

Lancashire County Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

April 2025 - March 2026

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

The following section provides a summary of the government's childcare 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 September 2025, eligible working families have been 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, the government provided capital funding to increase the availability of places for children under the age of two and for two-year-olds in priority areas. We have funded 38 projects and created 471 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.

Over the past 2 years capital & revenue funding has been allocated to 27 projects across Lancashire, resulting in the creation of 577 new wraparound childcare places. In addition, revenue funding has been made available to support operational costs, including staffing, resources and other running expenses. 141 projects have received revenue funding, contributing to the creation of 2450 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 September and December 2025, schools were invited to apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for capital funding to support the development of school-based nursery provision.

- 46 schools initially expressed interest in accessing the funding.
- 29 schools proceeded to submit formal applications to the DfE.
- 13 schools were successful in accessing the school based nursery capital funding.

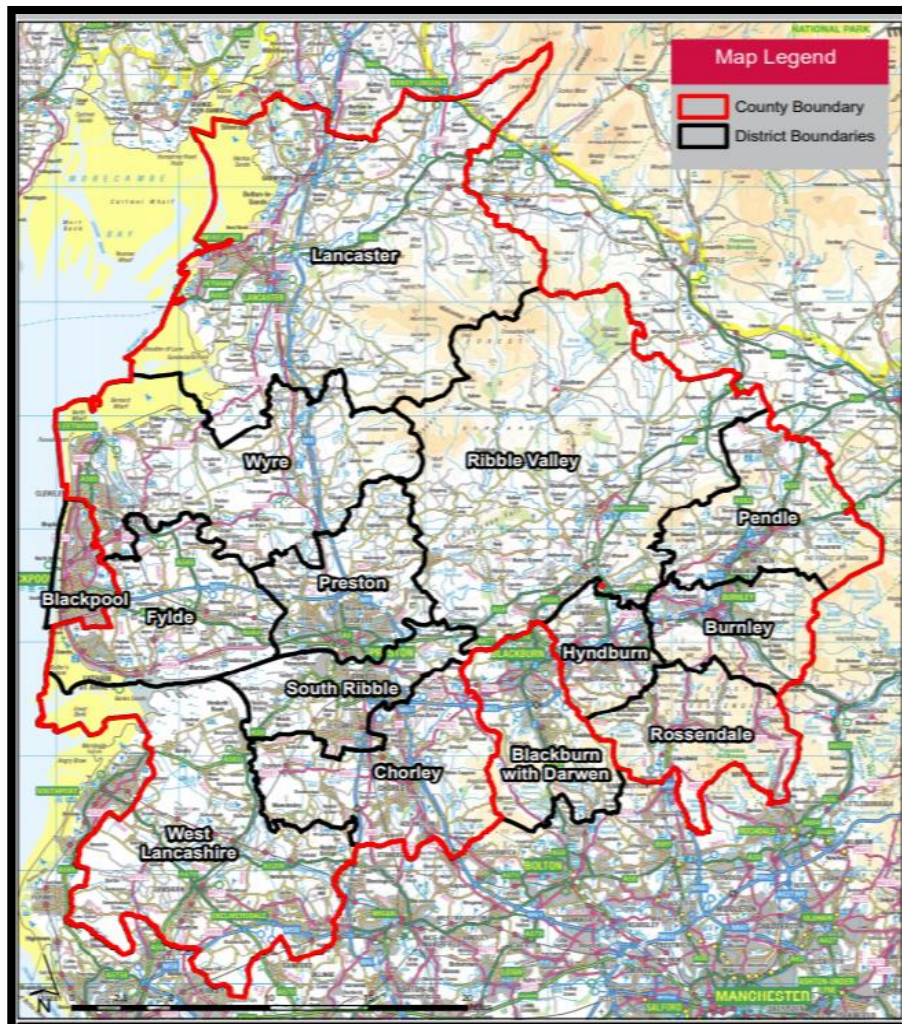
These successful projects will result in the creation of new early years places in schools.



Lancashire Overview

Lancashire County Council is the fourth largest County Council in the country. The population is 1,294,914 (Mid-year estimate 2024). The population for 0-19 year olds within this figure is 294,574. Lancashire is made up of 12 districts. Below you can see a map of Lancashire showing the county and district boundaries.

