

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.

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Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

April 2011

South Staffordshire District

Methodology Summary

1. Parent & Carer Questionnaire:
Undertaken over the summer, responses from 1902 parents countywide and 242 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:

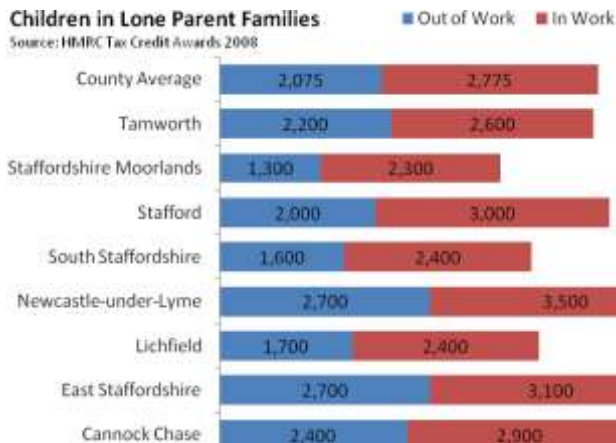
- Demographic data including birth rate
- Household composition
- Child Poverty
- Disability, Child & Working Tax Credits
- Childcare providers & places

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



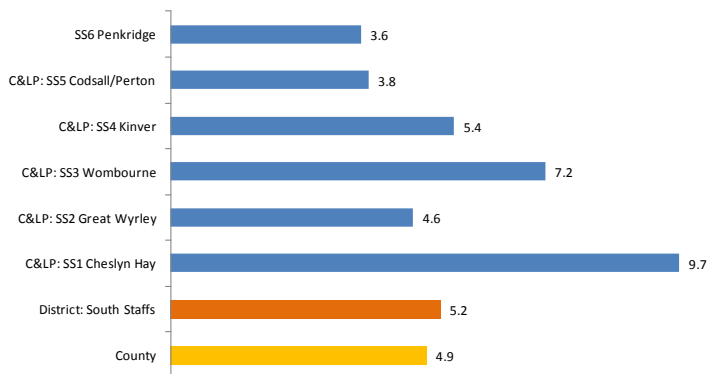
Places

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), 40% of children in South Staffordshire are from Lone parent families that are out of work. Children from lone parent families represent 26% of all children, slightly below 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 slightly few places than the county average, but in Cheslyn Hay, the ratio is nearly double to county figure and Wombourne is 1½ the county average.

Population Trends

The latest population estimates (2009, National Statistics) estimate that 17700 children aged 0 to 15 in South Staffordshire district, which is 16.7% of the total population. The proportion of 0-15 children is 1 percentage point below the county average, but 2 and 3 percentage points below the West Midlands and England average proportion.

South Staffordshire district has seen a 12% decline in the births between 2004/5 and 2008/9, compared to a 2% increase across the county.

From the Parent Survey

In South Staffordshire and the county as a whole, over 50% of parents felt that there were 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 the district felt that there were insufficient places in certain types of childcare. These gaps will be discussed later in childcare 'range'.

In South Staffs 100 (46.7%) number of parents used childcare to enable them to work, this is in keeping with the county average of 47.8 %. In contrast only 7 (3%) of parents in South Staffs used childcare to enable them to study or train.

From analysis of the parent focus group 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

Children in Working Families

Source: HMRC Tax Credit Awards 2008



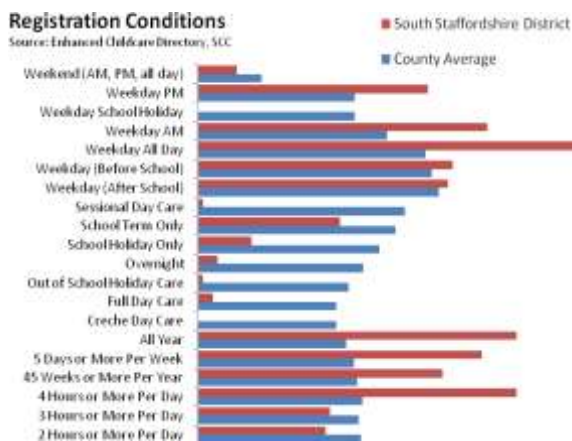
Children will be aged 0 to 19 for those in full time education/training and resident at home.

