

DARLINGTON LOCAL AUTHORITY - CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT, 2020-21

Introduction

The Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, June 2018' requires 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'. In carrying out this requirement local authorities should 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents. The report should include specific reference to how they are ensuring there is sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of: children with special needs and disabilities, children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit, children with parents who work irregular hours, children aged two, three and four taking up free early education, school age children and children needing holiday care.'

On 23rd March 2020, the government instructed the country to lockdown as a response to the pandemic. Schools and childcare settings were asked to remain open for children of key workers and vulnerable children. As a result of much reduced demand, by 24th April, 48% of the private and voluntary settings remained open (including 24 childminders with vacancies) and both nursery schools and nursery units were also open. Providers tried to remain open wherever possible. There were 142 pre-school children in attendance.

Support for Providers

Local authorities were responsible for monitoring demand and capacity and working with families to provide places in alternative settings, if necessary. Open and closed settings worked with social workers, health and other professionals, as appropriate, to keep in touch with children and families, particularly vulnerable children. During this period, the Education Partnerships team liaised with all settings, including childminders, to remind them of their safeguarding responsibilities, regardless of their current operational status. Settings shared information regarding vulnerable children, and attendance of all groups of children at this time was monitored daily. Information sharing was particularly vital for those children who were in childcare but were not attending their usual setting. Childcare staff were encouraged and supported to maintain contact with parents, in order to reduce parental feelings of isolation and anxiety.

From late March, various provider support systems were established. Regular virtual health briefings by Darlington's Public Health Team were set up, to explain the latest health guidance and answer provider queries. These sessions were very well attended. Following these meetings, appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was provided by Public Health free of charge to those settings who did not already have PPE. Providers and schools were sent up-dated links to DfE pandemic guidance on a daily basis. The provider networks for the private and voluntary sector

and childminders continued virtually. To enable a shared understanding of the evolving local picture of available childcare places and the difficulties faced by parents and providers, the Local Authority convened a strategy group to consider issues and ways to deal with them. The group consists of group care providers, childminders and Local Authority officers. The childcare sector was also able to pose questions to the DfE and the Regional Schools' Commissioner via daily meetings which took place with the Local Authority's Head of Education and Inclusion and the Head of Education Partnerships. Individualised work to support transitions has also been undertaken by the Inclusion Team which has facilitated input by a range of professionals, including headteachers and health professionals. In addition, the Early Years Inclusion Panel still took place virtually in June, awarding funding for the Autumn 2020 term to children with emerging and significant SEND.

Financial Support for Providers

On 19th March 2020, the government announced a package of support for businesses which included the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This scheme was available to settings while a proportion of the early entitlements funding via local authorities continued to be paid. Also, a Self-employment Income Support Scheme, which was established for those who are self-employed and have lost income due to the pandemic, was available to childminders. During the Summer 2020 term, in accordance with DfE guidance, both open and closed settings were funded at pre-pandemic levels. In addition, Darlington Borough Council funded a small number of places with childminders who had received no up-front summer payments but were unexpectedly caring for funded children from other settings which had closed.

On 20th July, the DfE released its early education funding guidance for the Autumn 2020 term. The DfE recognised that the number of children attending childcare may not have returned to normal levels by early January 2021. Local authorities were instructed to continue to fund providers who were open at pre-pandemic levels.

Early Years Entitlements take-up

From 1st June, children whose parents were not key workers or vulnerable children could return to settings. Although the number of children attending childcare steadily rose, numbers were below pre-pandemic levels by the end of the Summer 2020 term. For example, the Summer 2019 term headcount showed there were 373 funded 2-year-olds, 1088 3- and 4-year-olds accessing Universal Entitlement and 876 3- and 4- year-olds accessing the Extended Entitlement: a total of 2,337 funded children. The number of children in a funded place in early July 2020 is set out in table 1.

Table 1 - Summer 2020 (July) headcount

	Funded Places for 2-Year-Olds	Universal Entitlement for 3- & 4- Year-Olds	30 Hours Childcare for 3- & 4- Year-Olds	Termly Totals
Private Day Nurseries	83	109	205	397
Pre-Schools	9	29	38	76
Childminders & Out of School Clubs	7	11	26	44
Private & Voluntary Sector Totals	99	149	269	517
Nursery Schools	46	98	55	199
Nursery Units	46	498	119	663
School Totals	92	596	174	862
Childcare Market Totals	191	745	443	1,379

Data was collected to assess occupancy of Local Authority funded places on 29th September 2020.

