

The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to ensure that there is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents and parents who are in training which will lead to work. The assessment of childcare supply and demand, known as a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is published on a three year cycle and is updated annually.

Staffordshire's first Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was published in March 2008 and can be viewed together with the annual updates at <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/childcarecounts>

Sufficiency assessments are vitally important because they provide the basis for how local authorities direct their effort and work with partners to shape childcare supply so that it meets the needs of working parents. Childcare is part of the infrastructure that working parents depend upon in order to take up or stay in work. It therefore makes a major contribution to the economic prosperity not only of individual families but communities as a whole and also to achieving national priorities such as supporting lone parents to return to work and the eradication of child poverty.

On line information

The background demographic information and much of the childcare supply data that was contained in the 2008 assessment is not included in this document and can be found on the Staffordshire Observatory web site, including more localised data at Community & Learning partnership level, see opposite for more information

Methodology

Parents were consulted with a questionnaire on the county council website and also face to face through events held throughout July and August. Focus groups were held around the county with parents who had expressed an interest on the questionnaire and who had also been recruited through Children's Centres. Finally major employers and childcare providers were interviewed during September by the Early Years Quality Support Officers.

The questionnaires and interviews have been analysed and the key points included in this document.

The following document is split into the 9 benchmarks of sufficient childcare: Places, Flexibility, Accessibility, Quality, Range, Knowledge & Information, Affordability, Inclusivity, and Sustainability.

Staffordshire County Council, while believing the information in this publication to be correct, does not guarantee its accuracy nor does the County Council accept any liability for any direct or indirect loss or damage or other consequences, however arising from the use of such information supplied.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

April 2011

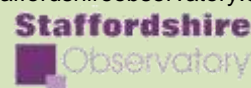
Lichfield District

Methodology Summary

1. Parent & Carer Questionnaire:
Undertaken over the summer, responses from 1902 parents countywide and 196 in this district.
 2. Parent focus groups:
Delivered across the county, 1 in the evening, 1 on a Saturday. 36 parents in 9 sessions.
 3. Childcare provider questionnaire:
Completed face to face with 121 providers.
 4. Employers questionnaire:
41 face to face interviews with employers across the county.
- Plus demographic and local information about the childcare market.

Online Information

Background demographic information and more localised childcare supply data can be accessed on the Staffordshire Observatory website: www.staffordshireobservatory.org.uk



Information relating to:

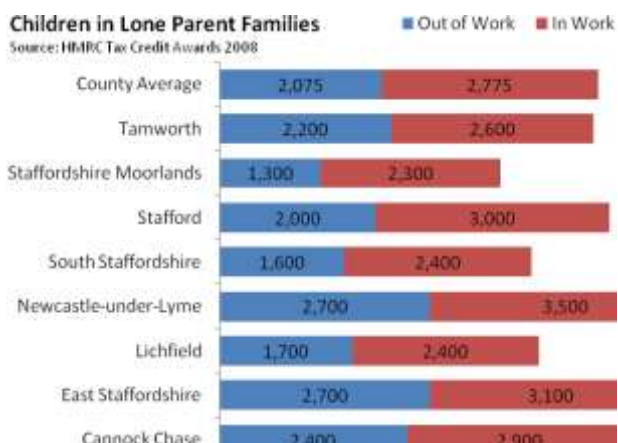
- Demographic data including birth rate
- Household composition
- Child Poverty
- Disability, Child & Working Tax Credits
- Childcare providers & places

If you do require a hard copy, please contact the Family Information Service on 0300 111 8007 or email fis@staffordshire.gov.uk.



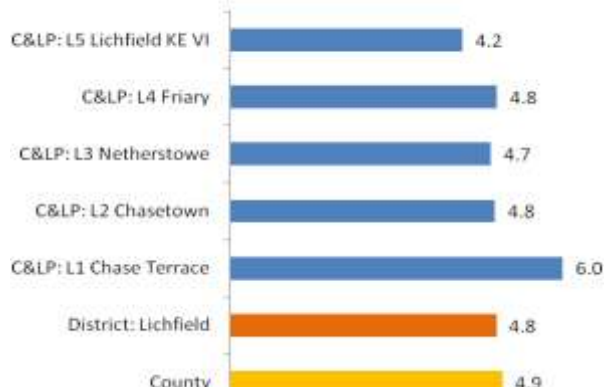
Places

Places is about securing sufficient places determined by population and trends across the county and in each district; that there are sufficient places for one parent families, working families, parents studying or training and to support children in working families up to 14 (17 with a disability)



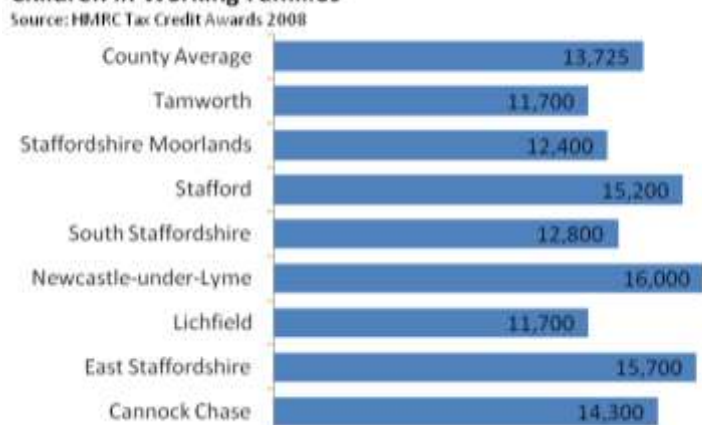
Based on HMRC Tax Credit data (about 80% of families claim tax credits), 41% of lone parent families in Lichfield district are currently out of work. Children from lone parent families represent 28% of all children, the same level as the county average.

Ratio of 0-14 Population to Places



A basic measure of 0-14 population to childcare places shows that the district has a ratio close to the county average, except Chase Terrace where the ratio is 20% higher

Children in Working Families



Children will be aged 0 to 19 for those in full time education/training and resident at home.

