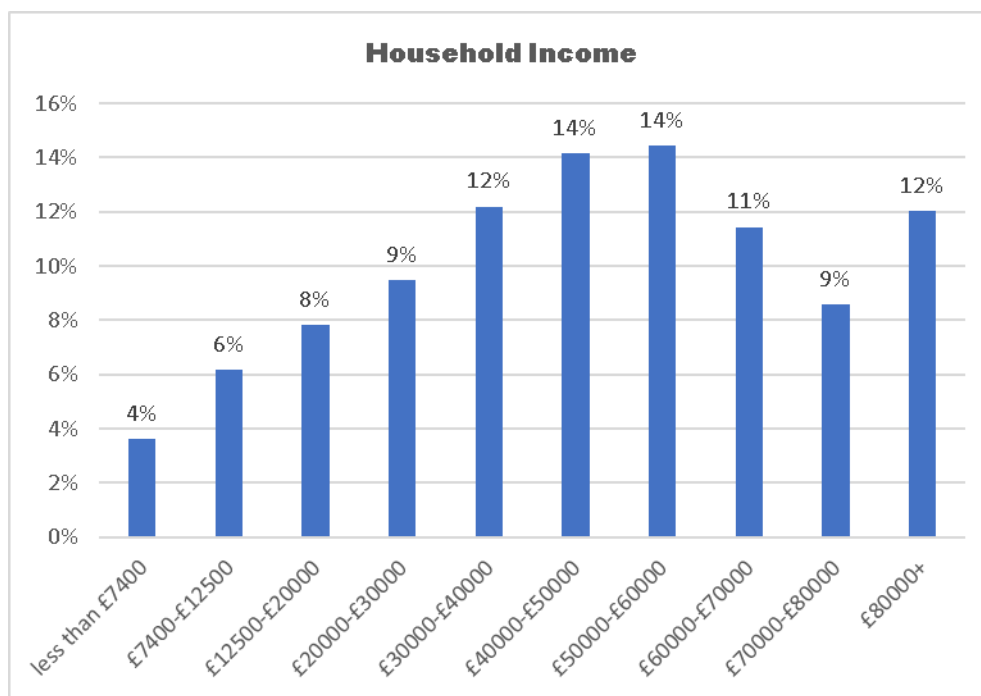
As part of our statutory duty, we gathered the views of parents and families that use formal childcare. Using the help of our early years' providers, parents were asked to complete a short online survey. Questions in the survey covered topics such as current childcare usage patterns, opening times, paying for childcare, satisfaction levels and Early Education Funding (EEF).

There were 664 completions in total. Whilst the majority of responses were from Preston, Chorley, Lancaster and South Ribble we did receive submissions from all 12 districts. The summary below is provided at a Lancashire level.

Your Household

Nearly all respondents to our survey are married or living with a partner, in most cases both partners are working full time. The majority of those surveyed have children aged 0-4 years. The most used childcare provider types are After School Club and Day Nursery.

We asked parents about their household income; this is displayed in the graph below.

