

# Sheffield City Council Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020/21

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Annual Report to Elected Members including Covid 19 and its impact on the Early Years Childcare Sector in Sheffield.



## Forward by Cllr Dunn

The Great Start in Life Strategy for Sheffield is part of a big ambition – that every child, young person and family in Sheffield achieves their full potential – and we know, from research, that a great start in life for all is one of the key ways to success. There is also overwhelming evidence that access to good quality childcare improves a child’s development and helps them to be ready for when they start school. Childcare providers across Sheffield provide a vital service not only to assist parents and carers to continue to work but also in the early development of our children and contributing to our Great Start in Life Strategy.

I know these last 18 months have been a torrid time for childcare providers in all sectors but the way you have all responded to the challenges which have come your way has been amazing. We are seeing a slow return to more normal times, but some things will have changed for good including how some families access and use childcare.

This report gives a snapshot of the childcare sector in April 2021. It will be some time before we can measure the full impact of covid on the childcare sector, but we will continue to try to support you moving forward. You may face further challenges, but I want you to know that you can contact me directly if you wish to discuss these.

## Executive Summary

### Overview

This sufficiency assessment covers the year from spring 2020 to spring 2021. Childcare in Sheffield is provided by a range of providers for children aged 0-14yrs (up to 18 years for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and includes Private Voluntary and Independent nurseries, Schools, Preschools, Playgroups, Childminders and Out of School and Holiday Clubs. These offer a range of wrap around childcare from early morning into the evening throughout the year offering the flexibility needed to meet the needs of working families across all ages.

### Identification of main issue/s

Early Years preschool childcare providers have struggled in recent years as the birth rate has shown a steady decline from the peak in 2012 which has resulted in some providers struggling to achieve sustainable occupancy levels. A few providers had already decided to reduce their operating hours or capacity in response to this fall in demand. The Office for National Statistics forecast only shows slight increases in the birth rate from the current year to the end of the decade. *(The latest Office for National Statistics forecasts did not factor in the impact of the current pandemic and resulting changes to the economic climate so may be less reliable).*

The year 2020 has been an unprecedented time in Sheffield and nationally with Covid 19 having an impact on everyone's life across all ages. The impact of Covid on the supply and demand for childcare saw levels fluctuate as circumstances have changed through the year. Take up of childcare went from 12,000 children in Funded Early Education and Childcare down to less than 400 in the late spring of 2020 when the first national lock down was imposed and then surging back to close to normal levels as the summer progressed until falling back again in the autumn term. With the early years sector expected to operate as normal during spring 2021 there has been little evidence of unmet demand for childcare at present. There have been no enquiries to the childcare brokerage scheme since the end of 2020.

### Analysis of the issue

The impact of lockdowns on the finances of the childcare sector were recognised by both national and local government and measures were put in place to support the sector. Guaranteed funding levels for Funded Early Learning providers were introduced which provided a basic safety net for financial survival but was not sufficient to compensate for the loss of fees and charges particularly from paid for childcare which virtually disappeared at the end of the spring term 2020. As the latest lockdown ends and funding returns to levels based on participation many providers remain uncertain about their future.

Demand could also be affected by the impact of covid on the economy. Changes in working practices such as working from home continuing to reduce demand for paid for childcare with many Out of School Clubs and Holiday Clubs suspending operation until summer 2021 due to the low level of demand.

Another factor affecting demand has been parental concerns about the safety of their children with many delaying access to childcare particularly for their younger children. With partners and siblings at home for long periods of 2020, the use of professional paid for childcare has declined considerably. This has added to the financial sustainability concerns of childcare providers.

Through the last year the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector responded well and shown tremendous resilience to continue to provide a high quality service in Sheffield albeit with the amount of challenges that they have faced with the roll out of vaccinations, lateral testing and Personal Protective Equipment supplies to the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector with

the risk of infection and need to isolate staff has been a continuous battle.