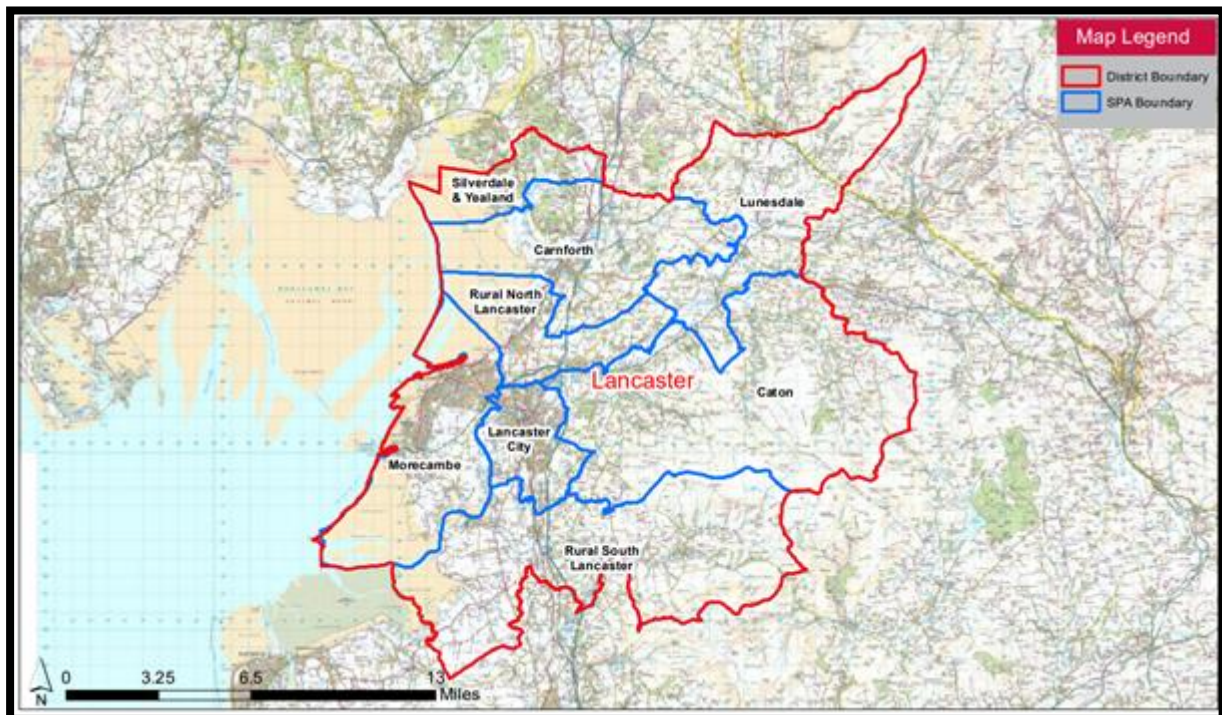
Lancashire's defining characteristics are its size and diversity. Each district has its own unique demography and geography. It is an area of vast contrasts with busy urban centres, coastal regions and large agricultural areas. For the purposes of this report these districts have been broken down further 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 2022 and 2047 the population of Lancaster will increase by 11%, which is lower the levels predicted for Lancashire. 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	8537	80	80	80	142	550
Caton	4760	24	53	49	87	365
Lancaster City	48219	398	394	424	853	3191
Lunesdale	2224	8	14	12	26	161
Morecambe	58165	544	645	603	1280	4801
Rural North Lancaster	12142	75	101	89	204	826
Rural South Lancaster	9142	49	48	60	101	419
Silverdale & Yealand	1818	7	8	3	17	91
Lancaster	145006	1185	1343	1320	2710	10405

The 2025 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that Lancaster was the 135th most deprived area out of 296 district and unitary authorities in England.

Area	No. of wards	No. of LSOA's	IMD average rank *	IMD in 20% most deprived
Lancaster	27	88	135	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.



Parent 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 year's 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).