Table 2 – Autumn 2019 and Autumn 2020 (September) take-up

	Autumn 2019				Autumn 2020			
	Funded Places for 2 Year-Olds	Universal Entitlement for 3- & 4- Year-Olds	30 Hours Childcare for 3- & 4- Year-Olds	Termly Totals	Funded Places for 2- Year-Olds	Universal Entitlement for 3- & 4- Year-Olds	30 Hours Childcare for 3- & 4- Year-Olds	Termly Totals
Private Day Nurseries	232	189	324	745	123	127	208	458
Pre-Schools	27	49	66	142	18	23	50	91
Out of School Clubs	-	-	32	32	-	-	0	0
Childminders	11	4	28	43	5	7	14	26
Private & Voluntary Sector Totals	270	242	450	962	146	157	272	575
Nursery Schools	21	80	32	133	27	45	25	97
Nursery Units	30	365	97	492	59	244	114	417
School Totals	51	445	129	625	86	289	139	514
Childcare Market Totals	321	687	579	1,587	232	446	411	1,089

Table 2 shows that in Autumn 2019 there were 498 more children across the 2 to 4 years age range accessing a Local Authority funded place than there were in Autumn 2020. When looking at the private and voluntary sector providers, apart from in the case of children accessing the Universal Entitlement with childminders (where the additional numbers concerned are very low), there is a decrease in take up in Autumn 2020 for all entitlements across the differing types of provision. Across the private and voluntary sector, there is a loss of 387 funded children; this means that the private and voluntary sector have incurred 78% of the total loss of funded places. With regard to nursery schools and units, there has been an increase of 35 funded 2-year-olds and 10 funded 3- and 4-year-olds accessing the 30 hours Extended Entitlement. As a whole, the private and voluntary sector is at 60% take-up compared to Autumn 2019 and the school sector is at 82% take up, giving a total of 69% take up compared to Autumn 2019 across the childcare market.

Across Darlington, there is a mixed supply of holiday and out of school provision. As well as full day care services and childminders who offer this service, there are a small number of standalone organisations, including Darlington Association on Disability’s holiday playschemes, DASH, who cater solely for children with special educational needs and disabilities. During the first half of the Autumn 2020 term, most out of school provision reported similar take-up to the equivalent period last year. However, due to pandemic restrictions, some providers have limited their out of school numbers or are not running at all. In general, holiday numbers during the October half term have been significantly lower than usual. In some cases, numbers were as low as 50% of normal occupancy.

The Local Authority established a childcare sufficiency task group to meet regularly and monitor childcare demand and supply, as well as the health of the local childcare sector. In addition to officers, the group includes representation from the Darlington Families’ Information Service, SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service), Darlington Association on Disability, Jobcentre Plus, Children’s Centres, Economic Growth and Learning and Skills. The group cross references with the Early Years Strategy Group.

Provider profile

Table 3 - The number of settings in Darlington pre-March 2020 and November 2020

	Pre-March 2020	November 2020
Nursery schools	2	2
Nursery units	17	17
Private & Voluntary	34	31
Childminders	80	71

Table 3 shows that between March and November 2020 three nurseries in Darlington permanently closed. In each case all children were successfully accommodated in other childcare settings. Two of these nurseries were owned by providers who had more than one setting and had places available at their other sites located in Darlington.

Ofsted Inspections

On the 17th March 2020, all routine Ofsted inspections of registered early years provision were suspended. Ofsted inspectors continued regulatory work during this time. Ofsted inspectors are carrying out interim visits. These visits are not inspections and will not result in an inspection grade. Inspectors can use regulatory or enforcement actions, if appropriate. Ofsted inspectors will visit providers that are currently judged 'less than good' and that had safe guarding and welfare actions raised at their last inspection.