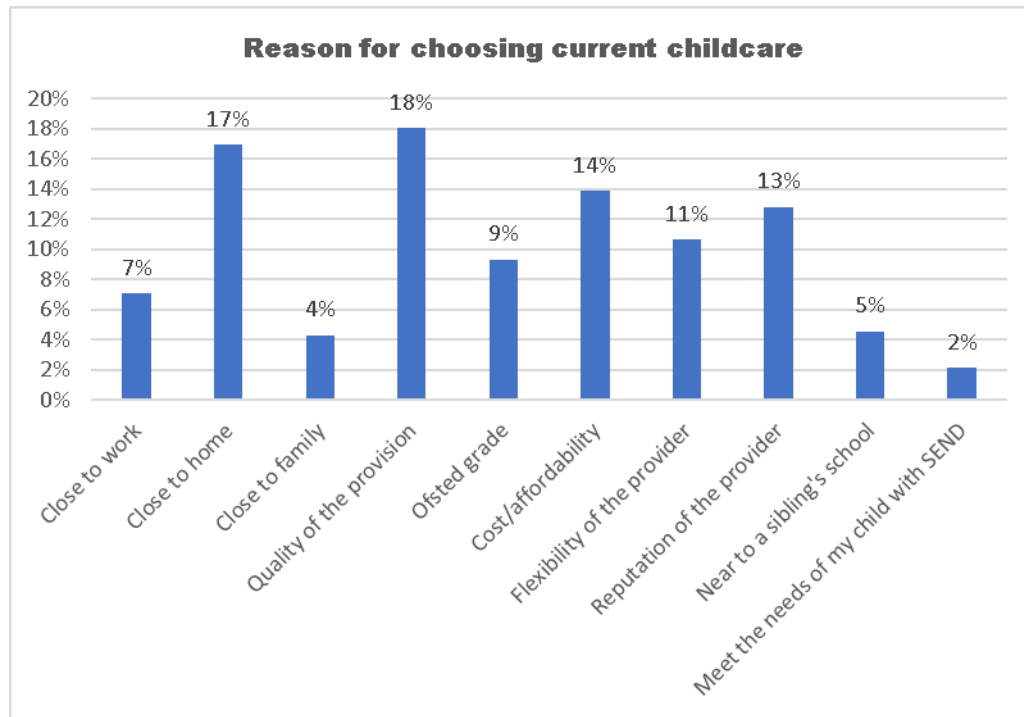


Childcare Needs

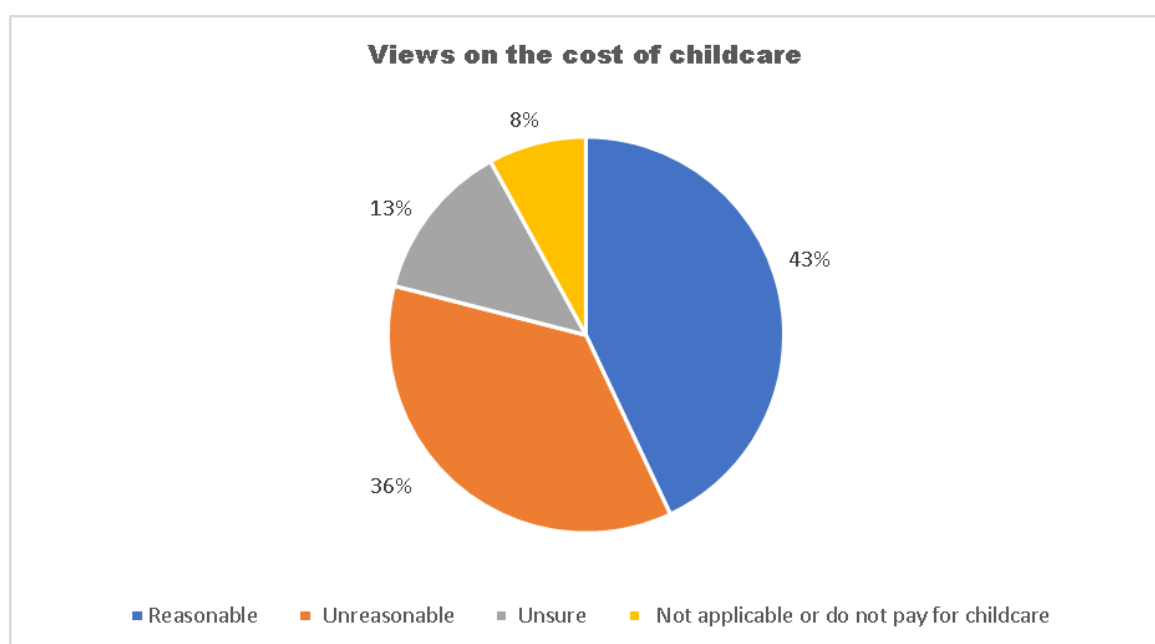
On average most parents/carers need between 10 and 30 hours of childcare per week. Nearly half of respondents said they use childcare because they work, 23% told us it is also for their child's learning and development and a small percentage state they use childcare for respite and to look for work. 5% of parents/carers access childcare solely to use their child's Early Education Funding. A small number of parents need childcare after 6pm or other patterns not specified.

Nearly three quarters of the respondents said that finding information about suitable childcare was easy.

We asked parents/carers what their most important factors were when choosing childcare, the responses are summarised below.