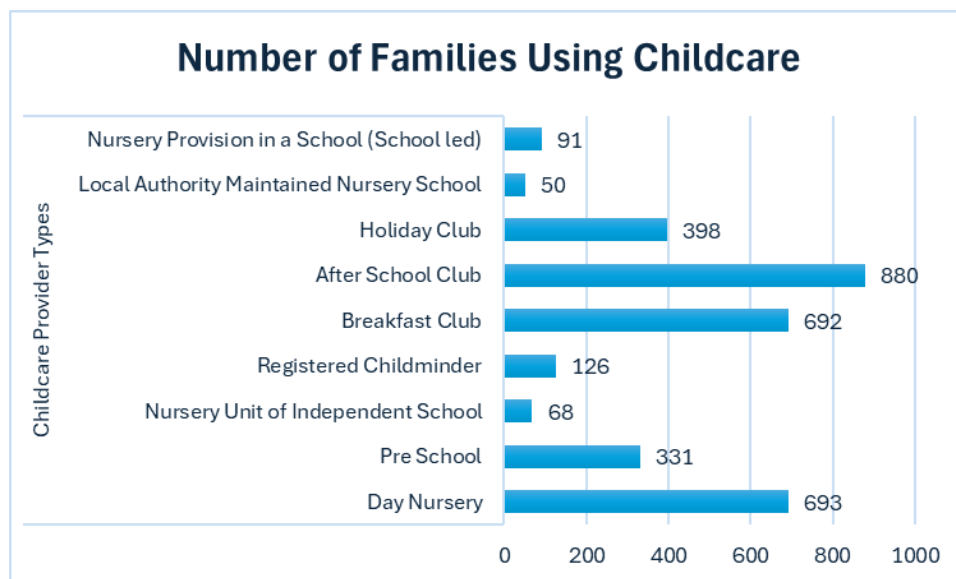
There were 1900 completions in total. Whilst the majority of responses were from Burnley, Lancaster, West Lancashire and South Ribble we did receive submissions from all 12 districts. The summary below is provided at a Lancashire level.

Your Household

Nearly all respondents to our survey are married or living with a partner, in most cases both partners are working full time. 40% of those surveyed have children in the early years category and 40% are 5-11 years old, 13% of respondents have children aged over 11 years.

We asked parents about their household income, most families surveyed earned between £20,000 and £80,000. 21% have a joint income of above £80,000.

The most used childcare provider types from those surveyed are shown below.



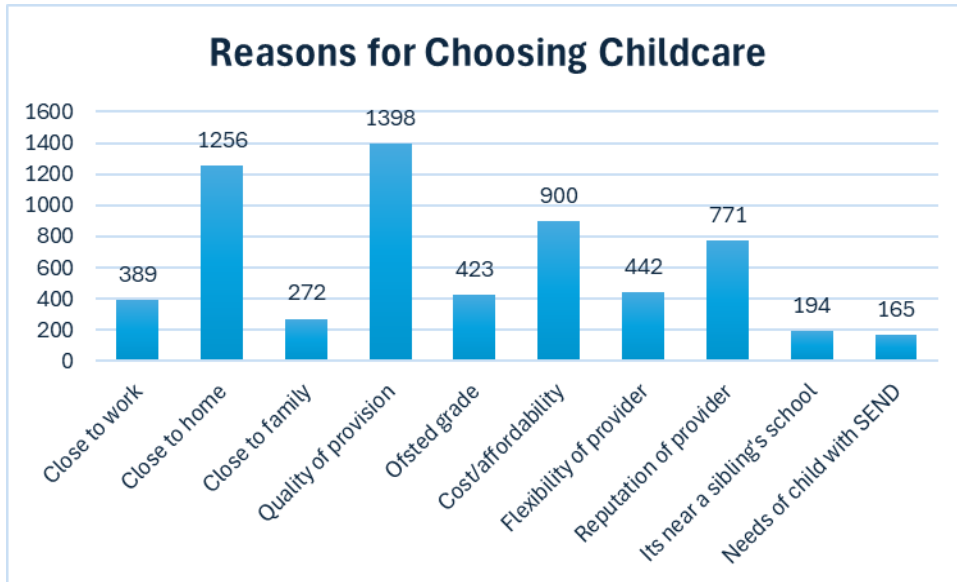
Childcare Needs

On average most families need between 10 and 40 hours of childcare per week with 6% of parents needing more than this. The majority said they use childcare because they work. 21% told us it is also for their child's learning and development or that their children enjoy it. A smaller percentage of parents/carers indicated they use childcare for respite, to study or look for work. Most parents need childcare all year round, however 38% wanted childcare term time only. 3% parents surveyed need childcare after 6pm or other patterns not specified.