Table 8 – Ofsted Judgements (source: FIS as at August 2020)

2020 Ofsted	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not met with actions	Awaiting 1 st Inspection	Not Required	Total
No. of Private Day Nurseries	3	13	0	0	0	0	2	0	18
No. of Holiday Clubs	1	12	0	1	5	0	1	4	24
No. of Out of School Clubs	1	16	0	1	1	0	1	0	20
No. of Out of School Clubs (school registered)	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	5
No. of Breakfast Clubs	0	14	0	1	0	0	1	0	16
No. of Breakfast Clubs (school registered)	0	10	4	0	0	0	3	0	17
No. of Playgroups	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	9
No. of Childminders	4	43	0	0	14	1	11	0	73

Childcare providers who only work with children from the end of Early Years Foundation Stage are registered on the childcare register. They are expected to meet the requirements relating to people, premises and provision and make a declaration that they will do so. They are inspected to ensure they are still complying with these requirements and are judged as either meeting the requirements of the register or not meeting the requirements i.e. 'Met' or 'Unmet'.

Demographics and Economic Regeneration

(source: Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services)

Darlington's current population is 106,800 (ONS Mid-year population estimates), 64,700 of this population are of working age (16-64 years old). Since the last census in 2011 we have seen a reduction of working age population of 2.7% or 2,100 people

due to Darlington's ageing population. Prior to March 2020, within this working age population, 80.1 were economically active (in work or unemployed), 58% of these people worked in the borough and 21% commuted out of the Borough to work.

Darlington had a healthy employment rate of 74.9%; taken as a percentage of the economically active population aged 16–64. Darlington's employment rate was above the North East average of 71.1% and just below the national average of 76 per cent. Darlington's in employment figure ranked second highest of all 12 North East authorities. The unemployment rate fell from 6.7 per cent in 2015 to 6.1 per cent in 2019. This equated to a reduction in unemployment in the borough from 3,600 people in 2015 to 3,200 people in 2019. In December 2019 it was estimated, 4.6 per cent of our 16 – 64 population or 3,010 people were claiming work related benefits; this estimate has risen by 1.1 per cent or an additional 765 claimants, compared to the December 2017 estimate.

In 2018, Darlington Businesses had 47,000 employee jobs (31,000 full time and 16,000 part time). The total number of people in employment in Darlington increased by 4.1% between 2014 and 2019 compared to 2.5% across the region and 3.3% nationally. The proportion of total jobs that were part time decreased by 11% from 2015 to 2018. This compared to a decrease of 0.3% in the North East and an increase of 6.4% nationally. 2.6% of Darlington's business base is characterised by a smaller number of medium to large businesses (employing more than 50 employees), 85.4.2% of Darlington's businesses are micro businesses employing 9 or less employees with a further 12.2% being small businesses employing between 10 and 49 employees.

In 2019 the number of workless households in Darlington reached 6,100 or 17.9% which is above the national average of 13.9% but below the Tees Valley average of 22.3%.

Regeneration projects are evident throughout the borough of Darlington. Since 2012 Darlington has identified four key growth locations for economic growth and regeneration namely, North Western Growth Zone, Central Growth Zone, Eastern Growth Zone and Durham Tees Valley Airport Growth Zone. Since 2012 these areas have seen major investment and regeneration in excess of £150 million, £54.4 million of this is being spent in the town centre and £10 million Opus North retail development on North Road. Planned further investments include the redevelopment of Darlington's Indoor Market and the train station.

With regards to the economy, the COVID-19 pandemic is presenting challenges across all sectors and we are facing an unprecedented economic crisis with little prospect of a rapid bounce back. Many businesses, jobs and voluntary organisations are at significant risk and investment in the economy is likely to be slow to return. There will be implications for the town centre but there may be opportunities depending upon the government response.

Largescale unemployment is anticipated:

- the proportion of residents claiming unemployment benefits is already at levels not seen since 1994 and this is predicted to rise further as government support is withdrawn;

- young people are expected to be particularly affected, with hundreds of thousands of education leavers set to join the labour market about to find themselves competing for job opportunities against high numbers of experienced and qualified adults. Even those who can find work are likely to suffer from significantly depressed earnings; and
- residents who were already on low earnings are expected to be disproportionately affected.

Local job quality is at risk of being detrimentally affected by growing unemployment should this translate into reduced wage levels and security. Levels of material deprivation are consequently likely to continue increasing and income and health inequalities widen. For many of those 'just about managing', this crisis and its associated economic shock is likely to tip them into 'not managing', no longer being able to afford basics, such as, housing costs and food.