Provider returns in autumn 2020 and spring 2021 indicate that many providers of childcare had vacancies with only a very few unable to meet the requirements of local families which were mostly due to small local outbreaks of covid 19 which required short term partial closures of settings.

### **Solutions/measures to support the sector**

A raft of financial support measures were introduced both locally and nationally to ensure that the childcare providers would survive this unprecedented fall in income. These have been successful in avoiding large scale closures to date. Anecdotal evidence from providers indicates that most have now used all their financial reserves and although they have benefitted from payment holidays for rent, taxes, and loans etc unless they see a return to normal operating during the summer of 2021 many of them will struggle financially which may impact on furloughed childcare staff finding their jobs at risk if demand does not recover.

Funded Early Learning funding will remain the primary income for most early years childcare providers so maximising take up will be an essential part of supporting the sector. 2year old Funded Early Learning take up declined from a high of 78% in 2019 to 58% during the summer of 2020 but has since recovered to 64% by the autumn term of 2020. For 3&4yr olds, demand remained relatively high throughout the year dropping only 2 to 3% below normal levels. The Local Authority intends to continue to take measures to stimulate demand where practicable.

### **Conclusion**

The diversity, flexibility and resilience of the childcare sector in Sheffield has been severely tested by covid but they have continued to operate during this period of uncertainty. It is hoped that these same qualities will help to sustain them over the medium to longer term as the market moves into the '*new normal*' mode. It is unknown at this stage whether the impact of COVID will mean a long-term decline, stagnation or rise in demand for childcare as this is not possible to predict. However, childcare providers have demonstrated that they have, up to this point, been able to meet the demand for childcare in Sheffield.

Out of school and holiday clubs are expected to resume as staff return from furlough and with schools fully reopened to support demand returning as the economy starts to open up once again.

Our judgement is that there was in 2020 and currently is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of all ages in Sheffield.

## Introduction

Local Authorities are required to report annually to Elected Members on how they are meeting their duties under the Childcare Act 2016 to:

- secure sufficient childcare so far as is reasonably practical for working parents or parents who wish to study or train for employment for children aged 0-14 years (or up to 18 years for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)
- Secure sufficient funded early learning places for eligible 2-, 3- and 4-year-old funded early education entitlement

To do this the Local Authority should take into account:

- The state of the local childcare market
- Levels of supply and demand for different types of childcare
- The state of the labour market
- Quality and capacity of childcare providers

This report will provide an analysis of the impact that Covid 19 has had over the last year on the Early Years Childcare market in Sheffield. It will also demonstrate how it has affected both supply and demand for childcare and the issues faced by childcare providers and families using childcare over the last year.

## Sufficiency spring 2019-20

Prior to the Covid 19 outbreak a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment of the market established that there had been little change from the previous year. The continued slight fall in birth rates leading to an oversupply of places in some areas was affecting occupancy levels for some providers and in particular schools which only offered fixed patterns of sessions with working families tending to gravitate to the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector which offered greater flexibility.

4 new nurseries registered for Funded Early Learning during this period but with an equal number being deregistered there was little overall impact on the supply of places.

Take up levels for 2yr Funded Early Learning in spring 2020 were at 71%, an increase from 68.5% in 2019. For 3&4yr Funded Early Learning take up was unchanged at 94% for the same period.

The assessment concluded that the market was providing sufficient, affordable, flexible childcare to meet the needs of families in Sheffield.

## Spring term 2020

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the government imposed a national lockdown to restrict the spread of the Covid 19 virus in England. All but essential key workers were instructed to stay at home and to observe social distancing from others outside of their family group who shared the same dwelling.

**Supply of Funded Early Learning.** Early years settings were asked to continue to provide childcare for under 5's and schools were also required to stay open but only for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Many early years settings across the city decided to close as they felt they could not maintain a safe service for these families and several schools opted into a cluster and hub arrangement to meet the demand for these low numbers of vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

There was a considerable reduction in the availability of childcare and whilst 83% of schools which delivered Funded Early Learning remained partially open either individually or as a cluster arrangement only 16% of Private, Voluntary and Independent nurseries and 11% of childminders

continued to operate.