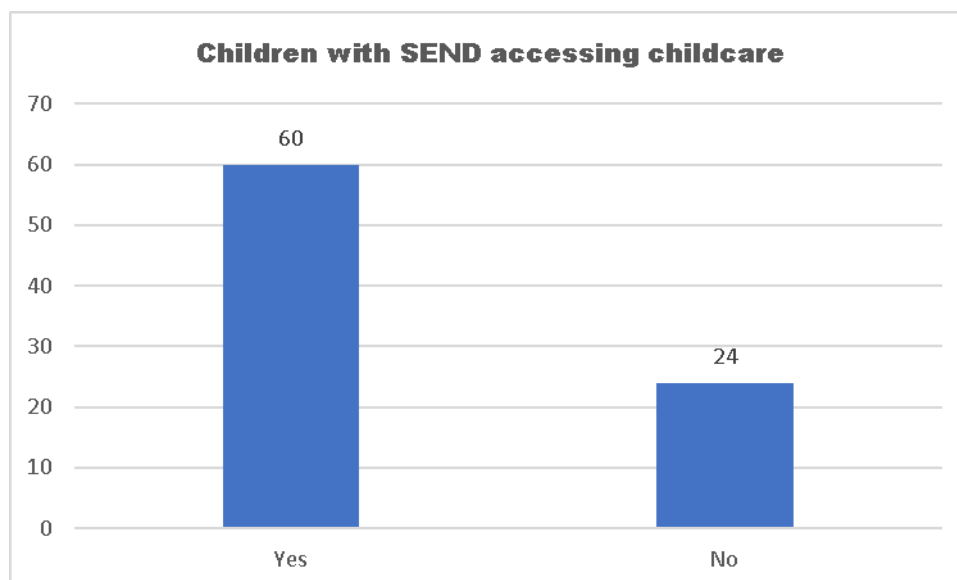
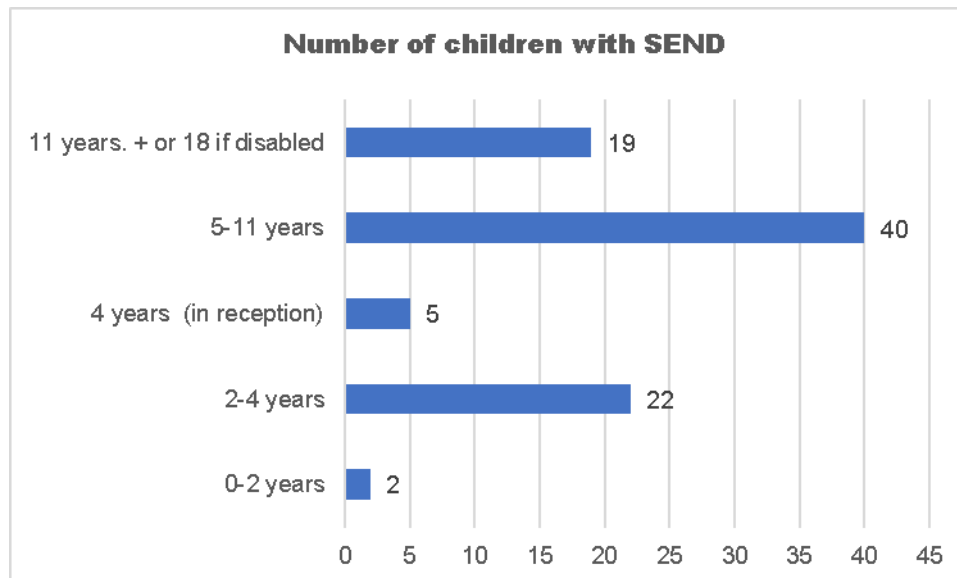


The chart below shows parent/carer views on the cost of childcare. Over half of parents/carers that completed our survey pay for their childcare through using wages, followed by the Tax-Free Childcare scheme and finally using Early Education Funding.



Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

We asked parents/carers if they have a child or children with SEND. The graphs below show the number of children with SEND and the following graph shows those who access formal childcare.



Early Education Funding

Nearly all our respondents were aware of the Early Education Funding for 2,3&4 year olds. 56% access a funded place however, 44% do not, this is due to the child's age either being too young or too old for funded places. Most parents access funded places at a Day Nursery or Pre-School Playgroup. 5% access funded places with a registered Childminder.

Childcare Provision

In Lancashire we have a large number of childcare providers offering a variety of childcare options and flexibility to enable families to access work and training.

The information provided in the tables below was captured in Autumn term 2024 and shows an overview of childcare providers in the area.

When counting the number of different providers, we include those who may offer more than one type of provision. In our provider type count this would be shown as three types of provision e.g. Pre-School Playgroup, Breakfast Club and After School Club however, those different types of provision may all come under one Ofsted registration. In the Movement in the Market and Quality of Provision sections of this report the numbers shown represent the number of Ofsted registrations rather than the number of provider types.

Provider Type Breakdown

The table below shows the district provider types available; on the following page the tables show provider types at a more localised level.

	Lancaster		
Provider Type	Number	Responses	% Responses
Childminder	48	45	94%
Day Nursery	29	26	90%
Pre-School Playgroup	16	16	100%
Maintained Nursery School	1	1	100%
Maintained Nursery Class	13	13	100%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	7	7	100%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	33	32	97%
After School Club	35	33	94%
Holiday Scheme	11	9	82%
Total	193	182	94%

	Carnforth			Caton			Lancaster City			Lunesdale		
Provider Type	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses
Childminder	3	3	100%	2	2	100%	8	8	100%	0	0	0%
Day Nursery	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	11	10	91%	1	1	100%
Pre-School Playgroup	3	3	100%	2	2	100%	2	2	100%	1	1	100%
Maintained Nursery School	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%
Maintained Nursery Class	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	2	2	100%	1	1	100%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	0	0	0%	1	1	100%	3	3	100%	0	0	0%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	1	1	100%	3	3	100%	8	8	100%	2	2	100%
After School Club	1	1	100%	3	3	100%	10	10	100%	1	1	100%
Holiday Scheme	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	4	4	100%	1	1	100%
Total	11	11	100%	12	12	100%	49	48	98%	7	7	100%