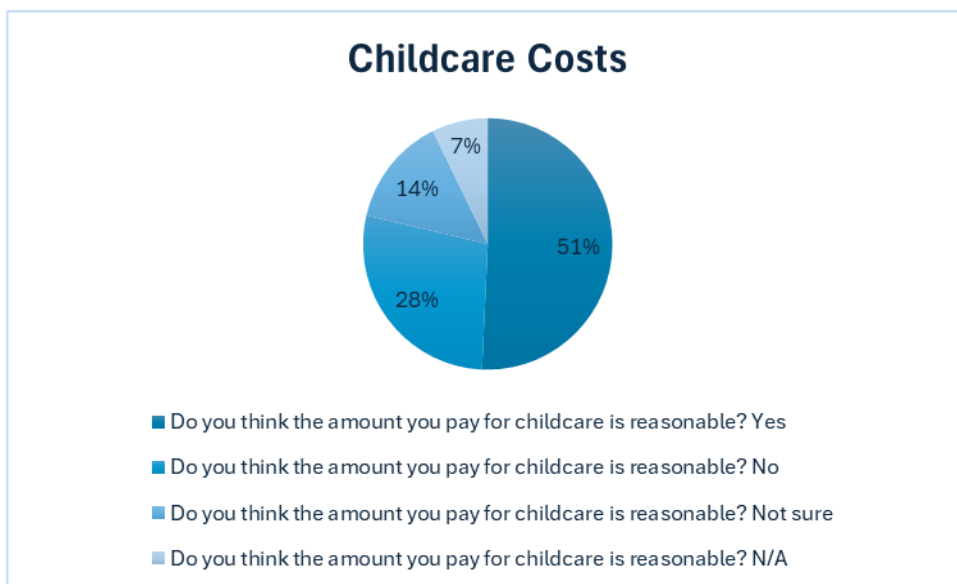
Nearly half of respondents said that finding information about suitable childcare was quite easy. Approximately 18% said it was very easy and a very small number of respondents said it was very difficult – 5%.

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



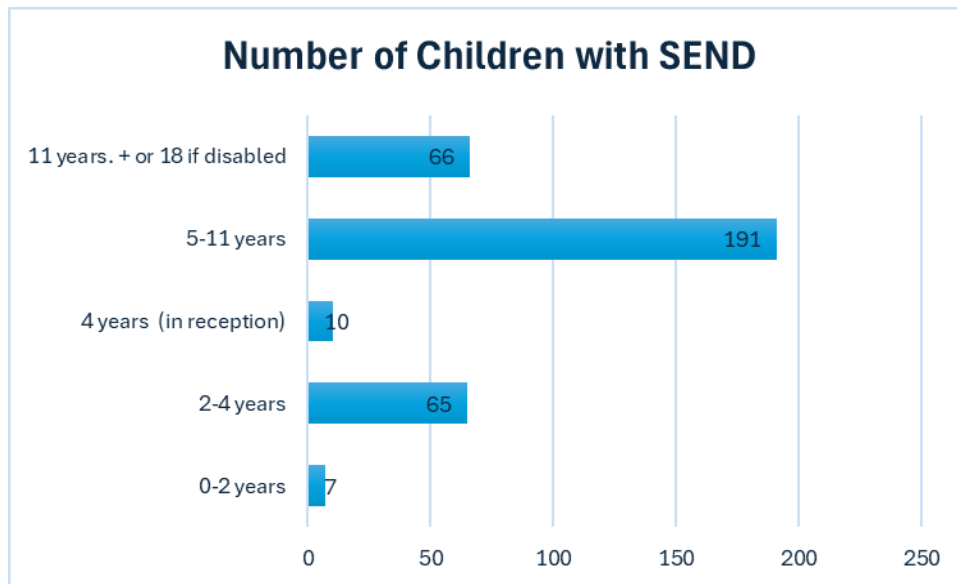
Over half of parents/carers that completed our survey pay for their childcare using wages, followed by the Tax-Free Childcare scheme and finally using Early Education Funding.