An Emergency Childcare Brokerage for all ages was set up to assist key workers and vulnerable children to find alternative placements during the lockdown whilst their current provision had closed. All families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities were offered individual support to find alternative placements. As a result, all children wishing to access a place were able to do so.

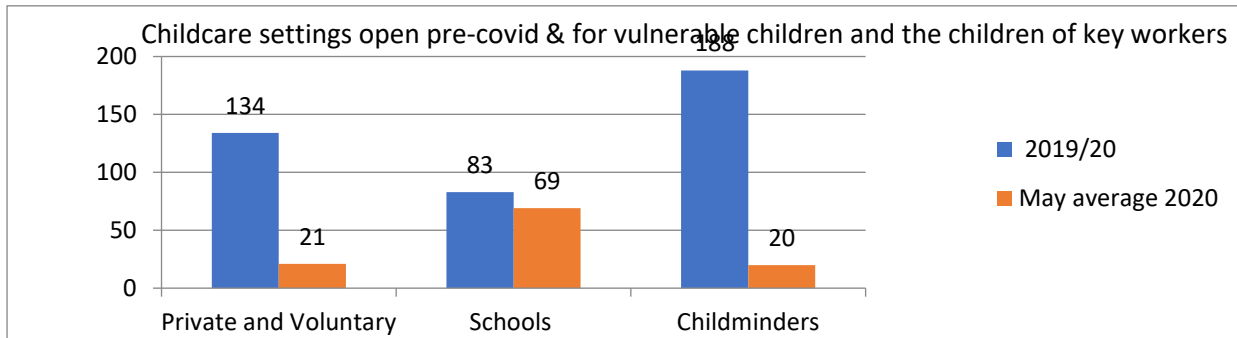
**Demand for Funded Early Learning.** Demand for Funded Early Learning provision reduced from approximately 12,617 children at the start of the spring term to less than 300 within days of the lockdown being announced as families kept vulnerable children at home and many children of key workers were also provided for at home. The demand for wrap around care reduced considerably with only key workers requiring this type of provision.

**Issues.** With the lockdown commencing so close to the end of the spring term any lasting impact would not be measurable until later.

## Summer term 2020

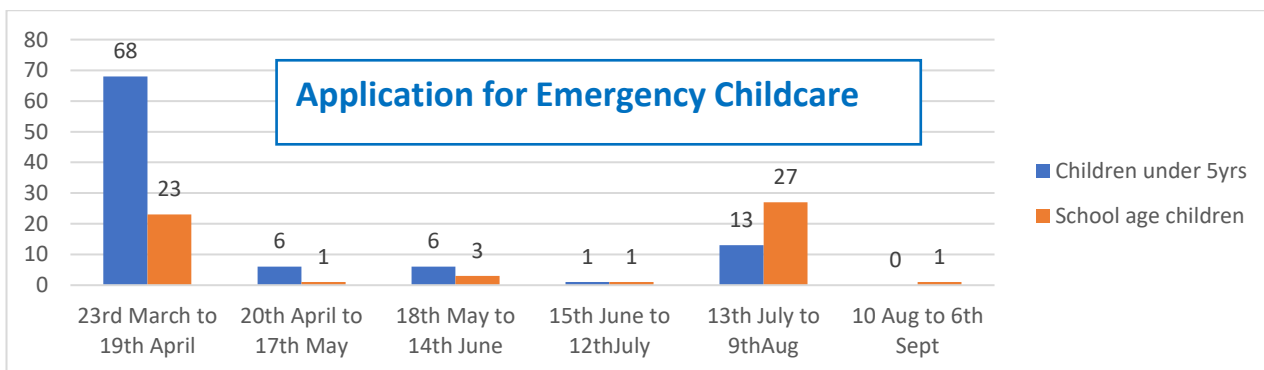
1<sup>st</sup> April – 14<sup>th</sup> June

**Supply of Funded Early Learning.** The term began in lockdown and data collected from the Department for Education returns indicated that on average during May, 69 schools, 21 Private, Voluntary and Independent nurseries and 20 Childminders remained open for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, and this was sufficient to meet the needs for Early Years care across the city.