It is clear that economic conditions nationally are highly fluid. Providers are facing uncertainty with regard to childcare demand, early years entitlements and parent paid income as families' circumstances change. Indicators show that there has been sufficient capacity to meet demand throughout this period, nevertheless, unmet demand will need to be continually monitored to ensure that parents are able to access training and work in the coming months and years.

Housing

(source: Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services)

When we look at the local housing market, the Council is currently producing the Darlington Local Plan for the period 2016 - 2036, and a consultation was held on a draft during Summer 2018 and currently is out for a 6 week representation period on the Proposed Submission Draft (Regulation 19). Anticipated submission of the plan is December 2020. To inform the plan, the Council commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in 2017, which identified a need for 9,840 additional dwellings over the 20-year period 2016-36. This is a significant increase from previous projections and will require a continuation of recent delivery rates of housing in coming years, to maintain a delivery of around 500 dwellings per annum. In the short term, residential development in the Borough continues, with new dwellings being recorded on around 50 active sites at West Park and Central Park, as well as a range of smaller sites in locations around the Borough, including rural areas such as Heighington, Hurworth and Middleton-St-George. Anecdotally, the housing market appears to be strong post lockdown, however, the effect of increased social restrictions during the winter months and the impact of redundancies may take some time to filter through.

The views of parents

During early September to mid October 2020, an on-line parental survey was carried out via providers, schools, Jobcentre Plus contacts, Darlington library, health visitors, Children's Centres, Darlington Association on Disability, the Local Authority staff bulletin, the Local Authority business e-newsletter, CAMHS and various other parental

social media groups. The return rate was relatively high at 643 responses. This compares with a return rate of just over 220 parents in 2019. Of the 643 responses, 68% were from two parent/ carer families who were both working; 20% were from single parent/carer families who were working; and 3% were from non-working families. 72% of respondents said they needed childcare for 5 to 11-year-olds; 25% needed childcare for 0 to 2-year olds; 20% required care for 3- to 4-year-olds; and 5% of respondents needed care for 15- to 18-year- olds.

71 respondents or 11% were completing the survey on behalf of a child or a young person with a disability and 68% of special educational needs were classed as 'Speech and language / communication needs (including Autism Spectrum Disorder)'. 22 respondents with a child or young person with a disability said they had some concerns about accessing childcare from the Autumn 2020 term. These concerns included cost, location, flexibility and pandemic related issues. Many of these themes were echoed by parents who did not have a child or young person with a disability.

When parents were asked what they take into consideration when choosing formal childcare, 77% said they look at the location of the provider, for example, close to their work or home; and 70% of respondents said that the cost of childcare was an important factor. 58% of respondents considered the safety and security of a provider; 56% looked at the flexibility of opening and closing times; and 52% considered the quality of care and education. Comments from respondents indicate some lack of flexibility to accommodate parents who work changing shift patterns. When compared with the results from the 2019 parental survey, the results are similar. In 2019, 82% of parents were most interested in provider location; 70% considered costs/charges to be an important consideration; 67% considered the safety and security of provision; and 55% looked at the flexibility of opening and closing times.

Respondents were asked whether the pandemic had changed their childcare arrangements and if so, how. 32% of respondents said they would carry on accessing childcare at the same levels as before March 2020. 12% of respondents said that they had accessed childcare before the pandemic but would be accessing less childcare over the coming year; 10% said that they had accessed childcare before the pandemic and would be accessing more childcare over the coming year and 7% said they had accessed childcare before the pandemic but would not be accessing childcare over the following year. When asked to explain why childcare usage had changed since April 2020, 32% of respondents said they had experienced a change in employment circumstances (for example, a change of job, unemployment or a change in working hours); and 32% said they had had a change in family circumstances (for example, working from home or more flexible working patterns).

When asked what type of childcare families will be using over the following year, 42% of respondents said breakfast clubs and after school clubs; 33% said full day care; and 23% said holiday clubs. Of the funded entitlements, the 30 hours Extended Entitlement is the one which will be most utilised over the following year at 21% of respondents. 37% of respondents require childcare from 7:30am followed by 25% who need childcare from 8:00am and 36% of respondents need childcare up to 6:00pm, followed by 16% who need childcare up to 5:30pm. This mirrors the feedback in 2019 which showed that the most required times were for childcare to start at 7:30am and finish at 6pm. 64% of parents said they would need childcare during the

summer holidays, closely followed by 55% at summer half term; 54% during the Easter holidays; 52% during spring half term; and 51% during autumn half term.