	Morecambe and Heysham			Rural North Lancaster			Rural South Lancaster			Silverdale & Yealand		
Provider Type	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses
Childminder	23	22	96%	12	10	83%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Day Nursery	12	11	92%	1	0	0%	3	3	100%	0	0	0%
Pre-School Playgroup	4	4	100%	3	3	100%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%
Maintained Nursery School	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Maintained Nursery Class	4	4	100%	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	2	2	100%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	2	2	100%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	9	8	89%	5	5	100%	4	4	100%	1	1	100%
After School Club	10	8	80%	5	5	100%	4	4	100%	1	1	100%
Holiday Scheme	3	2	67%	1	1	100%	1	0	0%	0	0	0%
Total	67	61	91%	28	25	89%	15	14	93%	4	4	100%

Movement in the Market

The table below shows the number of new Ofsted childcare registrations across Lancaster alongside the number of providers who have closed.

In Lancaster whilst there have been some closures during the past 12 months, overall, we have seen 9 providers join the childcare market and 13 leave. These numbers reflect the changes in the market and in some cases, provision may have been taken over by another provider or organisation. This shows in our data as a closed provider and a new provider, however, the provision and places available have remained in the area.

Area	Total Number of Providers	New Provider Registrations	Closed Providers	Net Change	% Change
Carnforth	8	1	1	0	0%
Caton	7	0	0	0	0%
Lancaster City	36	2	4	-2	-6%
Lunesdale	4	0	0	0	0%
Morecambe & Heysham	54	4	7	-3	-6%
Rural North Lancaster	20	1	0	1	5%
Rural South Lancaster	9	1	1	0	0%
Silverdale & Yealand	3	0	0	0	0%
Lancaster	141	9	13	-4	-3%

Summary of Movement in the Market

Over the last year in Lancaster 13 providers have closed, this includes 7 Childminders, 2 Day Nurseries, 1 Maintained Nursery Class, 2 After School Clubs and 1 Breakfast Club. However, 9 providers have opened over the last year and this includes 2 Childminders, 1 Academy Nursery Class, 5 Governor Led Nursery Provisions (s27) and 1 After School Club.

Whilst we have seen these changes in the area, we do still have capacity, and some providers are willing to increase their capacity if demand requires it.

Area	Settings with Potential of Increasing Capacity if Required
Carnforth	5
Caton	2
Lancaster City	18
Lunesdale	0
Morecambe & Heysham	13
Rural North Lancaster	5
Rural South Lancaster	5
Silverdale & Yealand	1
Lancaster	49



Childcare Places

In this section we look at childcare places available in the area. The data is gathered over four weeks in Autumn term and should be seen as a snapshot of places at that time. Assessing childcare places is a complex process which depends on a large number of variables including but not limited to, the effects of changes in child population, demographics, housing developments, movement of families within an area, local geography and parental choice. The expansion of the Early Years Funding Entitlements and the Wraparound Programme is currently being delivered and rolled out, this is being reported on separately and is not included in this report.

The number of childcare places should be seen as an estimate as a provider will be limited by the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This includes having suitable floor space and staff to child ratio. Insurance policies may stipulate a maximum number of children they can care for at any one time. The tables below show information for both the maximum number of places available, and the number of places a setting is currently 'working to' at any one time. For example, whilst we have floor space for 24 children, we are staffed for 16 children, therefore in the example given a provider would be working to 16 places.

0-4 Year Olds

Area	Population Requiring Childcare	Maximum Number of Places	Surplus Capacity (Maximum Places)	Places Working to	Surplus Capacity (Working to)
Carnforth	237	256	19	256	19
Caton	130	159	29	159	29
Lancaster City	1380	1777	397	1706	326
Lunesdale	42	153	112	151	110
Morecambe & Heysham	2075	1932	-143	1888	-187
Rural North Lancaster	321	487	166	483	162
Rural South Lancaster	156	620	464	492	336
Silverdale & Yealand	26.3	32	6	28	2
Lancaster	4367	5416	1049	5163	796

Summary of Childcare Places 0-4 Year Olds

The table above shows we have sufficient places for 0-4 year olds at district level. When removing the population requiring childcare from the maximum places and the working to places, Morecambe and Heysham have a shortfall of places. Funding from the Early Years Capital Expansion Programme has created 49 new childcare places for 2 year olds and under 2s, these places were created after the data for this report was gathered.

In Lancaster, 49 providers have said they would be willing to expand if the demand required it. Families may also choose to travel across Lancaster to access a childcare place. We will continue to monitor the places in the district in particular Morecambe and Heysham to understand the demand for childcare in the local area.