During this term the emergency childcare brokerage continued to support key workers and the families of vulnerable children to find suitable childcare when requested but after an initial period demand was reduced to very small numbers from mid-April onwards.

Demand picked up again in July with the approach of the summer holidays but fell back again after early August. Whilst the early demand was in the majority from Early Years families this was reversed in the build up to the summer holidays where the majority were school age children.



**Demand for Funded Early Learning.** With most families isolating at home demand for Funded Early Learning and reception places for all ages reduced from approximately 14,000 children in the summer 2019 term to approximately 350 on average in May 2020 (Department for Education returns).

Department for Education returns on May 18th showed that 364 vulnerable children and the children of key workers under 5 years in total were attending childcare provision. Approximately 63 were attending schools and 301 were attending Private, Voluntary and Independent nurseries and childminders.

**Issues.** One of the main concerns of Early Years childcare providers was the loss of funding and income from fees and charges however, the government’s decision to fund Funded Early Learning at guaranteed levels together with other financial support such as the Coronavirus Job Retention

Scheme and various rent, loans and payment deferrals provided short term financial support to the sector.

Following restrictions being lifted from 15<sup>th</sup> June the Local Authority asked providers to identify the major barriers to reopening. Providers identified as major obstacles:

- the need for social distancing
- the reluctance of parents to access provision
- the lack of operational guidance

**15<sup>th</sup> June – 31<sup>st</sup> August.**

**Supply of Funded Early Learning.** By the end of July most childcare providers had reopened ,albeit many of them were operating at reduced capacity due to Covid 19 restrictions.

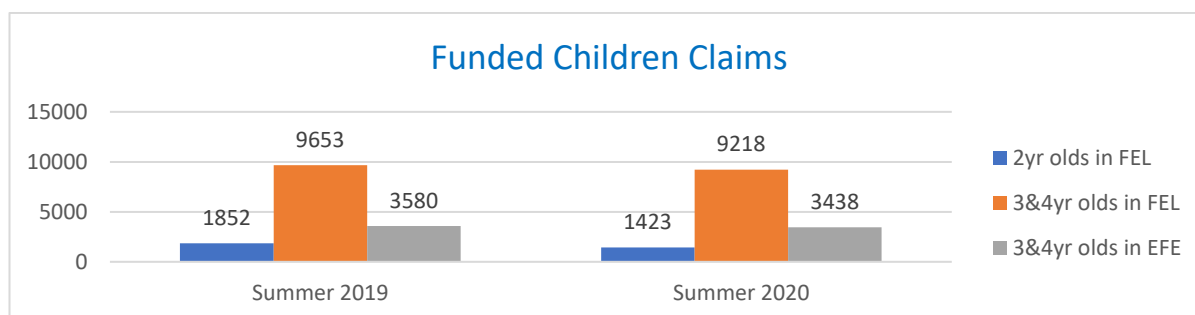
The lack of 2-year-old Funded Early Learning applications was particularly affected leading into the summer term as the Department for Work and Pensions had suspended the issuing of the lists of eligible families to Local Authorities. This meant the Local Authority was unable to prompt eligible families to take up their entitlement by sending a letter reminding them that their child may be eligible to take up a place. The number of 2-year-old Funded Early Learning applications reduced significantly during April and May 2020.

Month	Year		
	2018	2019	2020
January	455	409	472
February	232	268	261
March	309	352	145
April	164	212	37
May	163	142	33
June	532	633	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1855</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>948</b>

Source: PAS Team – completed applications made on the Citizen Portal (May 2020)

**Demand for Funded Early Learning.** This reduction in applications contributed to a considerable reduction in take up down to 56% in the summer term which was a 12% variance from 2019.