Key Observations

- There are areas of the district where there may be insufficient places
- Greater proportion of families in work than other districts
- Some childcare may be accessed out of county (eg Wolverhampton, Shropshire) due to the geography of the district; although we have no data to support this.

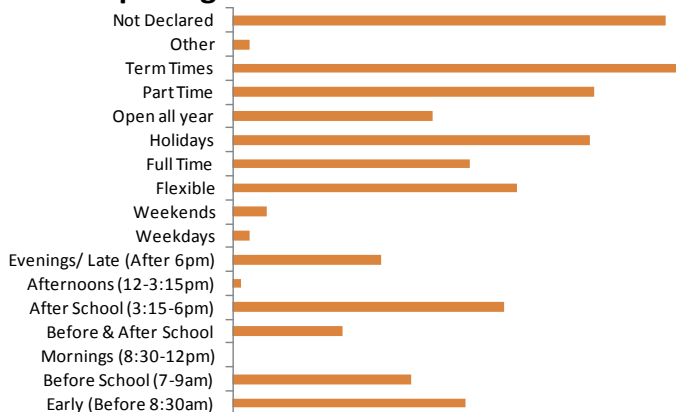
Flexibility

Ensuring places are available at the right times e.g. 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.



Ofsted registration conditions apply to childcare providers who are registered with Ofsted. The conditions form part of the providers registration and limit the opening periods of a setting. South Staffordshire has substantially more providers than the county average, offering All Day Weekday, Weekday morning and afternoon, All Year and 4 hours or more per day, all year and 5 days or more per week.

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 13% of providers in the district offer early morning, before school provision and about 10% after school care. A small number of providers (2%) have indicated that they offer weekend care and around 7% 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 nearly 80% of schools provided some form of After School childcare or activity and 60% provided Before School childcare or activity for school aged children. These figures are 3% and 8% above the county average for all provision.

The Parents Survey

The majority of parents in the 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: opening earlier and closing later, more wraparound provision (before and after school), enhanced flexibility e.g. pick up times, choice of Free Childcare Place (NEF) hours, provide holiday provision and childcare to cover working parent's 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?'

Employers (Countywide result)

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 hour's childcare.

Parent Focus Group (Countywide result)

From analysis of the parent focus group, flexibility was seen to be 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 and part time care 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

- There are few providers registered to offer full day care or overnight care in the district
- Providers have indicated a need for more before and after school provision and this is reflected in the broad opening times
- Although providers are registered to offer more flexible provision this is not currently being offered.