Population Trends

The latest population estimates (2009, national statistics) show that there are 14600 children aged 0 to 15 in the district, which is 18.2% of the total population. This proportion is very close to the county average. The overall birth rate has seen a decline of 4% between 2004 and 2008.

The largest declines are in Chase Terrace and Chasetown C&LP areas, both in excess of 15%, but Netherstowe C&LP area shows an increase of 11%.

From the Parent Survey

In Lichfield and the county as a whole over 50% of parents felt that there are enough childcare places to meet their needs. Feedback from the parent focus group reinforced this finding and pre school provision, nurseries and free funded places were considered the most useful countywide. Parents in Lichfield felt that there were insufficient places in certain types of childcare. These gaps will be discussed later in childcare 'range'.

In the Lichfield district 90 (47%) of parents said they used childcare to enable them to work, 58 (30%) said they used it for their child's development and 37 (19%) said they used it for the free funded nursery places.

From analysis of the countywide Parent Focus group's question on what worked well a small percentage of parents felt that their employment had been compromised, restricted or made impossible by the lack of suitable childcare such as:

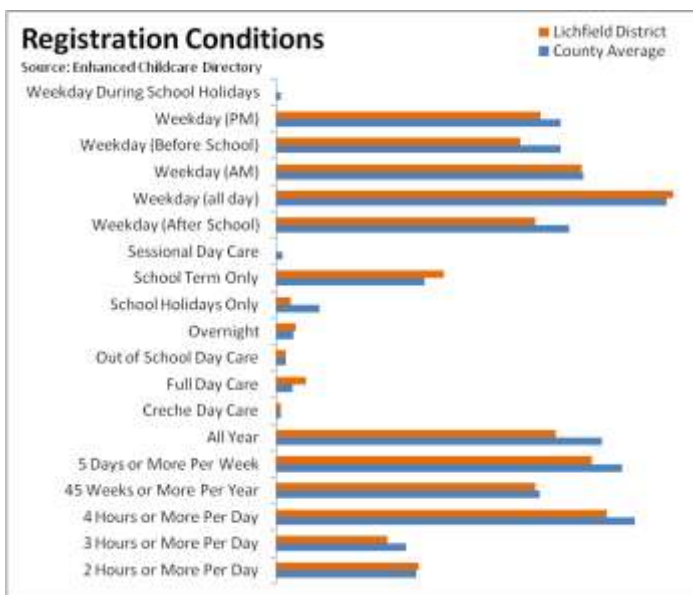
- Having to move from full time to part time employment
- Not being able to study
- Being required to work during school term times only
- Taking a reduction in salary
- Having to work shifts, including night shifts

Key Observations

- There is one area of the district where there may be insufficient places eg Chase Terrace
- Greater proportion of lone parent families in work that other districts
- The birth rate is declining in most areas of the district, with one area of growth
- Most parents use childcare to enable them to work

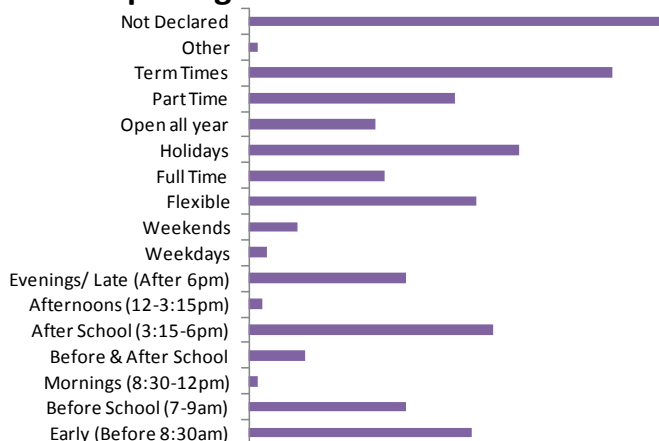
Flexibility

Ensuring places are available at the right times eg early morning, supporting irregular patterns of use throughout the day, be available 48 weeks of the year, between 8am and 6pm and support local working patterns.



Childcare providers opening hours are set out in the Ofsted registration conditions. Registration conditions in Lichfield district are close to the county average and there are no substantial differences.

Broad Opening Times



Childcare providers may choose not to open for the periods stated on their registration conditions. Information sourced by the Family Information Service about the broad opening times highlights that 6% of providers in the district offer early morning, before school provision and about 9% after school care. A very small number of providers (1%) have indicated that they offer weekend care and around 6% of providers are willing to offer evening or late care to support working parents.

School Census

The 2010 annual school census undertaken by the Local Authority revealed that over 90% of schools provided some form of After School childcare and 75% provided before school childcare or activity for school aged children. These figures are 10 and 4 percentage points above the county average for all provision.

Parent Survey

The majority of parents in the Lichfield District and Countywide i.e. 85% stated that the opening hours of childcare are adequate to meet their needs. From analysis of parental survey feedback and rating of opening hours the following themes were raised: change in opening & closure times, more wraparound provision, enhanced flexibility e.g. pick up times, choice of free childcare places, provide holiday provision and childcare to cover working parents shift patterns. These comments were reinforced in responses from the employer survey in answer to the question How do you feel childcare provision could be improved?

Employer Survey

Employers also identified a need for more after school and breakfast clubs, more affordable childcare and more information on childcare options. In order to meet the childcare needs of their employees more effectively the following changes were suggested: more provision for shift workers, holiday care at reasonable costs and no financial restrictions placed on out of hours childcare.

Parent Focus Group (Countywide)

From analysis of the parent focus group feedback flexibility was seen as very important for juggling the demands of work, school, childcare and family life. Many of the focus group parents spoke of the complex arrangements they had in place including different types of childcare, family and friends with grandparents being particularly important. The challenges presented by the school and working day, and the realities of children attending sessions or part time were clearly described: one parent identified that they had to visit the school 3 times per day to access sessional childcare and the problems this caused with finding suitable employment.