Claims for 3- & 4-year-old Funded Early Learning for the term were also reduced from 92% in 2019 to 88% in summer 2020. In contrast, claims for Extended Funded Entitlement (30hrs) were largely unchanged.



**Issues.** The Early Years childcare market proved extremely resilient through the latter half of the summer term with the number of providers operating close to pre covid levels and it was expected that all providers would be open for the start of the autumn term.



Several factors contributed to providers being under considerable financial pressures going forward. These included:

- The safety net of Funded Early Learning funding at 2019 levels was due to finish in the autumn term with an expected return to business as usual for Funded Early Learning funding in September
- Children taking up their places was a cause of concern for many Private, Voluntary and Independent and childminders as they had had only a short period of time to enrol new children for autumn before the term ended
- The loss of income from children transitioning into school as well as the fall in paid for childcare and fees and charges from parents not requiring childcare because they are working from home or furloughed also contributed to some provision being more vulnerable financially going forward

Feedback from providers suggested that in addition to financial concerns the lack of Personal Protective Equipment and support had been a considerable obstacle to the market being able to function at maximum capacity.

## Autumn term 2020

Despite strong messages of encouragement from the Government, concerns about the national situation regarding Covid 19 caused some uncertainty among families and although the majority of families were stating they would return immediately there were still considerable numbers who were uncertain about whether they would return to Early Years settings in the autumn term.

The reopening of the leisure and hospitality sectors of the economy during August with low paid workers returning to work contributed to increased demand for funded places although initially this was muted by the continuing Covid 19 regulations impacting on the numbers returning.

As the term progressed further concerns about the situation which had resulted in lockdowns being re-introduced in parts of the country added to the confused messages families were receiving about safety with some settings reporting that children they had enrolled were not attending.

**Supply of Funded Early Learning.** Whilst the number of providers was largely back to pre Covid 19 levels the number of available Early Years places was initially reduced. There were several reasons for this including:

1. Delayed transition into reception classes reducing the available Early Years places.
2. Nurseries still operating reduced capacity under social mixing restrictions. Particularly where buildings are not suited to smaller groups such as church halls.
3. Late enrolments meaning that nurseries were not staffed up to meet the demand.
4. Staff shortages.
5. Loss of informal extended family care.

**Demand for Funded Early Learning.** Two specific factors contributed to an initial surge in demand for Private, Voluntary and Independent places at the start of the term which in turn caused some localised short-term sufficiency issues.

Families who had deferred accessing a place in the summer term until September because parents had opted to “wait and see” before accessing an early years place added to the usual increased demand in the initial few weeks of the autumn term. The situation was further compounded by schools opting for staggered starts to the autumn term which resulted in some 4

yr. olds remaining in nurseries until a school place became available.

Whilst the take up for 3&4 yrs. olds was down slightly, the number of 2 yr. Funded Early Learning children taking up a place was a concern. The introduction of the Golden Ticket scheme which removed the need to make an online application, in December contributed to some recovery which by the end of the autumn was at 64%, although, this was still considerably reduced compared to 79% in 2019.

**Issues.** Autumn 2020 originally started as the period when the market would build on the first steps to recovery taken in the second half of the summer term. Unfortunately, the term ended with Sheffield in Tier 4 with restrictions close to those of the first lockdown which further added to families and providers concerns with hospitality and leisure sectors once again closed

As the term ended there was little evidence of unmet demand with very few applications from parents for assistance in finding places all of which were resolved

## Spring 2021

### 1<sup>st</sup> January – 23<sup>rd</sup> March

On 4<sup>th</sup> January a third lockdown was implemented with all non-essential businesses closed. Schools were once again closed to all but vulnerable children and the children of key workers, but Early Years settings were instructed to remain open as usual.