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

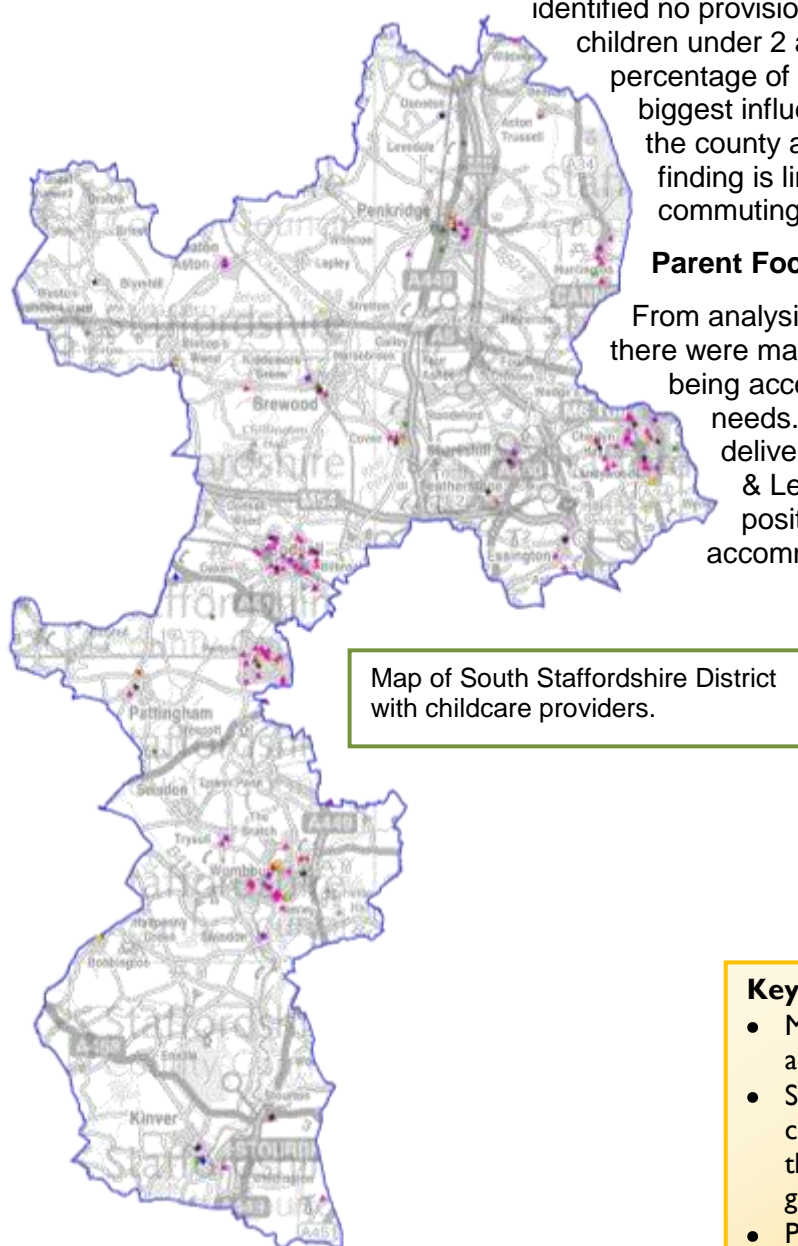
From analysis of the Parent Survey from a county perspective a high percentage of parents travelled between 0 and 3 miles to their childcare setting. From correlating the type of childcare used and distance travelled day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, before & after school care and family & friends 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.

For parents living in the South Staffs area 95 parents travelled less than a mile to their chosen childcare setting and 50 parents travelled between 1 & 3 miles. When asked to rate how easy it was to get to their childcare setting 82 parents gave a score of 10 defined as fully met. Only 7 parents identified physical barriers to accessing their childcare provision, reasons included busy main roads, no school crossing patrol and an unkempt ex railway line on route. Parents who gave a low score to accessing their childcare provision

identified no provision for children with Special Educational Needs or children under 2 and distance owing to disability. A high percentage of parents 57% cited closeness to home as the biggest influence to their choice of childcare; this was above the county average of 38%. One could suggest that this finding is linked to South Staffs parents undertaking longer commuting journeys into work.

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. Free nursery places and summer activities delivered by local district councils and the Community & Learning Partnerships were described most positively, together with childminders who could accommodate individual family needs.



Map of South Staffordshire District with childcare providers.



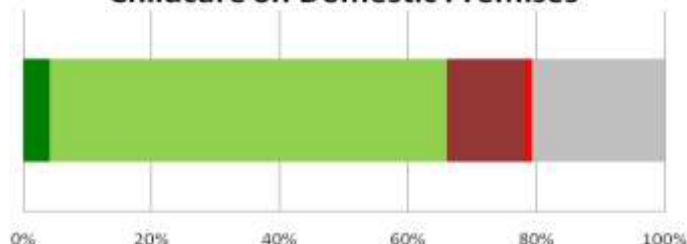
Key Observations

- Most parents have indicated that their childcare is accessible
- South Staffordshire district parents prefer their childcare to be close to home, as demonstrated in the distance travelled and the results of the focus group
- Parents need a car to get to their setting due to the rurality of the district.