5-14 Year Olds

Area	Population Requiring Childcare	Maximum Number of Places	Surplus Capacity (Maximum Places)	Childcare Places Working to	Surplus Capacity (Working to)
Carnforth	72	54	-18	54	-18
Caton	46	137	91	137	91
Lancaster City	434	916	482	908	474
Lunesdale	19	29	10	29	10
Morecambe	649	714	65	711	62
Rural North Lancaster	112	445	333	433	321
Rural South Lancaster	52	156	104	109	57
Silverdale & Yealand	13	22	9	22	9
Lancaster	1396	2473	1077	2403	1007

Summary of Childcare Places 5-14 Year Olds

Childcare for children of school age is complex to report on due to the different requirements for Ofsted registration. Some schools in Lancashire operate their childcare under Section 27 of the (Education Act 2002), which allows schools to operate community services, including childcare, directly under the management of the school and its Governors. This type of provision is exempt from Ofsted registration, as it is inspected as part of the school inspection. Therefore, these childcare places may not all be counted in our data.

This is also true of childcare solely for over 8 year olds as Ofsted registration for these providers is voluntary. As a result, there are likely to be more places available than we can predict, particularly in this age group.

Funding from the Wraparound Programme has created 200 new places for Before and After School provision in Lancaster. These places have mainly been created after the data from this report has been gathered.

The data shows a shortfall of places in Carnforth. We will continue to monitor places in these areas.



Early Education Funding

15 Hours Funded Offer

Every 3&4 year old is eligible for 15 hours funded Early Education the term after their third birthday until they start school. If parents receive some additional forms of government support or are working and on low income, they can apply for 15 hours of Early Education Funding for their 2 year old. Children can also be eligible for this funding if they:

Are looked after by the council, have left care under a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or Adoption Order, if they get Disability Living Allowance, if they have a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a current Education Health Care Plan (EHC), they are identified as a Child In Need, have a Child Protection Plan, are children of Gypsy Roma Heritage living in Lancashire, are children of Serving Armed Forces Personnel residing in Lancashire or are children who meet the criteria for Portage.

From April 2024 eligible working families of 2 year olds could also apply for 15 hours of early education funding. This was extended to eligible working families of children from 9 months in September 2024. More information is available at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Parents can choose to access this provision flexibly and use more than one provider to meet their childcare needs. The funding is available for 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year. Some parents may choose more flexibility and use the funding throughout the year.

Early Education Funding for 3&4 Year Olds

The eligible population data is taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which may not reflect the actual number of 3&4 year olds living in an area. The table below shows the take up of 15 hours Early Education Funding.

Early Education Funding for 3&4 Year Olds

The Eligible population data is taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which may not reflect the actual number of 3&4 year olds living in an area.

Area	Summer Term 2024			Autumn Term 2024			Spring Term 2025		
	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible population	No of Children	% take up
Carnforth	148	105	71%	148	116	78%	148	123	83%
Caton	84	81	96%	84	73	87%	84	76	90%
Lancaster City	897	818	91%	897	783	87%	897	784	87%
Lunesdale	30	25	83%	30	25	83%	30	27	90%
Morecambe & Heysham	1281	1208	94%	1281	1232	96%	1281	1199	94%
Rural North Lancaster	219	210	96%	219	194	89%	219	202	92%
Rural South Lancaster	101	99	98%	101	103	102%	101	109	108%
Silverdale & Yealand	20	17	85%	20	14	70%	20	11	55%
Lancaster	2780	2563	92%	2780	2540	91%	2780	2531	91%

Summary of Take Up for 3&4 Year Olds

On average the take up for 3&4 year olds has been consistent throughout the year. Accessing a funded place helps promote positive outcomes in children's health and wellbeing, learning and behaviour as well as preparing them for starting school. Therefore, the take up of 3&4 year old Early Education Funded places will continue to be monitored.



Early Education Funding for 2 Year Olds

Eligible population data is provided by the Department for Education based on a snapshot in time. Where the percentage take up is over 100% families may have become eligible after the data was provided therefore are not included in the eligible population.

Area	Summer Term 2024			Autumn Term 2024			Spring Term 2025		
	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible population	No of Children	% take up
Carnforth	13	12	92%	12	9	75%	20	16	80%
Caton	4	3	75%	1	3	300%	5	6	120%
Lancaster City	99	97	98%	95	83	87%	84	77	92%
Lunesdale	0	1	0%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%
Morecambe & Heysham	221	201	91%	218	210	96%	236	213	90%
Rural North Lancaster	12	12	100%	14	18	129%	10	7	70%
Rural South Lancaster	5	10	200%	6	7	117%	10	10	100%
Silverdale & Yealand	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	1	0	0%
Lancaster	354	336	95%	346	330	95%	367	330	90%

From April 2024 working families of 2 year olds can access 15 hours of Early Education Funding, the table below shows those providers offering the funding, if they are able to meet demand and the number of families claiming the funding.