### Supply of Funded Early Learning

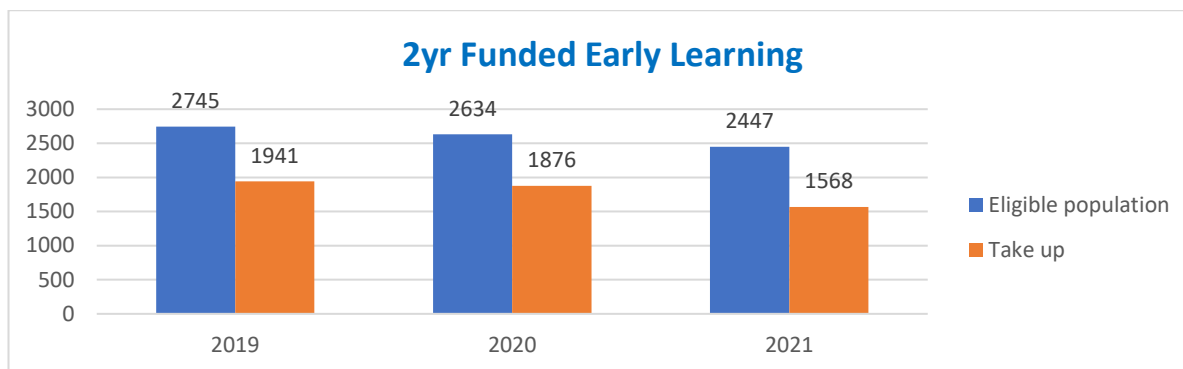
The January Census recorded 421 active Funded Early Learning registered childcare providers in Sheffield with 85 of these school based, 135 Private, Voluntary and Independent settings and 201 childminders. Some of these schools will have been operating a policy of only admitting vulnerable children and the children of key workers.



### Demand for Funded Early Learning

Take up for 3 & 4yr Funded Early Learning is slightly reduced at 92%, compared to 94% in spring 2020.

The government have indicated that they are concerned about the impact on take up of 2yr Funded Early Learning nationally and this is reflected in Sheffield's returns which indicate that take up had fallen to 58% in summer 2020 although it was 64% by the end of the autumn term and this level was maintained into spring 2021 it is still below the local target of 70%. The actual numbers of children taking up a 2yr old Funded Early Learning place for the last 3 spring terms are shown below and the fall in numbers in Funded Early Learning in previous years was broadly in line with the fall in eligible population however in spring 2021 the fall in take up was considerably greater than the fall in eligible population.



NB 2021 figures are provisional as at 18<sup>th</sup> March.

## Issues

**Whole school policies.** Whilst the majority of Private, Voluntary and Independent providers and childminders continued to offer a full service as usual, there were issues for some of those run directly by schools or operating out of school premises or from school grounds. Many schools introduced restrictions to maintain covid safe environments which resulted in some families not being able to access their usual school-based provision at times. These families were supported to find alternative placements.

**Short term closure.** Where short term closures occurred, providers have worked in partnership to ensure that working parents who relied on Funded Early Learning could continue to access their provision at an alternative setting on a temporary basis.

**Lateral Flow Testing.** Early Years providers reported they should have been prioritised for Lateral Flow Testing kits to allow early identification of staff with positive tests within their settings which they felt could have helped reduced the number of closures due to covid. This is now being addressed with the roll out to this sector during the second half of March.

**Vaccinations.** Early Years providers also thought they should have been prioritised for early vaccinations but understand the need for the most vulnerable to be treated first.

**Funding.** Levels of funding continues to feature as an ongoing concern for childcare providers.

**Out of School Clubs.** Out of School Clubs which provide a vital part of wrap around and holiday care for school age children from working families have faced a significant challenge financially due to children not attending school. Whilst they have had access to the Corona Job Retention Scheme and opportunities to take a rent holiday, the Local Authority has, in addition, allocated a small amount of funding to support those identified who operate independently of schools or school premises.

## Sufficiency and next steps

The funded early education and childcare provision in Sheffield is delivered by a diverse group of settings varying from childminders delivering for a single child in their own home to private (for profit) and voluntary (not for profit) nurseries, some with over 100 children as well as by independent schools collectively known as Private, Voluntary and Independent settings. In addition, there are nursery schools and primary schools with nurseries and reception classes.