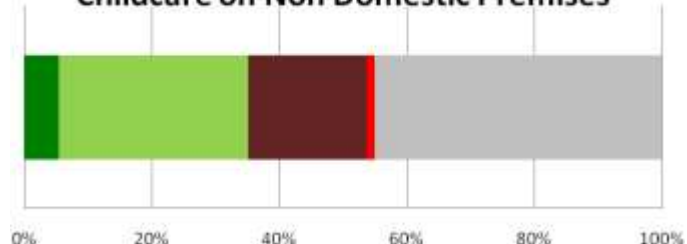
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Places are available with provision that is staffed by well qualified practitioners, a significant proportion achieve good or outstanding Ofsted judgements. Childcare provision is effective in narrowing the gap between those children at risk of the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

Childcare on Domestic Premises



Childcare on Non Domestic Premises



%	Domestic		Non-Domestic	
	District	County	District	County
Outstanding	4	4	5	4
Good	62	54	30	30
Satisfactory	12	24	19	13
Inadequate	1	1	1	0
N/A	21	17	45	52

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 ahead of the county average at 66%, compared to 58%.

This pattern is not repeated for provision on non-domestic premises, where Ofsted rates the quality as good or better in 35% of settings, compared to the county average of 34%.

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

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 parents 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 and staff were just hanging around chatting'. 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.

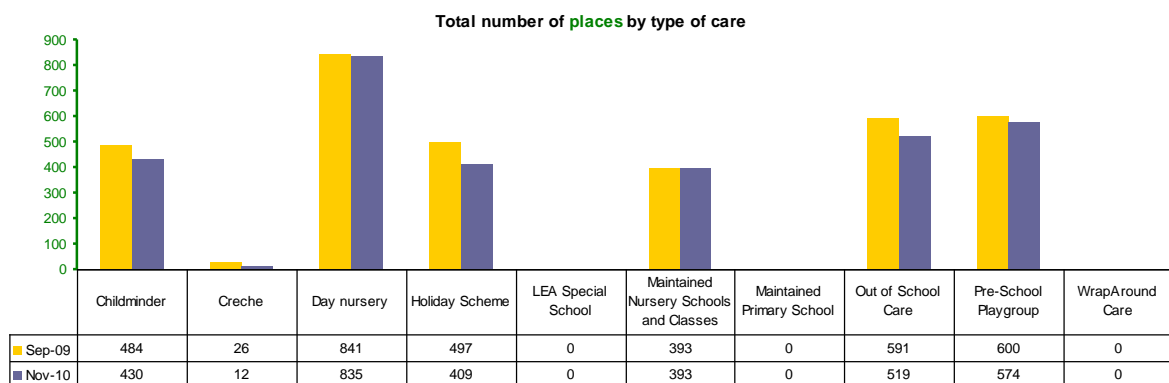
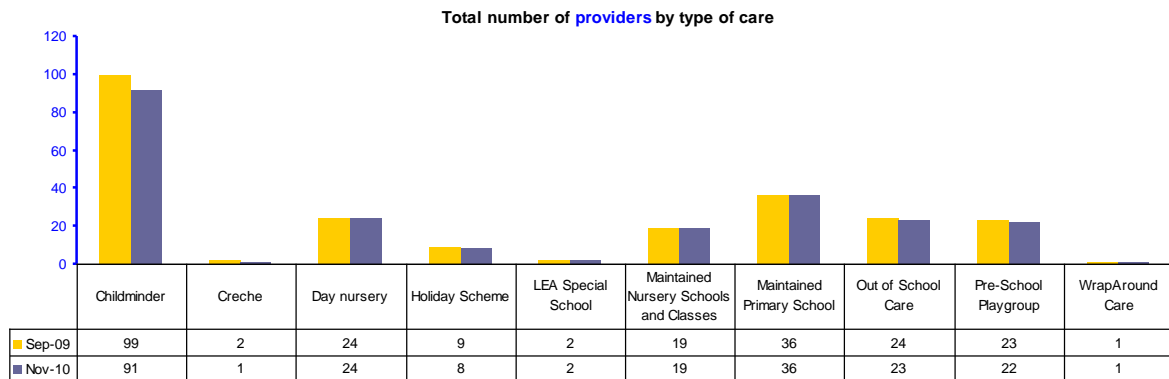
A common perception amongst the focus group participants was that childminders provided lower quality care because they were lone workers and this raised concerns about safeguarding. Provision on non domestic premises received criticism in terms of their models of delivery and holiday provision received 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 consider evidence, based on their experiences.
- Although parents consider Childminders to offer poor quality provision, over 66% are good or better compared to 35% on non-domestic premises (eg Day Nursery). Childminders may need to consider ways to improve their marketing.
- The overall quality of childcare is improving

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 5% decline in providers (12) and a decline in places of 8% (260). Childminders have seen the largest decrease over the same period at a 10% 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.