The chart below shows parent/carer views on the cost of childcare.

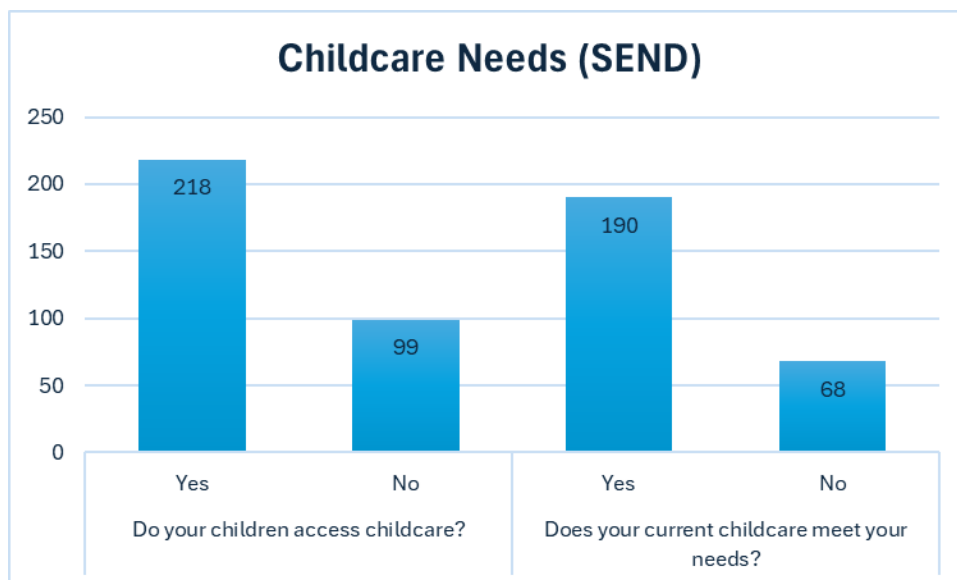


Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

We asked parents/carers if they have a child or children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.



The following graph shows those who access formal childcare and if this childcare meets their needs. For those parents currently accessing childcare 31% said it did not meet their child's individual needs. 15% stated that cost/affordability and a lack of alternative childcare were a concern.



Early Education Funding

The majority of those who responded to our survey are aware of Early Education Funding. 58% of respondents to this survey access a funded place with most accessing funded places at a Day Nursery or Pre-School Playgroup. 42% are not accessing a funded place. Those not accessing a place is either because they are now at school, they are not eligible or their child is too young.



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 2025 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.

Provider Type	Lancaster		
	Number	Responses	% Responses
Childminder	50	43	86%
Day Nursery	29	27	93%
Pre-School Playgroup	14	13	93%
Maintained Nursery School	1	1	100%
Maintained Nursery Class	13	11	85%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	11	9	82%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	46	35	76%
After School Club	47	38	81%
Holiday Scheme	15	13	87%
Total	226	190	84%



Provider Type	Carnforth			Caton			Lancaster City			Lunesdale		
	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses
Childminder	3	3	100%	2	2	100%	7	6	86%	0	0	0%
Day Nursery	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	12	11	92%	1	1	100%
Pre-School Playgroup	3	3	100%	2	2	100%	1	0	0%	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)	1	1	100%	2	2	100%	3	1	33%	0	0	0%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	2	1	50%	4	3	75%	12	9	75%	3	3	100%
After School Club	1	0	0%	4	3	75%	14	12	86%	2	2	100%
Holiday Scheme	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	5	4	80%	1	1	100%
Total	13	11	85%	15	13	87%	57	46	81%	9	9	100%

Provider Type	Morecambe and Heysham			Rural North Lancaster			Rural South Lancaster			Silverdale & Yealand		
	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses	Number	Responses	% Responses
Childminder	25	20	80%	13	12	92%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Day Nursery	11	10	91%	1	1	100%	3	3	100%	0	0	0%
Pre-School Playgroup	3	3	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	3	75%	1	0	0%	1	1	100%	2	2	100%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	4	4	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	14	9	64%	5	5	100%	4	4	100%	2	1	50%
After School Club	15	11	73%	5	5	100%	4	4	100%	2	1	50%
Holiday Scheme	5	5	100%	2	2	100%	1	0	0%	0	0	0%
Total	81	65	80%	30	28	93%	15	14	93%	6	4	67%