Childcare providers have been creative and innovative in how they have addressed the challenges facing them to maintain a service with minimum disruption to families. They have continued to operate flexibly to be able to meet the challenges set by Covid and to meet the changing demands for childcare across Sheffield over the last year. As a result, the children of

Sheffield have been able, with few exceptions to access their Funded Early Learning entitlement where covid restrictions have allowed. This will have had a positive impact on enabling parents to continue to work and support them where their children are vulnerable and where they have relied on services to support them.

During the past year Early Years providers have responded positively to adversity and time and again have demonstrated their commitment to the children of Sheffield.

## **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment**

The constantly changing situation has meant that the Local Authority has not been able to undertake a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2020 however, with the exception of a very small number of individual cases across the whole of the city, throughout 2020/21 families who required access to a childcare place have been able to access one.

## **Holiday care**

Out of School care has been impacted by schools introducing restrictions to maintain safe practices which has greatly reduced demand for this type of provision and many of these have temporarily closed for the duration of the spring 2021 lockdown but those contacted by the Local Authority have stated an intention to re-open post lockdown.

## **The economy**

Regular surveys of employers are carried out across the region throughout the year to attempt to gauge what local industries think the economy will do in the months ahead and how this might affect employment which in turn could impact on demand for childcare.

## **Sheffield City Region Quarterly Economic Review Quarter 3 Results**

The Quarter 3 survey fieldwork ran from 24th August to 14th September 2020 and attracted a record 409 responses. At a macro level, given everything that has taken place over the last 6 months, the economy across the Sheffield City Region has held up well. UK market activity recovered from historic lows to almost reach positive territory again as a net score, with export markets not too far behind. In terms of staffing levels, unfortunately the figures showed large numbers of businesses reducing their workforce size over the past three months, but we also saw four-in-ten employers looking to recruit to new roles and a further one-in-four expecting overall increases in the workforce in the coming quarter, with only 11% expecting further decreases. Given everything the region has been through and the uncertainty that still exists, these results should give heart.

## **Conclusion**

During 2020 there was little if any evidence of unmet demand for childcare which would seem to indicate that where there was demand the sector was able to react and provide the necessary places.

Supply and demand for all childcare has fluctuated over the year as lockdowns came and went with no prolonged settled period available to measure the lasting impact of Covid 19 to date.

The government is being cautious as it rolls back the lockdown with schools and colleges already opened. Sometime after 12<sup>th</sup> April it is intended that the retail sector will reopen, and the catering and leisure industry will begin to open again with a return to normal opening expected in midsummer.

There is no doubt that the financial support provided through the various local and national government schemes has helped to support the sector over the last year with the guaranteed

Funded Early Learning funding levels providing some stability for most providers.

As these support mechanisms are removed, particularly the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which has paid up to 80% of salaries for furloughed staff, there could be an impact on both supply of and demand for childcare.

The gradual relaxation of restrictions should see a gradual increase in demand for non-funded childcare but the continued practice of working from home and other changes in working practices such as reduced hours or redundancies may cancel out any short-term increase and may have a negative effect on demand for paid for childcare going forward.

Looking forward is always a risk but as we emerge from this latest lockdown we can once again expect the sector to respond positively. As was shown after the first lockdown there is a demand from people to “get back to normal” which includes accessing Early Years and particularly Funded Early Learning funded places and this in turn should support the sectors recovery.

An area which the Local Authority will continue to monitor closely will be the number of 2yr olds accessing their Funded Early Learning entitlement and is to continue using the Golden Ticket scheme throughout 2021.