Parents/carers were asked whether they had stopped using childcare, reduced the amount of childcare they use or were unhappy with their formal childcare provision and if any of this was the case, what was the reason. The costs or charges were cited by 24% of respondents; 11% said the lack of flexibility around opening and closing times of provision; and 11% said that parents/carers, family or friends were able to provide childcare. Parental satisfaction with the quality of provision remains high across both the 2019 and 2020 surveys.

Finally, when asked to anticipate whether childcare arrangements may change in the Spring 2021 term, 44% of respondents said their current arrangements would not change; 21% said they would be accessing more childcare in Spring 2021 than in Autumn 2020. Only 3% said they currently access childcare but would not be accessing childcare in Spring 2021 and 4% said they will be accessing less childcare in Spring 2021. This is of course intent and is dependent upon developments regarding the pandemic.

Even during this difficult period, there continues to be general parental satisfaction with childcare in the borough and parental feedback continues to be that childcare is of a good quality. Parents have indicated that there are some potential areas of dissatisfaction: the cost and flexibility of childcare; and access to childcare for school aged children and young people with disabilities. The uncertainties created by the pandemic have made childcare demand more difficult to predict. Consequently, more targeted research is needed to establish, from spring onwards, what requirements are not being met from the market for children with disabilities and for parents requiring flexibility such as shift workers.

Previous employer surveys have investigated the use of family friendly employment practices and explored the extent to which childcare supply meets the needs of businesses, and have reported that the number of businesses frequently experiencing problems due to childcare issues is relatively low; however, many found childcare was an occasional problem. Anecdotal evidence from the Childcare Sufficiency Task Group is that some businesses have recognised this and have introduced working patterns that fit in with school hours to encourage more women in particular to apply for roles and to open up recruitment to those who are unable to work full-time hours due to a lack of available childcare.

Provider feedback

As well as experiencing a reduction in the number of early years entitlements children since March 2020, some settings have experienced a reduction in the occupancy of baby places, non-Local Authority funded places for 2-year-olds and wrap-around and holiday care for school age children, leading to a loss of parent paid income.

A survey of providers was undertaken in October. Providers were asked whether they expect their income from parent paid places to be lower in the Autumn 2020 term than in the Autumn 2019 term. 4 respondents said that their Autumn 2020 parent paid income was higher than their Autumn 2019 parent paid income. However, 17 respondents said that they expected their parent paid income to be lower than in

Autumn 2019. These 17 respondents were then asked to estimate the size of this parent paid reduction in income in comparison to Autumn 2019 levels of funding. The size of the reduction in income ranged from 10% to 60% in the private sector and from 20% to 64% in the voluntary sector. When asked which type of places would be most affected by a loss of income, by far the most common responses were 2-year-old places; wrap-around childcare for 3- and 4- year-olds and older children, in some cases up to age 11, and holiday places.

All respondents stated that they estimated they would still be operating by July 2021. However, issues of market sustainability were raised.

Finally, providers were asked to estimate, before March 2020, what proportion of their total income was from parent paid places. In the private sector this ranged from 31% to 70% and in the voluntary sector the range was from 10% to 54%.

Childminders were also sent the business health survey. 7 childminders returned the survey. All of the respondents said that the pandemic had negatively affected their business, particularly in the 0 to 2 years age range and regarding wraparound care. Some of the childminders that responded were unsure whether they will still be operating by July 2021.

Additional information

Table 4 shows that in recent years the number of birth registrations in Darlington has declined. This may have market implications for providers.

Table 4 - The number of births registered in Darlington

Year of Birth (Sep-Aug)	Number of Births
2009/10	1,359
2010/11	1,324
2011/12	1,336
2012/13	1,284
2013/14	1,220
2014/15	1,231
2015/16	1,187
2016/17	1,107
2017/18	1,138
2018/19	1,048

Source: Office for National Statistics Birth Registrations

Conclusion

The pandemic has impacted on the financial stability of some settings. Our consultation with parents demonstrates the need for local childcare to be affordable and flexible, to be available to meet existing or new working patterns and where required, the need for accessible, affordable, inclusive holiday childcare. The Local

Authority is engaging with providers to ensure sufficiency of places over the coming months and to assist with sustainability.