Area	Offering Early Education Funding			Able to meet demand			Number of Families Claiming Funding		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Summer Term 2024	Autumn Term 2024	Spring Term 2025
Carnforth	9	3	0	9	0	3	35	30	33
Caton	6	6	0	5	1	6	21	23	23
Lancaster City	35	1	2	23	12	3	159	194	190
Lunesdale	5	1	0	1	4	1	5	4	4
Morecambe	48	4	5	28	22	8	230	228	225
Rural North Lancaster	23	3	1	21	2	4	63	57	60
Rural South Lancaster	7	3	0	3	4	3	31	41	31
Silverdale & Yealand	0	4	0	0	0	4	2	2	3
Lancaster	133	25	8	90	45	32	546	579	569

From September 2024 working families of children aged 9 months+ can access 15 hours of Early Education Funding, the table below shows those providers offering the funding, if they are able to meet demand and the number of families claiming the funding.

Area	Offering Early Education Funding			Able to meet demand			Number of Families Claiming Funding	
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Autumn Term 2024	Spring Term 2025
Carnforth	5	6	1	2	3	7	29	32
Caton	4	8	0	2	2	8	21	16
Lancaster City	32	4	2	20	14	4	181	185
Lunesdale	4	2	0	0	4	2	5	4
Morecambe	37	13	8	17	24	17	241	230
Rural North Lancaster	18	4	5	16	2	9	66	60
Rural South Lancaster	3	7	0	1	2	7	38	34
Silverdale & Yealand	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	2
Lancaster	103	48	16	58	51	58	581	563



30 hours Funded Offer

Eligible working parents of 3&4 year olds can apply for 30 hours of Early Education from the term after their child turns 3 until they reach school age. Parents can choose to access this provision flexibly and use more than one provider to meet their childcare needs. The funding is available for 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year. Some parents may choose more flexibility and use the funding throughout the year.

From September 2025 the funding will be extended to 30 hours for eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to school age, therefore the take up of this provision in Lancashire is not included in this report. Working parents are eligible if they earn equal to a minimum of 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage and less than £100,000 adjusted net income per year. Working parents can apply direct at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.

More information about Early Education Funding in Lancashire can be found at <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/early-years-childcare-and-family-support/paying-for-childcare/>

The table below shows working families accessing 30 hours of Early Education Funding, the table below shows those providers offering the funding, if they are able to meet demand and the number of families claiming the funding.

Area	Offering Early Education Funding			Able to meet demand			Number of Families Claiming Funding		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Summer Term 2024	Autumn Term 2024	Spring Term 2025
Carnforth	12	0	0	9	3	0	54	36	51
Caton	12	0	0	8	1	0	31	25	34
Lancaster City	36	0	2	31	5	2	342	214	299
Lunesdale	1	5	0	1	4	1	13	9	10
Morecambe	50	4	4	32	19	7	463	318	447
Rural North Lancaster	26	0	1	21	1	5	117	73	97
Rural South Lancaster	10	0	0	7	3	0	58	32	52
Silverdale & Yealand	4	0	0	4	0	0	9	7	7
Lancaster	151	9	7	113	36	15	1087	714	997

Summary of Early Education Funding

On average the take up has been consistent throughout the year. Accessing a funded place helps promote positive outcomes in children's health and wellbeing, learning and behaviour as well as preparing them for starting school. Increasing the take up of Early Education Funded places is key to helping ensure that all children have the best start in life and achieve their full potential.

Therefore, we will continue to monitor the take up of Early Education Funded places in relation to the introduction of the new working family entitlements.



Accessibility of Childcare

Some of the main factors which influence parent's decisions when considering childcare include opening hours, the cost of childcare, and the quality of provision, including provision for children with Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND). Flexibility of childcare enables parents to have a greater choice of provision and to balance work and family life. A summary of opening hours is contained in the table below. Please note if a provider selected multiple provider types in our survey and for example has selected a Day Nursery and Holiday Club and the Day Nursery is open 50 weeks of the year this will skew the opening hours for the Holiday Club. It may exaggerate the number of weeks the Holiday Club is open.

Opening Hours

Provider Type	Average Opening Days	Average Opening Weeks	Average Opening Hours	Open Weekends (%)
Childminder	4	44	9	0%
Day Nursery	5	48	10	0%
Pre-School Playgroup	5	40	8	0%
Maintained Nursery School	5	38	9	0%
Maintained Nursery Class	5	38	7	0%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	5	38	8	0%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	5	40	1	0%
After School Club	5	41	3	0%
Holiday Scheme	5	11	9	0%
Lancaster	5	34	6	0%

Help Paying for Childcare

There are many different kinds of financial support available to help families pay for childcare. The support available will depend on individual circumstances.