Both Wombourne and Codsall Community & Learning Partnership areas have not seen the same decrease in providers and places as the district, but has remained static with new childminders providing care.

The Parent's Survey

From analysis of the parent survey results for South Staffs 57 (25%) of parents used pre school playgroups, 40 (17%) used day nurseries and 39 (17%) used family and friends. 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 district did identify a lack of childminders, no Children's Centre, not enough choice in childcare types and limited places.

Furthermore parents felt that the waiting time of 12 months for a place in a private nursery or children's centre was unacceptable and by only providing one after school club within a village did not give parents a choice.

Key Observations

- There has been a marked decline in the number of Childminders providing care in the last year, confirming parents perceptions
- The rurality of the district and low population density impacts on the range of provision that can be supplied and run sustainably

Parents are informed consumers of childcare. Information is available in a range of ways, including information about funding to support childcare costs. Parents are clear on how to access information. Outreach is proactively used ensuring all parents receive information they need, when they need it including brokerage support.

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 South Staffs scored between 5 & 10. 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 South Staffs were asked to comment on ways in which the Early Years and Childcare service could help them support parents more effectively the following suggestions were made: "More support on all teams and what support they can offer", "More information on changes in practice", "Local evening support", "Support to do the Early Years Foundation Degree – perhaps through OU as travel the main barrier", "Training is mainly at weekends which can be difficult, preference for evenings" and "additional funding towards cost of employing a graduate".

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%. 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.

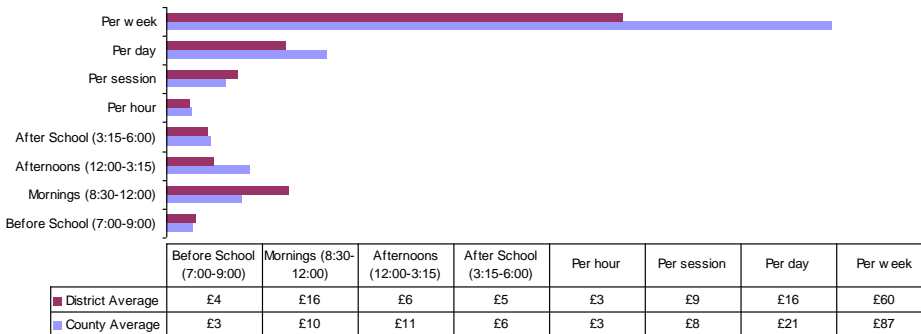
Key Observations

- 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. Day rates and weekly rates are less 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 or inability 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 nurseries' 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 year's 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 cost of childcare in the district is slightly higher than the county average
- Parents do not link 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 for parents

Short break Sufficiency report findings (2010)

Nearly 200,000 children in Staffordshire aged 0 -19 4.2% (8335) have a limiting long term illness or disability (Census 2001). In the South Staffs district 937 (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 64 children in the district.

The estimated prevalence rates for mild & severe disability show that overall Staffordshire is likely to see the number of 0-19 year olds with mild disabilities 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 that 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.

Parent Survey

The parent survey identified the numbers of families caring for a SEN child and explored parental views on the inclusiveness of their childcare setting. Of the 1652 parents who completed the survey 209 parents said they had a child with a SEN. The type of SEN's 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 recognition was shown for religious & cultural beliefs, foreign languages and support for children with special educational needs whether physical, psychological or medical in nature.