The Local Authority intends to undertake further monitoring and evaluation of the market position.

Please see Appendix A for the 2020-21 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan.

Please see Appendix B for the 2020 Childcare Parental Survey results.

Appendix A

Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan, 2021

	Gap identified	Objectives	Actions	Responsibility and Timeframe	Outcome
1)	From late March 2020, a need to collect frequent childcare occupancy data, particularly with regard to vulnerable children and key worker's children.	To ensure frequent, accurate attendance data is available.	Draft a survey which meets the LA's data requirements and uses as little childcare provider resource as possible.	Families' Information Service/ Education Partnerships Team. March – July 2020 on a daily basis August onwards – on a weekly basis.	Monitoring of unmet demand. Monitoring attendance of vulnerable children. Ability to complete weekly DfE occupancy returns and termly DfE funded 2 year olds return. Ability to apply for DfE support to increase the take-up of funded 2 year old places.
2)	From late March 2020, a need to collect frequent childcare supply data, particularly with regard to vulnerable children and key worker's children.	To ensure frequent, accurate supply data is available.	Draft a survey which meets the LA's data requirements and uses as little childcare provider resource as possible.	Families' Information Service/ Education Partnerships Team. March – July 2020 on a daily basis August onwards – on a weekly basis.	Monitoring of unmet demand. Ability to utilise DSG more effectively. Ability to complete weekly DfE returns.
3)	Need for urgent support for the market following 'lockdown'.	To ensure providers/schools had access to the most up-to-date DfE/Public Health guidance.	Movement of the private and voluntary sectors' termly briefing to virtual meetings. Movement of the childminders' termly	Education Partnerships Team/Public Health/Finance. From March 2020 onwards.	A more knowledgeable and confident market. More providers staying open – Darlington has had very few private and voluntary sector permanent closures.

		<p>To ensure that the market had access to DfE/LA funding policy. To provide a support network and opportunities for providers open and closed, to learn from each other and to access regional/national feedback.</p>	<p>briefing to virtual meetings. Establishment of an Early Years strategy meeting with sector representatives who informed LA policy. Access to timely public health information which may include drop in sessions. To provide virtual support to experienced settings to enable them to continue to deliver intervention programmes with parents. To plan innovative ways of using intervention programmes to support settings to work with families.</p>		<p>Sufficiency and choice and diversity for parents/carers.</p>
4)	<p>Need to have more accurate and up-to-date data relating to unmet demand, particularly re. children and young people with SEND.</p>	<p>Tighten unmet demand processes.</p>	<p>Agreement with FIS on procedures to ensure providers signpost unmet demand and parents are fully supported</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers/Families' Information Service Process agreed by September 2020 then on-going.</p>	<p>All reported unmet demand investigated, and families supported.</p>

			to access childcare (brokerage service). Ensure that providers who are unable to meet a childcare enquiry, sign-post parents back to the FIS.		
5)	Need to carry out further research regarding unmet demand for children and young people with disabilities.	To find out whether there is hidden demand. To advertise the availability of inclusive childcare to specific groups of parents using various media	Contact Darlington's Parent/Carer Forum – establish which method would be best to gather information and answer childcare queries eg survey, virtual drop in session, etc. Work in partnership with SENDIASS, Children's Centres, JobCentre Plus, Darlington Carers, Social Care Teams, CAMHS and any other interested stakeholders to promote inclusive childcare Ensure providers have access to training via the	Early Years Projects Officer/Childcare Development Officers/Families' Information Service September 2020 onwards.	Less hidden childcare demand for children and young people with disabilities – 2021 parental survey

			<p>SENCO Network and the Accessibility Toolkit</p> <p>Utilise social media channels, eg, share the early years entitlements webinar link.</p> <p>Review up-dates to the Local Offer webpages.</p>		
6)	<p>Need to carry out further research regarding the flexibility of childcare and whether this meets the needs of parents in a changing employment market.</p>	<p>To assist the sector to meet post-pandemic parental childcare demand</p>	<p>Use existing channels, eg, DBC Business e-newsletter, to find out whether childcare is an issue for employers when recruiting and retaining staff and to find out whether employment patterns are changing.</p> <p>Ask providers regularly whether the nature of childcare demand is changing.</p>	<p>Early Years Projects Officer/Childcare Development Officers- January 2021 onwards.</p>	<p>Less unmet childcare demand – 2021 parental survey</p>
7)	<p>Ensuring access to appropriate business support</p>	<p>To ensure the market has access to business</p>	<p>Ensure the sector has access to the DfE/Hempsalls</p>	<p>Early Years Projects Officer/Childcare Development Officers-</p>	<p>Improving providers access to business support</p>