Key Observations

- The balance between registration conditions and opening times offered is roughly the same
- Provision at schools is higher than the county average for wraparound care – but this does not indicate availability

Accessibility

Places are available so that parents do not have travel too far out of their way, they are easy to reach without physical constraints such as motorways or railway lines preventing easy access, meet parents preferences for childcare in familiar locations and that parents take up provision within their perceived cultural community.

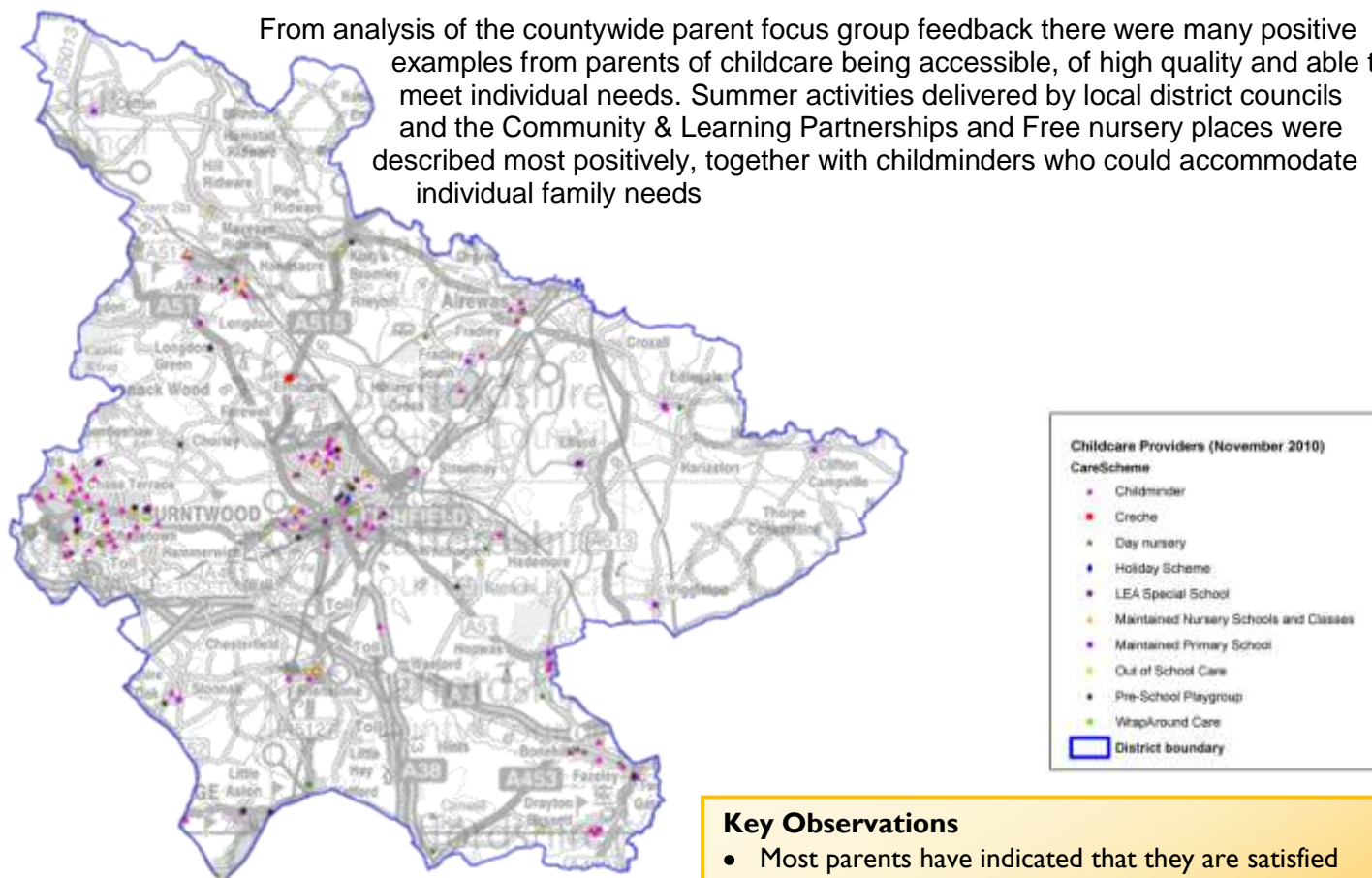
Parents Feedback

From analysis of the Parent Survey from a county perspective a high percentage of parents travelled between 0 and 3 miles to their childcare setting. From correlating the type of childcare used and distance travelled day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, before & after school care and family & friends were cited most frequently for travelling less than a mile. With reference to how easy parents felt it was to get to their childcare provision the following themes were identified countywide: Limited choice in immediate area, need to split care across 2 settings to accommodate siblings, busy roads and traffic congestion, poor car facilities and you need to be a car driver.

From analysis of results from the Lichfield district 56 parents travelled less than a mile to their childcare provision, 42 parents travel between 1 & 3 miles, 32 parents chose not to state how they got to the childcare provision and 17 parents said they travelled between 4 & 8 miles. The majority of parents were satisfied with the accessibility of their childcare provision. Only 9 parents gave a low rating when asked about the ease of getting to their childcare provision and comments include: "Only 20 places available at before & after school club for 450 children at St Josephs", "good nurseries are always full", "have to move out of area to collect from school", "no footpaths in village and no public transport", "unable to cater for my child with special educational needs" and "terrible parking facilities".

Parent Focus Group (Countywide)

From analysis of the countywide parent focus group feedback there were many positive examples from parents of childcare being accessible, of high quality and able to meet individual needs. Summer activities delivered by local district councils and the Community & Learning Partnerships and Free nursery places were described most positively, together with childminders who could accommodate individual family needs



Map of Lichfield District with childcare providers.