Support available for families

- Child Benefit
- Universal Credit
- Childcare Element of Universal Credit
- Childcare Vouchers (ends April 2026)
- Tax-Free Childcare
- Early Education Funding for 9mths - 4 year olds

Support available for parents who are studying

- Care to Learn (C2L)
- Childcare Grant
- Discretionary Learner Support Fund, Hardship Fund/Bursaries
- Parents Learning Allowance (PLA)
- Access to Learning Fund (ALF)
- NHS Student Grants and Bursaries
- Educational or Charitable Trust Funding

Families living with disabilities or special educational needs

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (for children aged over 16)
- Direct Payments
- Child Disability Additions element of Universal Credit

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/early-years-childcare-and-family-support/paying-for-childcare/help-paying-for-childcare/>

Childcare Fees

Cost remains a deciding factor when parents are looking for childcare, we asked our providers about their fees, the responses are summarised below.

Provider Type	Under 2's				2 year olds				3-4 year olds				5-14 year olds (18 yrs SEND)			
	Hour	Session	Day	Week	Hour	Session	Day	Week	Hour	Session	Day	Week	Hour	Session	Day	Week
Childminder	£5.44		£49.88	£222.83	£5.42		£49.88	£222.83	£5.42		£49.88	£222.83	£5.00	£7.20	£32.86	£156.67
Day Nursery	£6.94		£65.11	£320.38	£6.57	£45.00	£62.58	£306.81	£6.29	£41.00	£59.33	£280.48				
Pre-School Playgroup					£5.83	£18.69	£36.87	£179.20	£5.69	£18.38	£37.73	£180.27				
Maintained Nursery School					£5.00	£15.00	£45.00		£5.00	£15.00	£45.00					
Maintained Nursery Class					£5.00	£12.33	£38.00	£250.00	£4.71	£13.33	£31.13	£155.17				
Governor Led Provision (s27)	£7.50	£22.50	£67.00	£333.00	£5.50	£15.25	£42.25	£235.00	£5.50	£15.67	£42.00	£223.40				
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools																
Breakfast Club						£5.25				£4.85				£4.65		
After School Club						£11.25				£8.69				£8.28		
Holiday Scheme							£36.00				£33.40				£29.75	£148.33

Summary of the Cost of Childcare

Childcare providers have supplied us with their hourly, sessional, daily and weekly fees. Some may have different charging patterns, and this can depend on age, opening times and additional services offered. Therefore, it is more difficult to compare childcare charges across the sector. In Lancaster a parent can expect to pay between £4.71 and £7.50 per hour.

Governor led Provision (s27) is the provider type that has the most expensive hourly rate at £7.50 per hour. Maintained Nursery Class is the provider type that has the lowest hourly rate at £4.71. However, childcare fees in Lancaster appear consistent without many extreme variables in hourly, sessional, daily and weekly charges. This should be seen as a guide to childcare fees in Lancaster.



Quality of Childcare Provision

Quality of care and education is one of the most important aspects when a parent is choosing childcare for their children. Access to high quality childcare has long term benefits for children, particularly those from disadvantaged families. The tables below show an overview of Ofsted inspection outcomes for Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate providers. The tables also include providers who have yet to be inspected and those providers on the childcare register who receive a met or not met outcome. Childminders who are part of a Childminding Agency receive an overall judgement, in the table below this shows as effective or compliant. The majority of children in Lancashire will have access to good high-quality childcare.

Childcare on Domestic Premises – Childminders

Area	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not Met	Not Yet Inspected	Effective	Compliant
Camforth	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Caton	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Lancaster City	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lunesdale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Morecambe	5	15	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Rural North Lancaster	1	9	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Rural South Lancaster	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Silverdale & Yealand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burnley	8	33	0	0	2	0	5	0	0

Childcare on Non-Domestic Premises – including, Day Nurseries, Pre-School Playgroups, Nursery Unit of Independent Schools, Maintained Nursery Classes, Maintained Nursery Schools, Governor Led Provision (S27), Breakfast Clubs, After School Clubs and Holiday Clubs

Area	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not Met	Not Yet Inspected	Excellent	Compliant
Camforth	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caton	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancaster City	2	15	2	0	3	0	6	0	0
Lunesdale	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Morecambe	3	22	1	0	3	0	2	0	0
Rural North Lancaster	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Rural South Lancaster	1	5	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
Silverdale & Yealand	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burnley	11	59	4	0	6	0	13	0	0

Summary of the Quality of Provision

From the information shown we can see that 111 childcare providers in Lancaster have been inspected and are Good and Outstanding. 18 providers are still awaiting inspection. Some providers may not have had early years children present at the time of inspection and some providers may only be registered on the Childcare Register, therefore will have received a Met or Not Met judgement. Morecambe has the highest number of Outstanding providers. We can summarise that families accessing childcare in these areas are using high-quality childcare provision.



Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

It is vital for children with SEND to be supported within high quality provision with practitioners who have an excellent understanding and are able to carry out effective observation, assessment and planning. Inclusion should be embedded as part of everyday practice, where staff are flexible and ensure individual needs are met.

The tables below show providers responses about their provision for children with SEND.