The full financial impact of the pandemic on the Early Years sector has yet to be fully understood but it will be important going forward that this financial burden suffered by Funded Early Learning providers is not addressed disproportionately by the imposition of increased fees and charges for Funded Early Learning children. Therefore, the Local Authority will continue to monitor the situation throughout 2021 and report any significant changes to the childcare market within the next Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

## APPENDIX

### Risks for 2021 and Actions

There are 3 major risks identified which could impact on the sufficiency of childcare moving forward, which are in many ways interdependent. These are detailed in the following tables:

#### 1. Demand for childcare might stagnate or even fall over the medium to longer term because of the impact of COVID-19

Factors	Mitigation	Outcome
Changes in working practices may lead to less need for professional childcare.	Promote the support available to support the cost of childcare through Childcare Choices.	Higher take up of tax-free childcare and other schemes, providing sustainable income levels to childcare providers.
Parents defer younger children accessing paid for childcare because of perceived risks from Covid 19 and return to using informal care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive messaging on the benefits of good quality childcare and helping children's development</li> <li>• Use the Golden Ticket to remove the barrier of making an application for 2yr Funded Early Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of Funded Early Learning take up at all ages providing a guaranteed level of basic income to providers</li> <li>• High levels of take up provided by the through flow of older children for providers. This will help to maintain their sustainability</li> </ul>
Relatively low levels of take up combined with falling birth rates combine to reduce the guaranteed income for providers.	Positive messaging about the benefits of Funded Early Learning to children.	High levels of take up provide a guaranteed income and contribute to sufficient sustainable childcare.
Falling income could lead to instability for some providers, particularly those less reliant on Funded Early Learning income such as Out of School Clubs.	Carry out a provider audit during the summer term to determine the views of providers. This should include both Funded Early Learning and non-Funded Early Learning provision and include the level of financial planning they have undertaken.	Local Authority is able to identify where the providers are most at risk and may give an early indication of where this could impact on sufficiency.

## 2. The economy fails to recover once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, which in turn could contribute to a fall in demand

Factors	Mitigation	Outcome
The ending of the furlough scheme could see many parents facing reduced working hours or redundancy reducing the need for professional childcare.	Many new opportunities, such as the expansion of the home delivery sector, have created new employment for many during 2020-21 to date.	Sustain demand for professional childcare.
Household incomes fall, which increases the pressure to reduce expenditure on childcare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the support available to support the cost of childcare through Childcare Choices</li> <li>• Continue to monitor the level of Universal Credit claimants, particularly through the Department for Work and Pensions lists for 2yr Funded Early Learning</li> <li>• Ensure that the contribution of good quality Early Years provision is prioritised and recognised for its contribution to the development of children and outcomes later in life, as well as its need to be available to support the any expansion in the economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher take up of tax-free childcare and other scheme, providing sustainable income levels to childcare providers</li> <li>• Sufficient good quality childcare to support families in training or employment remains available for children aged 0-8yrs</li> </ul>

### 3. Instability in the childcare market, leading to an imbalance in supply and demand, which in turn could affect the ability of the Local Authority to fulfil its sufficiency duties

Factors	Mitigation	Outcome
As income falls or stagnates, increased financial pressure on childcare providers could lead to provider full or part closures, reducing the availability of childcare for working parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue 1:1 contact with providers on a regular basis</li> <li>• Continue to monitor occupancy and take up of Funded Early Learning on a termly basis and undertake impact assessments based on the information available</li> </ul>	Provide early warning to the Local Authority of areas where sufficiency of childcare might be a concern.
Increases in Fees and Charges might be used to remain financially viable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor complaints from parents and remind providers of the need to comply with the Code of Practice</li> <li>• Encourage alternative strategies such as new delivery models or partnership working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise the impact of charges on the least affluent families</li> <li>• Retain flexibility in the childcare market</li> </ul>
Displacement of 2yr Funded Early Learning children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to providers the benefits of through flow on sustainability</li> <li>• Ensure that the contribution of good quality Early Years provision is prioritised and recognised for its contribution to the development of children and outcomes later in life, as well as its need to be available to support any expansion in the economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued high levels of take up of 2yr Funded Early Learning</li> <li>• Sufficient good quality childcare to support families in training or employment remains available for children aged 0-18 yrs</li> </ul>