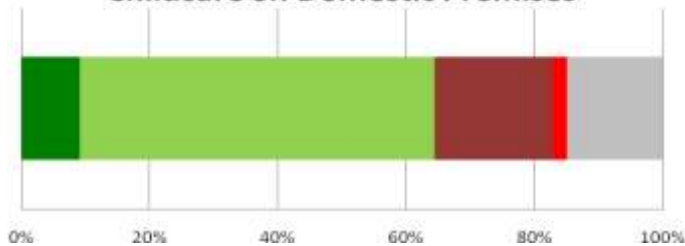
Key Observations

- Most parents have indicated that they are satisfied with the accessibility of childcare
- For parents who cited accessibility as an issue school pickups & poor parking facilities were the main areas of concern

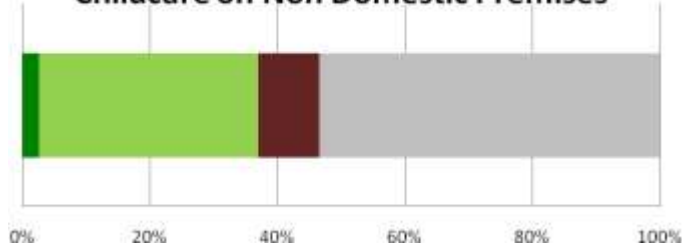
Quality

Places are available with provision that is staffed by well qualified practitioners, a significant proportion achieve good or outstanding Ofsted judgements. Childcare provision is effective in narrowing the gap between those children at risk of the poorest outcome and the rest.

Childcare on Domestic Premises



Childcare on Non Domestic Premises



Since the 2008 assessment the quality of provision as judged by Ofsted Inspection outcomes has increased. Since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008 there has been an increase in Staffordshire and nationally in the proportion of providers judged as Outstanding or Good.

%	2008	2010	National
Outstanding	2	6	10
Good	61	64	58
Satisfactory	35	28	29
Inadequate	2	1	3

Source of national figures: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2009/10

The parent focus groups provided much revealing insights into parents perspectives of quality, a parent commented that they were dissatisfied as they 'didn't do any arts and craft' or that staff were not engaging with the children. It was felt that the increase in quality was predominately due to the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Quality & Access for All funding which enabled settings to improve their outdoor play areas. Children's centres were also described as excellent in providing holistic care for the whole family, although there were still misconceptions on eligibility e.g. considered to be for disadvantaged families only.

A common perception amongst the focus group participants was that childminders provided lower quality care because they were lone workers and this raised concerns about safeguarding. Non-domestic care received criticism in terms of their opening hours and holiday provision received mixed reviews; especially amongst working parents. A key theme was the difficulties faced by families with children of different ages in accessing holiday or after school provision.

Key Observations

- Parents have a different definition of quality to that of the Local Authority and Ofsted and make judgements based on their experiences.
- Parents consider Childminders to offer poor quality provision – 64% of providers in the district are rated as Good or better, but only 2% are inadequate.
- Childminders should consider improving their marketing.
- The overall quality of childcare is improving

%	Domestic		Non-Domestic	
	District	County	District	County
Outstanding	9	4	3	4
Good	55	54	34	32
Satisfactory	18	23	9	14
Inadequate	2	1	0	0
N/A	15	17	53	49

Source: Enhanced Childcare Directory, SCC

A setting will be listed as N/A where they have not yet received an Ofsted inspection.

Quality of childcare provision is often based on a settings Ofsted inspection. Most provision is regulated by Ofsted and providers are inspected on a regular basis. Provision is categorised by Ofsted into Domestic (Childminders, Home Childcarers) and Non-Domestic (Day Nurseries, pre-school play groups).

For childcare on domestic provision, the district is better than the county for the number of providers receiving a Good or better inspection outcome (64%) compared to the county average of 58%

This pattern is similar for provision on non-domestic premises, where Ofsted rates the quality as good or better in 37% of settings, compared to the county average of 36%.

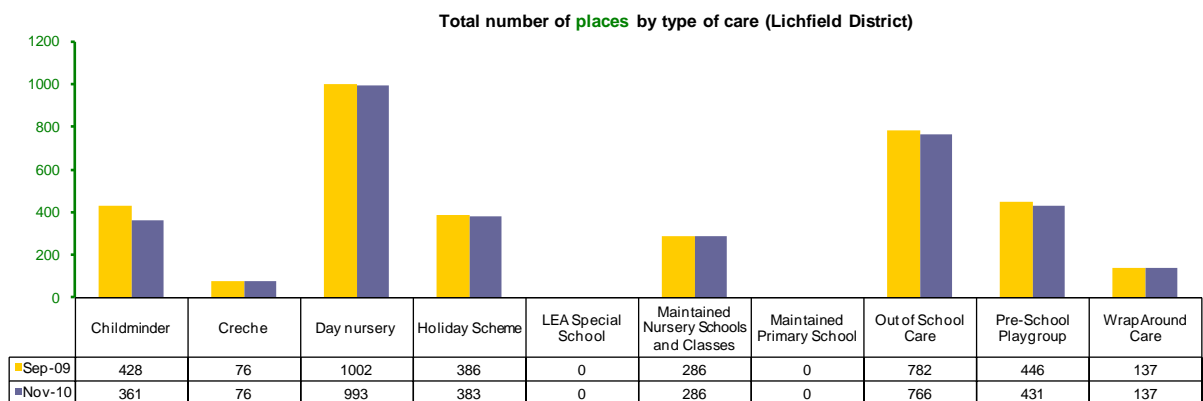
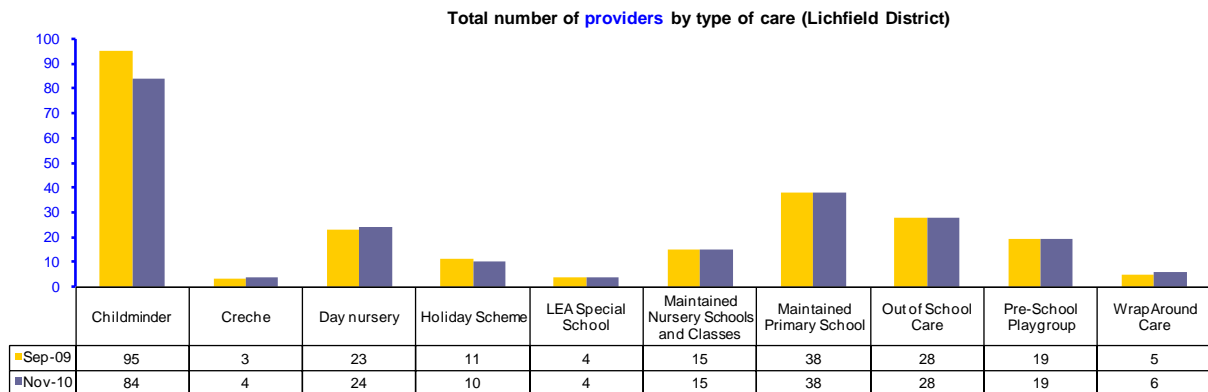
Narrowing the Gap