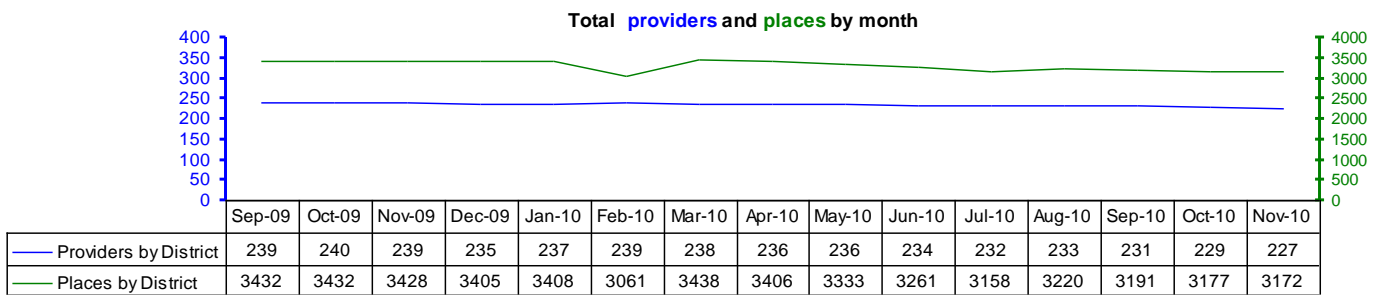
Feedback from the parents in the focus group who were caring for a child with SEN's or additional needs questioned the inclusiveness of childcare. It was either felt to be lacking or when it did exist, it was the result of lengthy, traumatic and all consuming efforts. When provision was achieved, parents 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 disabled children and children with additional needs.

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 important 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.



Source: Enhanced Childcare Directory, SCC

Over the previous 14 months there has been a 5% decline in providers (12) and a decline in places of 8% (260). 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 survey, 5 settings in the district said they had seen no change in staff recruitment and retention, 2 settings had made a reduction in staff working hours and 2 settings had not replaced staff that left. Out of 20 settings consulted in South Staffordshire, these findings would suggest that they are not currently experiencing difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff.

Changes in parental employment patterns

From analysis of results from the district, 10 settings said that some of their parents had been made redundant, 7 settings had parents on reduced hours and 6 settings had not yet noticed any changes. South Staffordshire & Tamworth were the 2 districts with the highest number of settings that had parents who had become redundant; 10 and 13 respectively. Comments from providers included: 1 father travelling down to London for work, 1 parent changed to more flexible hours so childcare no longer required and 1 parent moving job in order to avoid redundancy.

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

In the district 12 settings felt that in the future there would be a reduced demand for places, 12 settings felt that they would need to make changes to the services they offered and 6 settings identified other reasons. Other reasons included: offering part time flexible hours, shared care with relatives and reviewing the setting's opening hours. 6 settings from South Staffs had made contingency plans to deal with future changes in the job market they included: extending the childcare provision and opening hours, offering afternoon sessions, keeping curriculum vitae up to date, monitoring the closure of local childcare provision with the view to offering places for these children and putting money aside in case of future loss of earnings.

Settings priorities for development over the next 12 months

From analysis of results for the South Staffs District development plans were prioritised by settings as follows: 14 ticked sustainability, 10 ticked filling places and 9 ticked Staff development. Other reasons included: developing forest schools, improving quality and confidence building, moving to new building and using the mosaic approach to assess how children feel about the activities they have on offer.

Key Observations

- Noticeable decline in Childminders operating in the district
- Providers report that staff recruitment is not an issue for their setting
- The main priorities for the next year are business led, although some are focussing on improving their provision
- Repeat the provider survey to determine more fully how parents have been affected by the recession

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

Places:

- Cheslyn Hay higher child to place ratio due to parents commuting to childcare outside of area
- Kinver & Wombourne – there is evidence of unmet demand for baby places

Flexibility:

- Childminders in the Penn, Perton & Penkridge area offer overnight childcare but there is low take up
- One setting decided not to offer the Nursery Education Funding (NEF) flexibly to avoid excessive parent travelling
- Parents only willing to pay for out of school & holiday childcare that they use

Accessibility:

- Most parents want out of school provision to be based on a school site
- There may an opportunity for childminders to offer pick up service from schools
- In rural areas and between population centres such as Perton & Pattingham travelling between two schools can be very time consuming for a childminder

Quality:

- It is positive that parents do not focus on the Ofsted rating as the only judgement of a setting's quality
- Childminders need to promote their service to potential new parents e.g. school playground
- A one off, unannounced visit to setting can be the best indicator of quality
- Need to recognise a setting's progress over time rather than a 3 yearly Ofsted assessment
- Parents give preference to a school nursery place rather than a pre school setting
- Need to link education with childminders and pre schools & tell parents of quality offered
- Quality Access for all funding – 2 settings in receipt of this funding achieved outstanding Ofsted grade

Range:

- Settings need to advertise more effectively the days & times they have available
- More partnership working is required between settings to fill vacancies e.g. play day event
- Parents need to be given a choice in childcare provision but only if it is financially viable

Knowledge & Information:

- Website searching tools & Staffordshire County Council web site needs to be improved
- FIS information – needs to be given out appropriate time for parents
- It is good that employers seek links with Early Years services, but providers often refuse help.

Affordability:

- Childcare costs more like £160 - £190 per week which is significantly higher than survey indicated
- Settings reluctant to give prices over phone
- Charging and invoicing for nurseries very confusing for parents & affects choice
- There will be impact on demand when the income threshold to qualify for tax credits goes is lowered in April 2011

Inclusivity:

- Childminders & pre schools excluded from special educational needs (SEN) funding
- WAM funding is only for provision set up or adaptation of facilities, does not include ongoing support on a one to one basis
- Wombourne Children's Centre runs a holiday club providing respite care for children with SENs
- SEN out of school provision is costly and difficult to sustain financially; especially in terms of transport costs

Sustainability:

- Quality of new staff applying for jobs considered to be very poor.
- 2 pre schools in Kinver have a long waiting list, whilst another setting as reduced the number of days offered due to lack of children
- Some out of school clubs have closed due to schools setting up their own provision
- Pre schools & settings in Wolverhampton border struggling due to sustainability issues

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
	Mini assessments on areas bordering South Staffs e.g. Perton & Wombourne 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
Flexibility	Establish links with Positive Activities teams and district councils for holiday activities	Market Management Group & district councils March 2012
Accessibility	Quality Liaison to ensure consideration of parking is part of advice for development of new settings	Market Management Group & Data Development Agenda
	Assess parental commuting patterns & consider cross border childcare demand & supply when planning services	Childcare Development Agenda, Data & Research Team & FIS
	To review the out of school demand/supply in rural districts and forward details to childminders with vacancies	FIS Development Officer Ongoing to March 2012
Quality	Childcare in rural villages, FIS to work closer with existing support agencies & share info	Research & Evaluation Coordinator Summer 2011
	Consult with parents to further understand perceptions attached to childminding	Research & Evaluation Coordinator Summer 2011
	Work with National Childminding Association (NCMA) & conduct focus groups with childminders and parents	Children's Centres Aug/Sept 2011
	Children's Centres to conduct marketing awareness training with childminders	Quality Liaison & Research & Evaluation coordinator /Summer 2011
	SEQUIP (Programme to assess quality standards in Early Years settings) – review analysis conducted with childminders on programme	Workforce Development & training providers – ongoing
	To review the quality of Childcare Training & qualifications & make recommendations to improve	Research & Evaluation coordinator /Summer 2011
	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework – assess parental awareness & benefits to child through focus groups, write up in code of practice	Data development agenda & FIS Information officers
Range	Collect accurate data of number of childminders actually practising	PLA & Market Management Group
	Impact of Single Formula Funding – Pre school learning alliance (PLA) reports to be shared with Market Management Group	Quality Liaison Team, Childminder Admin Officer & FIS Info Officers – Aug/Sept 2011
	New childminder set up –share records of interest & training uptake	Research & Evaluation coordinator Summer 2011
	Consult with parents on their understanding of terminology used to describe childcare types & use more parent friendly words as required.	

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	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 Officers
	To provide employers with FIS updates & info packs so that they can disseminate to employees	FIS Development Officers
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 Team (LST) & Early Intervention Project	Data Development agenda & LST – ongoing
	To acquire accurate details of setting's special educational needs (SENs) 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 proactive in raising awareness of the FIS with LST & deliver workshops to support providers in caring for SEN child	FIS Development officer
	To promote the holiday club at Wombourne Children's Centre families with a SEN child	FIS Information Officers
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
	Encourage partnership working with after school provision to avoid closures	All ongoing