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 7 providers join the childcare market and 6 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	9	2	1	1	13%
Caton	8	1	0	1	14%
Lancaster City	35	0	2	-2	-5%
Lunesdale	4	0	0	0	0%
Morecambe & Heysham	55	3	2	1	2%
Rural North Lancaster	21	1	1	0	0%
Rural South Lancaster	9	0	0	0	0%
Silverdale & Yealand	2	0	0	0	0%
Lancaster	143	7	6	1	1%

Summary of Movement in the Market

Over the last year in Lancaster 6 providers have closed, this includes 3 Childminders, 1 After School Club and 2 Pre School Playgroups. However, 7 providers have opened over the last year including, 1 After School Club, 4 Governor Led Nursery Provision (s27) 1 Pre School Playgroup and 1 Childminder.

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	3
Caton	0
Lancaster City	16
Lunesdale	3
Morecambe & Heysham	17
Rural North Lancaster	7
Rural South Lancaster	3
Silverdale & Yealand	1
Lancaster	50



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 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)	Working to Places	Surplus Capacity (Working to)
Carnforth	221	232	11	220	-1
Caton	141	172	31	172	31
Lancaster City	1262	1795	533	1730	468
Lunesdale	37	128	91	126	89
Morecambe & Heysham	2002	2365	363	2211	209
Rural North Lancaster	325	438	113	434	109
Rural South Lancaster	190	492	302	492	302
Silverdale & Yealand	20	74	54	74	54
Lancaster	4198	5696	1498	5459	1261

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. There is a very small shortfall in Carnforth.

In Lancaster, 50 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.



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	66	-6	66	-6
Caton	46	193	147	193	147
Lancaster City	427	1148	721	1124	697
Lunesdale	22	82	60	52	30
Morecambe & Heysham	643	1506	863	1245	602
Rural North Lancaster	111	293	182	293	182
Rural South Lancaster	55	131	76	123	68
Silverdale & Yealand	13	49	36	49	36
Lancaster	1390	3468	2078	3145	1755

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 302 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 Childcare

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.

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.

Funded Childcare 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.

Area	Spring Term 2025			Summer Term 2025			Autumn Term 2025		
	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible population	No of Children	% take up
Carnforth	141	123	87%	141	117	83%	141	127	90%
Caton	80	76	95%	80	76	95%	80	79	99%
Lancaster City	854	784	92%	854	757	89%	855	734	86%
Lunesdale	29	27	93%	29	23	79%	29	22	76%
Morecambe & Heysham	1220	1199	98%	1220	1165	95%	1222	1218	100%
Rural North Lancaster	209	202	97%	209	194	93%	209	200	96%
Rural South Lancaster	96	109	114%	96	113	118%	96	98	102%
Silverdale & Yealand	19	11	58%	19	13	68%	19	15	79%
Lancaster	2648	2531	96%	2648	2458	93%	2651	2493	94%

Funded Childcare for 2 Year Olds

This Early Education Funding is for families receiving, some additional forms of government support or if they are working and on low income. 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. The table below shows the take up of this funding.

Area	Spring Term 2025			Summer Term 2025			Autumn Term 2025		
	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible Population	No of Children	% take up	Eligible population	No of Children	% take up
Carnforth	20	16	80%	16	17	106%	17	19	112%
Caton	5	6	120%	8	6	75%	7	8	114%
Lancaster City	84	77	92%	82	75	91%	85	76	89%
Lunesdale	1	1	100%	1	2	200%	3	2	67%
Morecambe & Heysham	236	213	90%	244	210	86%	209	201	96%
Rural North Lancaster	10	7	70%	7	7	100%	7	7	100%
Rural South Lancaster	10	10	100%	5	6	120%	5	6	120%
Silverdale & Yealand	1	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Lancaster	367	330	90%	363	323	89%	333	319	96%



30 Hours Childcare for Working Families

From September 2025 eligible working parents were able to apply for 30 hours of funded Early Education from the term after their child turns 9 months 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.