The county performance in narrowing the gap at the end of EYFS has seen the % gap decrease by 4 percentage points to 28% between 2008/9 and 2004/5. These figures are not publically available at district level, and it is not possible to easily identify the direct impact childcare has had on improving outcomes for children using this measure.

Source: Communities & Local Government National Indicator Set

Range

An appropriate balance of places is available in different types of childcare settings at both county and district level. Sufficient balance of places is available. Places are available in childminding, pre-school, nurseries and out of school.



Source: Enhanced Childcare Directory, SCC

Over the previous 14 months there has been a 3% decline in providers (9) and a decline in places of 3% (110). Childminders have seen the largest decrease over the same period at a 11% decline. Other provision has remained relatively static.

Place information is based on the Ofsted registered maximum. It may not represent the actual number of places offered by settings due to their staffing or local decisions on the number of children they wish to care for. Further to the reduction in providers, the fall in places is mainly in the Childminding sector. Although the number of group providers (Day Nursery, Out of School Care, Pre-School Playgroup) have not declined, there is a small reduction in the number of places that they offer. This will be due to settings reducing their registered capacity.

The Parent's Survey

From analysis of results from the Lichfield District 43 (26%) of parents use day nurseries, 32 (19%) of parents used pre school playgroups, 27 (16%) of parents used family & friends and 24 (15%) used before & after school care. Within the scope of this research it is difficult to ascertain parent's views on the range of childcare available to them because the question was not asked directly during consultation. However parents in the Lichfield district did identify a lack of childminders, before & after school provision, competitive childcare which fits in with work hours, care for older children & mixed age group siblings, rural summer play schemes and places at chosen childcare provider who have a waiting list or require you to book ahead.

Key Observations

- Compared to other districts, the decline in providers is lower in Lichfield
- Parents have indicated that they would like to see more Childminders in the district
- That too many providers have waiting lists

The Parents Survey

Word of mouth was by far the most cited response with over 40% of parents in the district and countywide giving this as the way they find out about childcare a finding which is consistent with the 2008 assessment.

The second most used source of information was schools and each of the other answer options; leaflet, health professional, web site, library, children's centre and Family Information Service (FIS) were mentioned by fewer than 10% of parents.

Although this finding appears disappointing for the FIS as its remit is to be an information hub for childcare and related information, the focus of its development strategy over recent years has been to make information widely accessible in venues used by parents so the part it has played is much more significant than is shown by the research.

When asked to rate the availability of information and advice on childcare the majority of parents in Lichfield provided a high rating. This would suggest a degree of satisfaction with regard to their experiences of accessing childcare information.

The 17 parents who gave low scores made the following comments: not enough information, lack of communication on services & no advertising, had to do a lot of digging, no advice given from Health Visitor/GP and internet not clear or up to date.

Employer survey

From analysis of the employer survey there was limited awareness of the Family Information service (FIS) and it was suggested that employers are provided with up to date FIS packs together with joint support/visits from the Early Years Quality Support Officers and FIS outreach team. For example drop in sessions on issues such as tax credits & childcare provision.

Provider survey

When childcare providers in Lichfield were asked to comment on ways in which the Early Years & Childcare service could help them support parents more effectively the following suggestions were made: Give the private sector some funding, so they can meet the needs of parents as the Children's Centres do, "Funding is not always easy to get hold of when you are private", "Information on how to support the above groups would be gratefully received" and "access to training".

Parents Focus Groups (Countywide)

The countywide focus groups revealed strong views regarding the need to have good access to good quality, reliable childcare information. There was a perception that there is no central place for childcare information, the FIS was mentioned by some parents although the general level of awareness was low. The Staffordshire People's Panel survey in Spring 2010 found FIS awareness to be 26%. For those parents looking for childcare, the process of ringing around for vacancies was a 'soul destroying' and frequently unsuccessful activity.

At the focus groups many parents spoke of the difficulties they had experienced finding the information they required. Parents described the information search as a 'trial and error' process, 'unless you are a terrier like parent'. Searching the internet was also felt to have many short comings being described as 'hit & miss' and very time consuming if a childcare place could be secured at all.

Parents suggested that if you are involved in a voluntary project, regularly attend a children's centre, or know someone who works in services, you get more information. This was thought to disadvantage parents universally, especially working parents that cannot attend in the weekdays during the daytime.

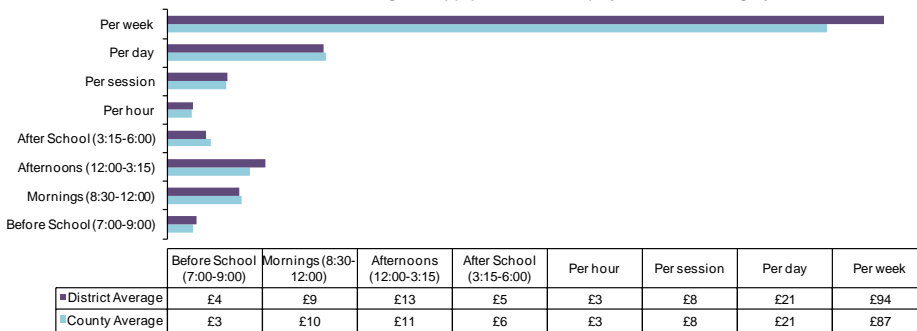
Key Observations

- Some parents find childcare confusing and struggle to access information
- Parents find word of mouth information important and trust information supplied by schools
- The Family Information Service needs to develop ways to effectively maintain its enhanced childcare directory
- Develop clear links with local employers

Affordability

Working parents are able to pay for the childcare provision they need; they are fully informed of the funding or grants they are entitled to. Parents are supported to afford childcare and claim the funding available to them. Settings offer information and support to parents to help them afford fees.