		support to aid sustainability	<p>Business Toolkit training</p> <p>Ensure the sector has access to business advice via DBC audits</p> <p>Identify and promote other opportunities to aid sustainability, eg, access to grants and opportunities to commission childcare services</p> <p>Ensure the sector has the opportunity to network and share good practice</p> <p>Providing up-to-date information re. government funding</p>	January 2021 onwards	
8)	Need to monitor sufficiency on a rolling basis and utilise expertise of other LA teams/departments and interested stakeholders.	To establish a Childcare Sufficiency task group which meets regularly to monitor sufficiency from Autumn 2020 and tackles arising issues.	Contact appropriate representatives, explain the objectives and set up the group.	Early Years Projects Officer/ Childcare Development Officers. From early August 2020 and on-going.	From August 2020, the group has met regularly and includes representatives from Children's Centres, Darlington Association on Disability, Jobcentre Plus, SENDIASS, Learning and Skills, Economic Regeneration, the Families' Information

		Ensure this group feeds in to the EY Education Strategy group which meets half termly.			Service and the Education Partnerships Team.
9)	Need to monitor wrap-around and holiday provision supply and demand.	To ensure accurate holiday attendance is available.	Draft a mini survey which meets the LA's data requirements and uses as little childcare provider resource as possible.	Early Years Projects Officer/ Childcare Development Officers/ Families' Information Service. Survey is ready for issue from October 2020 half term onwards.	Monitoring of unmet demand. Ability to complete weekly DfE occupancy returns. Ability to apply for DfE business support for providers.
10)	Gather feedback from parents re. existing and future childcare requirements.	To ensure the LA and the childcare market is aware of how demand has/is changing post March 2020.	Draft a parental childcare survey and disseminate the link as widely as possible, via the task group links and social media sites. Run the survey from early September to mid October 2020.	Early Years Projects Officer. Survey ran from early September to mid October 2020. Run survey again in Autumn 2021.	Information from parents about their recent experiences of the childcare market and their intentions re. childcare use in Spring and Summer 2021 which can be fed back to the childcare market. A return rate of 643 was achieved.
11)	Need to ensure that other LA teams and organisations who work with families are fully aware and up-dated re.	To share more widely and in differing formats, the funding information available on the	To produce a funding webinar and disseminate this to appropriate stakeholders.	Early Years Projects Officer/Childcare Development Officers. November 2020 onwards.	Other LA teams, partner organisations and parents/carers are able to access information about early years funding via a route which suits them.

	the early years entitlements.	DBC website, for example, to update social care staff and health visitors.	To produce a less formal funding webinar/chat for parents and disseminate this via appropriate social media channels. Up-date Childcare leaflets/posters Market childcare via various social media methods		
12)	Need to support the childcare sector to effectively market their services.	To enable providers to target their marketing, utilising numerous media forms.	The production of a marketing plan to support providers and parents with childcare. Feeding in advice from the DBC Communications Team, including infographics, good news stories, access to social media sites and the webinar link and up-dating the adverts in 'One Darlington'. A specific focus for 2 year old funded places and children	Childcare Development Officers. Plan sign off by the end of November 2020. Implementation starting in December 2020.	Parents/carers will be better informed and have more choice. Increased sustainability for the sector.

			and young people with disabilities. Advertise the 'Changing Lives through Childcare' session to front facing professionals.		
13)	Up-to-date data relating to the sustainability of the childcare sector.	To gather data to enable a sustainability baseline to be established.	Draft a simple business health check survey for the private and voluntary sector providers and childminders. The provider audits which take place generate discussions re. business health.	Early Years Projects Officer/Childcare Development Officers. Surveys to be disseminated and return data analysed by end of October 2020. Audits – CDOs - on-going.	Intelligence which will enable appropriate business advice to be targeted at the different types of provision within the childcare market. Up-to-date data to enable the LA to apply for support via the DfE's childcare business advice commission. A more sustainable childcare market and continuity of care for children and families.