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.beststartinlife.gov.uk

More information about Early Education Funding in Lancashire can be found at [Early Years Paying for Childcare](#)

From September 2024 working families of children aged 9 months - 2 years could access 15 hours of Early Education Funding. In September 2025 this offer was extended to 30 hours. 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	Spring Term 2025 15 hours	Summer Term 2025 15 hours	Autumn Term 2025 30 hours
Carnforth	8	2	1	2	4	3	32	37	41
Caton	8	0	0	8	0	0	16	15	17
Lancaster City	32	3	1	20	12	4	185	184	208
Lunesdale	7	1	0	7	0	1	4	4	3
Morecambe	40	1	2	23	17	3	230	235	274
Rural North Lancaster	17	6	0	10	8	5	60	64	67
Rural South Lancaster	6	1	0	1	2	1	34	36	30
Silverdale & Yealand	3	0	0	3	0	0	2	2	3
Lancaster	121	14	4	74	43	17	563	577	643

From April 2024 until September 2025 working families of 2 year olds could access 15 hours of Early Education Funding until it was extended to 30 hours. 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	Spring Term 2025 15 hours	Summer Term 2025 15 hours	Autumn Term 2025 30 hours
Carnforth	9	2	1	5	4	3	33	34	31
Caton	5	1	3	5	0	4	23	25	23
Lancaster City	29	7	1	18	11	8	190	182	180
Lunesdale	5	3	0	5	0	3	4	4	8
Morecambe	35	6	5	19	16	11	225	220	246
Rural North Lancaster	19	4	0	14	5	4	60	67	69
Rural South Lancaster	4	3	0	2	2	0	31	24	35
Silverdale & Yealand	0	3	0	0	0	3	3	3	1
Lancaster	106	29	10	68	38	36	569	559	593



The table below shows working families of 3&4 year olds accessing 30 hours of Early Education 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	Spring Term 2025 30 hours	Summer Term 2025 30 hours	Autumn Term 2025 30 hours
Carnforth	11	1	0	7	3	0	51	58	38
Caton	9	0	0	9	0	0	34	38	26
Lancaster City	37	0	0	30	7	0	299	340	233
Lunesdale	5	3	0	5	0	3	10	11	3
Morecambe	45	1	0	32	13	1	447	512	334
Rural North Lancaster	22	1	0	17	5	1	97	116	77
Rural South Lancaster	7	0	0	7	0	0	52	65	43
Silverdale & Yealand	3	0	0	3	0	0	7	7	5
Lancaster	139	6	0	110	28	5	997	1147	759

Summary of Early Education Funding

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.

We will continue to monitor the supply and 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	45	10	0%
Day Nursery	5	46	10	0%
Pre-School Playgroup	4	39	8	0%
Maintained Nursery School	5	38	10	0%
Maintained Nursery Class	5	38	6	0%
Governor Led Provision (s27)	5	38	8	0%
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools	0	0	0	0%
Breakfast Club	5	37	1	0%
After School Club	5	37	3	0%
Holiday Scheme	4	11	8	0%
Lancaster	5	38	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 9 months - 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	£6.00		£55.23	£233.00	£5.91		£55.23	£233.00	£5.82		£55.23	£233.00		£5.67	£42.60	£300.00
Day Nursery	£7.69		£71.50	£347.88	£7.16		£66.71	£327.33	£6.70		£62.60	£308.21				
Pre-School Playgroup					£6.44	£20.90	£42.27	£213.00	£6.10	£24.25	£42.27	£173.57				
Maintained Nursery School	£7.00	£21.00	£42.00		£6.00	£18.00	£36.00		£6.00	£18.00	£36.00					
Maintained Nursery Class					£5.00	£13.33	£34.33	£250.00	£4.67	£12.78	£32.63	£161.67				
Governor Led Provision (s27)	£8.00	£24.00	£80.00	£400.00	£6.00	£14.00	£29.67	£157.50	£6.00	£15.14	£32.00	£167.50				
Nursery Unit of Independent Schools																
Breakfast Club						£5.67				£5.00				£4.71		
After School Club						£11.67				£15.60				£10.47		
Holiday Scheme							£29.00				£31.60	£150.00			£28.55	£168.75

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 £4.67 and £8.00 per hour.