Average cost(£) (where available) by broad cost category



Source: Enhanced Childcare Directory, SCC

Cost information is provided by settings to the Family Information Service. Information is not held about all settings – some childcare providers do not provide information. It is not possible to directly compare the costs in the table above, for example to convert session prices to hourly rates. The hourly, sessional and after school costs are comparable to the county figure. Weekly rates are higher than the county average. Before school and morning costs are both higher than the county average.

The Parents Survey

Parents voiced concerns about the lack of availability of holiday provision and its cost, the daily cost for 6 hours of care at a local authority / school run provision is £16 and rises to £21 in the private sector.

The parents' survey found that the majority of parents were paying between £50-£100 per week (40%) and between £101-£150 (38%). A total of 126 parents which is 10% of those that supplied the information said they paid over £150 per week with 32 parents paying over £200 a week for childcare.

Overall parents felt that the affordability of childcare was very much dependent upon their own wages and the age of the child receiving care.

The focus group discussion found that childminders were considered to charge reasonable rates and playgroups and pre schools were considered good value as they "do a lot with the children". In contrast day nurseries were thought to be more expensive. The fees charged were not thought to be an indicator of better quality.

Although many parents considered nursery education entitlement to be a significant and useful contribution to a family's childcare fees, others commented that its awareness could be improved. It was said to be instrumental in some families' ability to juggle work and childcare.

The cost of holiday childcare for school aged children was commonly agreed to be the biggest challenge along with fees for pre-school children requiring full time childcare. Parents with more than one child find the affordability of holiday & after school childcare a major and sometimes insurmountable challenge.

The parent survey found that countywide 33% of families were in receipt of childcare tax credit and 48% of families use the employer vouchers to help with their childcare costs. Parents in the focus groups had mixed experiences of using the vouchers and felt that publicity for them was poor.

A theme of the focus groups was the difficulty some parents faced in dealing with the charging policies of childcare providers with the perception being that there is a lack of transparency. Parents gave examples of inconsistencies in relation to levying of fees when child is absent, deposits and retainers.

The restrictive nature of nursery contracts were criticised with having to pay a month's deposit and providing a month's notice for changes causing particular difficulty. Generally, bills, payment and statements were thought to lack clarity.

The childcare provider survey explored ways in which early years practitioners supported families with specific needs; including those on low incomes or out of work. The extent of support offered was dependent upon the type of setting, past experience of provider and the nature of the relationship they had with parents. When asked how the Local Authority could support parents more effectively, providers highlighted the need to offer parents choice in the type of childcare chosen, more up to date leaflets and training/financial funding to help staff support families living in areas of disadvantage or with a SEN child.

Key Observations

- The weekly cost of childcare in the district is higher than the county average
- Parents do not associate high fees with better quality provision
- Tax Credits and childcare vouchers are important to parents so that they can afford childcare and stay in employment
- Charges for childcare and invoicing are confusing to parents

Short Break Sufficiency Report Findings (2010)

Of the 200,000 children in Staffordshire aged 0 -19, 4.2% have a limiting long term illness or disability (Census 2001). In the district 793 (3.7%) of children have limiting long term illnesses. In April 2010 562 children aged between 0-18 were registered on Staffordshire's voluntary Children with Disabilities Record and 50 children in the district. The estimated prevalence rates for mild & severe disability are likely to remain the same between 2008 and 2028, and a 1.6 % increase in severely disabled 0 -19 year olds

Consultation with parents from across Staffordshire in 2010 identified the following improvements to services for families who have a child with additional needs: more activities, better information, and participation by both parents/carers & children/young people in future service development.

In 2009/2010 Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) consulted with 387 parents/carers of children with additional needs and found Staffordshire performed particularly well for health & education information and education assessment when compared to the national average, but performed less well for education participation and care/family support assessment.

The Parent Survey

The parent survey identified the numbers of families caring for a child with a Special Educational Need (SEN) and explored parental views on the inclusiveness of their childcare setting. Of the 1652 parents who completed the survey 12% of parents said they had a child with a SEN. The type of need ranged from physical, medical to behavioural and emotional.

Other responses were specific rare medical conditions or from parents whose children were still undergoing assessment for SEN.

With regard to the inclusiveness of the setting, parents commented positively on the recognition that was shown for religious & cultural beliefs, foreign languages and support for children with special educational needs whether physical, psychological or medical in nature.

Feedback from the parents in the focus group who were caring for a child with SEN's or additional needs questioned the inclusiveness of childcare. It was either felt to be lacking or when it did exist, it was the result of lengthy, traumatic and all consuming efforts. When provision was achieved, parents had many ideas on how its shortcomings could be improved. It was thought there was a lack of trained staff with skills for working with children with a disability or an additional need.

With regard to the inclusiveness of childcare for working parents the employer survey identified a lack of provision for shift workers and to cover school holidays and after school care. This was particularly significant for employees without a close family network who struggled to find affordable childcare to cover their shift patterns. It was suggested that setting's offer reductions for families with two siblings at the same setting.