Area	Do You Offer Places for Children with SEND		Number of Children Accessing with SEND
	YES (%)	No (%)	
Carnforth	88%	13%	30
Caton	100%	0%	17
Lancaster City	97%	3%	180
Lunesdale	100%	0%	7
Morecambe & Heysham	98%	2%	584
Rural North Lancaster	82%	18%	41
Rural South Lancaster	100%	0%	11
Silverdale & Yealand	100%	0%	1
Lancaster	95%	5%	871

Area	Changes in demand		
	Remained the same	Decreased	Increased
Carnforth	71%	14%	14%
Caton	57%	14%	29%
Lancaster City	29%	15%	56%
Lunesdale	75%	0%	25%
Morecambe & Heysham	46%	2%	52%
Rural North Lancaster	86%	7%	7%
Rural South Lancaster	88%	13%	0%
Silverdale & Yealand	100%	0%	0%
Lancaster	52%	8%	40%

Summary of SEND provision

The numbers of children accessing a SEND place were highest in Morecambe & Heysham.

52% of providers in Lancaster who responded to our survey said that demand for SEND places remained the same. Demand for SEND places has decreased by 8%. Demand for SEND places has decreased the most in Lancaster City. However, Lancaster City has seen an increase in demand of 56%.



Business and Finance

Sustainability has been one of the main challenges for childcare providers. Changes in demand for childcare and rising staffing costs has placed financial pressure on the sector.

Some providers are struggling to recruit knowledgeable, qualified practitioners. This has led, in some areas to settings reducing childcare places available or being unable to expand.

Moving forwards, we will continue to monitor the take up of childcare places to understand the impact of the extended funded entitlements and the recruitment and retention of staff.

Childcare providers were asked about the sustainability of their business and the impact of any changes over the last year. The tables that follow summarise the responses.

Area	Are You Sustainable	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Carnforth	100%	0%
Caton	100%	0%
Lancaster City	96%	4%
Lunesdale	100%	0%
Morecambe & Heysham	90%	10%
Rural North Lancaster	100%	0%
Rural South Lancaster	64%	36%
Silverdale & Yealand	100%	0%
Lancaster	93%	7%

Area	Timescale of Providers Being Concerned About Longer Term Viability				
	3 months	6 months	12 months	24 months	No concerns
Carnforth	0%	0%	25%	8%	67%
Caton	0%	0%	14%	36%	50%
Lancaster City	0%	0%	18%	25%	58%
Lunesdale	0%	0%	29%	14%	57%
Morecambe & Heysham	0%	6%	11%	27%	56%
Rural North Lancaster	0%	0%	12%	15%	73%
Rural South Lancaster	0%	7%	50%	14%	29%
Silverdale & Yealand	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
Total	0%	2%	17%	23%	58%

Summary of Business and Finance

In Lancaster 93% of providers who completed the survey have indicated that they are currently sustainable, however 17% providers in Lancaster have highlighted concerns about their longer term viability within the next 12 months.



Key Findings and Action Plan

Area	Key Findings
Lancaster	<p>Lancaster has 141 Ofsted registered childcare providers. Over the last 12 months the net change in the number of providers is - 4. 49 providers said they would increase their numbers if demand required it. Lancaster district shows a surplus in places for 0-4 year olds, however, there is a shortfall in Morecambe and Heysham. We have a shortfall of 5-14 year old places in, Carnforth. The average EEF2 take up for the district is 93% and the average take up for EEF 3&4 year olds is 91%. This is an decrease in take up of EEF 2,3 & 4 since our last published CSA. 97% of providers have received an Ofsted judgement that was Good or Outstanding. 95% of providers offer places for children with SEND, 52% have said demand for these places has remained the same. 93% are sustainable this is an increase since last year however, 17% are concerned about their longer term viability within the next 12 months.</p>
	<p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will work with local providers and schools to understand the demand for childcare for 0-4 year olds in Morecambe & Heysham & places for 5-14 year olds in Carnforth. 2. We will monitor providers who are concerned about the longer term viability. 3. We will continue to monitor the take up for Early Education Funding. 4. We will continue to support providers with staff recruitment by advertising vacancies on our website.

Conclusion

To summarise, our latest assessment shows we have childcare places available across all age groups at district level, however, we have a shortfall of 0-4 year old places in Morecambe and Heysham, however, funding from the Early Years Capital Expansion Programme has created 49 new childcare places for 2 year olds and under 2s, these places were created after the data for this report was gathered.

We also have a small shortfall for 5-14 year old places in Carnforth. Funding from the Wraparound Programme has created 200 new places for Before and After School provision in Lancaster. These places have mainly been created after the data from this report has been gathered. We will continue to monitor childcare places, in particular the impact of any closures and change in demand.

As there have been a number of new government initiatives this year including the expansion of early years funding entitlements which has provided grant funding to create new places, increasing before and after school places through the national wraparound programme and Phase 1 of School Based Nurseries. We will continue to provide support to the sector with these initiatives and monitor the places created and the take up of provision.