Governor Led Provision (s27) is the provider type that has the most expensive hourly rate at £8.00 per hour. Maintained Nursery Class is the provider type that has the lowest hourly rate at £4.67. 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
Carnforth	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caton	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancaster City	2	20	1	0	3	0	2	0	0
Lunesdale	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Morecambe	0	24	1	0	5	0	0	0	0
Rural North Lancaster	3	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Rural South Lancaster	0	6	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Silverdale & Yealand	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burnley	7	69	2	0	8	0	7	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
Carnforth	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caton	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Lancaster City	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Lunesdale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Morecambe	5	14	0	0	2	0	3	1	0
Rural North Lancaster	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	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	3	0	5	1	0

Summary of the Quality of Provision

From the information shown we can see that 117 childcare providers in Lancaster have been inspected and are Good and Outstanding. 12 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	89%	11%	29
Caton	100%	0%	36
Lancaster City	100%	0%	236
Lunesdale	100%	0%	18
Morecambe & Heysham	94%	6%	304
Rural North Lancaster	85%	15%	47
Rural South Lancaster	100%	0%	15
Silverdale & Yealand	100%	0%	5
Lancaster	95%	5%	690

Area	Changes in demand		
	Remained the same	Decreased	Increased
Carnforth	50%	0%	50%
Caton	75%	0%	25%
Lancaster City	50%	7%	43%
Lunesdale	50%	0%	50%
Morecambe & Heysham	45%	2%	53%
Rural North Lancaster	82%	12%	6%
Rural South Lancaster	75%	13%	13%
Silverdale & Yealand	100%	0%	0%
Lancaster	56%	5%	39%

Summary of SEND provision

95% of providers in Lancaster offer places to children with SEND. The numbers of children accessing a SEND place were highest in Morecambe & Heysham.

56% 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 5%. Demand for SEND places has decreased the most in Rural South Lancaster. However, Morecambe & Heysham has seen an increase in demand of 53%.



Business and Finance

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	92%	8%
Caton	79%	21%
Lancaster City	85%	15%
Lunesdale	89%	11%
Morecambe & Heysham	91%	9%
Rural North Lancaster	93%	7%
Rural South Lancaster	71%	29%
Silverdale & Yealand	100%	0%
Lancaster	88%	12%

Area	Timescale of Providers Being Concerned About Longer Term Viability				
	3 months	6 months	12 months	24 months	No concerns
Carnforth	0%	25%	17%	8%	50%
Caton	14%	0%	43%	29%	14%
Lancaster City	2%	2%	9%	28%	59%
Lunesdale	11%	0%	0%	0%	89%
Morecambe & Heysham	0%	0%	29%	11%	60%
Rural North Lancaster	0%	3%	17%	7%	73%
Rural South Lancaster	0%	7%	36%	21%	36%
Silverdale & Yealand	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
Total	2%	3%	21%	16%	58%

Summary of Business and Finance

In Lancaster 88% of providers who completed the survey have indicated that they are currently sustainable, however 21% providers in Lancaster particularly in Rural South Lancaster and Caton 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 143 Ofsted registered childcare providers. Over the last 12 months the net change in the number of providers is 1. 50 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 very small shortfall in Carnforth. There is also a small shortfall of 5-14 year old places in Carnforth. The average EEF2 take up for the district is 92% and the average take up for EEF 3&4 year olds is 94%. This is a decrease in take up of EEF 2 and an increase in EEF3&4 since our last published CSA. 98% of providers have received an Ofsted judgement that was Good or Outstanding. 95% of providers offer places for children with SEND and 56% have said demand for these places has remained the same. 88% are sustainable. 21% 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 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 small shortfall in Carnforth, we also have a small shortfall for 5-14 year old places in Carnforth. We will work with local providers to understand any changes in parental needs and capacity within existing settings. We will continue to monitor and respond to areas where demand for childcare remains low.

With the continued roll out of government initiatives including the expansion of early years funding entitlements, which has provided grant funding to create new places and the increase in before and after school places through the National Wraparound Programme and School Based Nurseries, we will continue to support the sector. We will also monitor the places created and the take-up of provision.