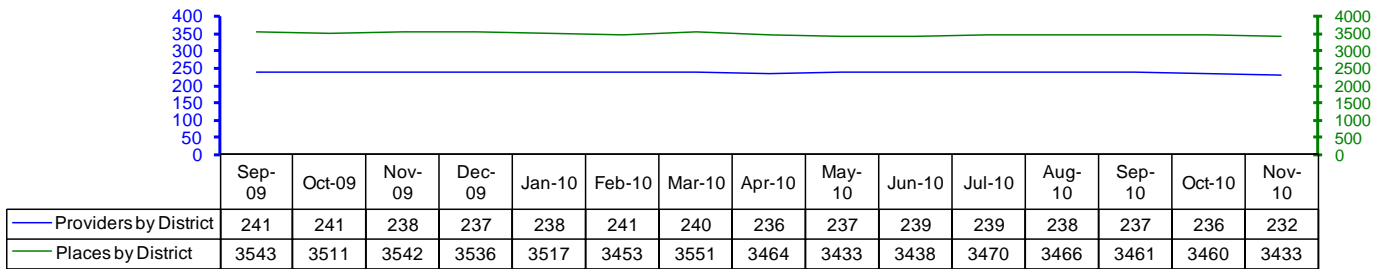
A recent survey undertaken by the Family Information Service for the Childcare for Disabled Children project ('DCATCH') revealed that the majority of childcare providers felt that their staff required training on specific disabilities, handling or any training that was available. Settings also indicated that they required support relating to adaptations – ramps, toilets. However, most settings understood that each special need or disability is specific to a child and requires additional information and support at the time. The findings of this research were reiterated in the Childcare Provider survey where settings indicated that they required more support and training on ways to support families who have a child with additional needs.

Key Observations

- Both providers and parents have indicated that settings require additional support and training to better cater for children with specialist needs
- Parents of children with specialist needs find it difficult to access provision as there is a lack of trained staff to care for children with special or additional needs.

Early Years and childcare settings are managed well and financially healthy, are able to balance the needs of families, the quality of provision and needs of their business. Settings continue to grow and develop and are reliable organisations.

Total providers and places by month (Lichfield District)



Source: Enhanced Childcare Directory, SCC

Over the previous 14 months there has been a 3% decline in providers (9) and a decline in places of 3% (110). This is compared to a county average of 4% for providers and 5% decline in places over the same period.

Childcare providers report that there are several different reasons why they may not be sustainable, ranging from staffing issues, demand and changes in the employment market. Providers were asked a series of questions relating to their sustainability.

Changes in the recruitment and retention of staff

From analysis of results of the childcare provider questionnaire, 4 settings in the Lichfield district said they had seen no change in staff recruitment and retention, 2 settings had not replaced staff that left, 4 settings had introduced a reduction in staff working hours and 4 settings had seen an increase in their staff numbers. Out of the 14 settings consulted in Lichfield, these findings would suggest that they are not currently experiencing difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff. However it is difficult to draw any conclusions from these statistics owing to the low number of settings consulted.

Changes in parental employment patterns

From analysis of results from the Lichfield district 7 settings said some of their parents were on reduced hours, 8 settings said some of their parents had been made redundant, 3 settings had not noticed any changes in their parents' work patterns and 1 setting said that they were aware that redundancies & changes to working patterns were imminent.

Impact of future changes to the local employment market to their delivery of childcare services

From analysis of results for Lichfield District 4 settings felt that in the future there would be a reduced demand for places, 2 settings felt that they would have to increase nursery fees, 4 settings predicted no changes and 2 settings felt that they would have to make changes to the services they offered. One setting commented that as they are a Local Authority run setting, changes in demand would not affect them. 5 settings had made contingency plans to deal with future changes they included: "Banner/advertising. Ensuring hours are not over contracted to cut pay, "Doing trips weekly", "Becoming full day care to demand", "Extend working hours", "Be prepared to take on more children only taking a part time nursery place (instead of a full time nursery place which may not be as available as before), "Provide more meals to enable parents not to worry about having to feed child when in care", "I am reducing my working hours" and "Opening 5 mornings a week, offering 15 hours, changed a few sessions & extending opening hours".

Setting priorities for development over the next 12 months

In the Lichfield district development plans were prioritised by settings as follows: sustainability (11), filling childcare places (7), staff development (7), marketing (4) and staff recruitment (2).

Key Observations

- Repeat the provider survey to determine more fully how parents have been affected by the recession.
- Filling vacancies and staff development are high priorities for providers in the district.

A group of people working in the childcare sector; which included Head Teachers, district council officers and Children's Centre staff met to discuss the initial findings of the Lichfield CSA report. The following feedback was collated in relation to each of the 9 benchmarks:

Places:

- Need to look at places in the rural areas of Tamworth & Burton which border with Lichfield
- Chase Terrace area there are a number of estates with a high population of children, may explain high ratios but low demand for childcare.
- There is evidence of a setting in Chase Terrace having to reduce staff hours because of low demand
- Some settings are full and have waiting lists whilst others have sustainability issues; there is not a culture of settings working together to signpost parents to settings with places available

Flexibility:

- Many grandparents & extended family take responsibility for childcare needs –there is a need to assess informal care arrangements in terms of providing positive child outcomes
- Further consultation with employers required to ascertain need for overnight care.
- Parents using childcare outside of city not reflected in report figures
- The end of the Get Active Funding will have a significant impact on before & after school clubs – follow up research suggested to assess impact on use of out of school activities.

Accessibility:

- Families based at the MOD base in Lichfield face challenges because of the transient nature of their lives which can make it difficult to take up employment and some local services. There is however a good level of take up of nursery education funded places with the on site childcare provider.
- Inadequate car parking was highlighted as an issue, particularly at school based sites.

Quality:

- It was felt that the disappointing perception of childminders was attributable to news of safeguarding issue at a setting in neighbouring authority at the time of the consultation.
- None of the parents taking part in the pilot for 2 year olds had opted to use a childminder.
- Suggestion to change name of childminding to one that better reflects its professionalism.
- Example given of several parents who have preferred to take up their NEF entitlement with a childminder because home environment is an important consideration for them.
- 5 childminders with an outstanding Ofsted grade
- Childminders not on level playing field with daycare provider as automatic 'satisfactory' grade awarded if no children present on day of inspection.

Knowledge & information:

- FIS brokerage system explained to group in terms of team going the extra mile to find childcare
- Agreement that word of mouth is the most valuable source of information for parents and very important in helping childminders fill vacant places.
- Observation that childminders may not be chosen because unable to do school pick up.
- Evidence of lack of childminders in area disputed because several were said to have waiting lists

Affordability:

- Average cost information collected from survey is not reflective of true cost.
- Settings reluctant to share cost information with FIS.
- Some childminders unwilling to share cost information over the phone with parents because they prefer parents to visit and see quality of facilities and care provided.
- From April 2011 there may be an impact on the cost of childcare due to changes to tax credit

Inclusivity:

- Brokerage can be an issue – evidence from recent Sun group meeting that some settings find SEN's too difficult to care for with consequence that parents' cannot find suitable provision.
- Childminders tend to be more proactive in undertaking appropriate training to enable them to support a child's specific needs.
- It can be difficult for private settings to access funding and training to support children with specialist needs.
- Case studies of positive experiences of childcare for children with a specialist need are needed to help parents.

Action Plan

Implementation of the Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan will be monitored by the Market Management Group. The actions themselves will be delivered by many different parts of the local authority working in partnership with childcare providers and other agencies such as Job Centre+, health and voluntary and community groups.

Benchmark	Action	Who / When by
All	Establish Childcare Market Management Group	County Commissioner by April 2011
Places	Data Development: Capture data of Provision on School site / Governor Run	FIS / Quality Liaison On-going Review Summer 2011
	To review the take up of Nursery Education Funding(NEF) places in the Chase Terrace area and if figure is low FIS Development Officer to promote through workshops with families	Data Development agenda & FIS team
	Mini assessments for the rural villages in Tamworth & Burton which border Lichfield to look at needs at local level	Childcare Market Management group March 2012
	Outreach activity in the district to identify childcare needs and to support families	FIS Development On-going March 2012
	Establish closer links with the district council departments responsible for planning children & families services	FIS Development Officer & Data Development Agenda
Flexibility	Establish links with Positive Activities teams and district councils for holiday activities	Childcare Market Management Group & district councils
Accessibility	Quality Liaison to ensure consideration of parking is part of advice for development of new settings	March 2012
	Assess commuting patterns & consider cross border childcare demand & supply when planning services	Childcare Market Management group & Data Development Agenda
	FIS Development Officer to maintain links with the childcare provider based at the Ministry of Defence (MOD) base in Lichfield to monitor the extent to which needs for childcare are met and to highlight gaps in services.	FIS Development Officer – ongoing
	Childcare in rural villages, FIS to work closer with existing support agencies & share info	FIS Development Officer Ongoing until March 2012
Quality	Consult with parents to further understand perceptions attached to childminding	Research & Evaluation Coordinator Summer 2011
	Work with the National childminding Association (NCMA) & conduct focus groups with childminders and parents	Research & Evaluation Coordinator Summer 2011
	Childminder recruitment to be a main priority for Lichfield	Quality liaison, Childminder Support & Workforce Development
	To monitor settings capacity to take extra children & promote partnership working	Quality Liaison & Childminder support
	Children's Centres to conduct marketing awareness training with childminders	Children's Centres Aug/Sept 2011
	SEQUIP (Programme to assess quality standards in Early Years settings) – review analysis conducted with childminders on programme	Quality Liaison & Research & Evaluation Coordinator /Summer 2011
	To review the quality of Childcare Training & qualifications & make recommendations to improve	Workforce Development & training providers – ongoing
	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework – assess parental awareness & benefits to child through focus groups, write up in code of practice	Research & Evaluation coordinator /Summer 2011
Range	Collect accurate data of number of childminders actually practising	Data development agenda & FIS Information officers
	Impact of Single Formula Funding – reports to be shared with Market Management Group	Pre school learning alliance (PLA) & Market Management group
	New childminder set up –share record of interest & training uptake	Quality Liaison Team, Childminder Administration Officer & FIS Info Officers –Aug/Sept 2011
	Consult with parents on their understanding of	Research & Evaluation coordinator

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	terminology used to describe childcare types & use more parent friendly words as required.	Summer 2011
	Review range of childcare in rural areas & FIS to advertise/monitor uptake	Data development agenda & FIS team
Knowledge & Information	Develop project plan to market childcare & improve communications/ frequency of providers updating records	Data Development agenda, Market Management Group & FIS team - ongoing
	Consider how corporate website provides childcare information.	All – ongoing
	Establish more effective links with schools to develop them as information points.	FIS Development Officer
	To provide employers with FIS updates & info packs so that they can disseminate to employees	FIS Development Officer
	To consider how to work with & support grandparents caring for children in the home regarding child outcomes	FIS Development Officer
Affordability	Review impact via consultation of changes to childcare tax credits & vouchers on parents & settings.	Data Development agenda & Research & Evaluation coordinator /Summer 2011
	Set up standardised pricing & invoicing system with settings & monitor impact via consultation + Quality Liaison to support settings to adopt process	Data Development agenda, Research & Evaluation Coordinator & Quality Liaison team/Summer 2011
	Set up pilot project with providers to identify a more consistent way to record childcare costs & share info with FIS/data team	Data Development agenda & Research & Evaluation Coordinator /Summer 2011 & FIS team
Inclusivity	Representative of Aiming High to sit on Market Management Group.	Aiming High & Market Management Group
	Data development team to liaise with the Local Support Teams (LST) & Early Intervention Project	Data Development agenda & LST – ongoing
	To acquire accurate details of setting's Special Educational Needs (SEN) training requirements & qualifications/skills	Data Development agenda & FIS team
	Develop formalised links with the LST re ways Early Years can support them & identify process for referral	Data Development agenda & FIS team
	FIS development officer to be more proactive in raising awareness of the FIS with LST & deliver workshops to support providers in caring for a child with additional needs	FIS Development officer
Sustainability	To offer support to settings through the 'Staffordshire Means Business' & 'Business Support Fund'	All – ongoing
	Record the number of settings opening & closing by district and how many places are being taken up compared to what setting is registered to offer	Data Development agenda & FIS team