

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 9 June 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People & Families

SUBJECT: Early Years Sufficiency Duty Report 2025

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The report aims to provide a summary of the revised Sufficiency Duty Report. It details information about Halton's childcare sector and outlines the current and projected supply and estimated demand for childcare places over the next twelve months. It also highlights any gaps in provision and how these are being addressed.
- 1.2 The report outlines information regarding the expansion of the early years entitlements, launched in April 2024, together with estimates around how the demand for new places will impact upon the childcare market in Halton.
- 1.3 The report shares information on factors impacting on childcare both locally and nationally, including the expansion of funded childcare for working parents of children aged 9 months to 2 years, the expansion of wraparound care, the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in early years. The report details the sufficiency of childcare across sectors and strategies to address future challenges.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board endorses the revised Sufficiency Duty Report.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 **Background**

Sections 6 and 7 of 'The Childcare Act' (2006) and the associated statutory guidance: 'Early Education and Childcare – Statutory guidance for local authorities' (March 2018), requires all Local Authorities in England to undertake and provide an annual childcare sufficiency report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make it

available to the public.

3.2 In accordance with the above, Halton's Sufficiency Duty Report has been reviewed and updated (SDR). The purpose of the document is to:

- Assist parents to find suitable childcare across the borough;
- Help inform the Local Authority regarding supply and estimated demand for childcare places in all age ranges, in particularly for the Funded Early Years Entitlement places;
- Provide information for anyone who is considering setting up new childcare provision in the borough or becoming a childminder.

3.3 **SUMMARY OF SDR**

The SDR Provides the following information:

- The purpose of the Sufficiency Duty Report
- Information about the national context, including childcare expansion
- Information about the local context, including population and demographics
- Details of current Early Years childcare provision including location, choice, flexibility and affordability
- Provision for children with SEND
- Quality of Provision
- Supply and Demand Analysis
- Details of childcare for school-age children
- The sufficiency strategy and future plans

3.4 **CURRENT POSITION**

The childcare expansion announced in 2023 Spring budget set out 2 key policies to be rolled out, all children of working parents from 9 months old to received 30 hours funded childcare by September 2025 and all school age children to have access wraparound care by September 2026.

3.5 2-year-olds from families receiving additional support (formerly known as disadvantage funding) continue to receive 15 hours funded entitlements.

3.6 The Halton Sufficiency Duty Report 2025 reflects that there is currently a sufficient, flexible and high quality Early Years and Childcare market that delivers a wide choice of affordable childcare services to parents and carers. Currently, Halton as a borough has sufficient childcare places to meet demand and has continued to do so through the first two phase of the childcare expansion. The third phase of expansion in September 2025 is predicted to increase the demand for childcare places for children aged 2 and under.

3.7 The report shows that currently there is a sufficient supply of

childcare places across Halton, as follows:

- 0-1 Year olds – The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across Halton of 127 places, 37 surplus places in Runcorn and 90 surplus places in Widnes
- 2 Year olds - The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across Halton of 505 places, 208 surplus places in Runcorn and 297 surplus places in Widnes
- 3 & 4 Year olds - The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across Halton of 450 places, 191 surplus places in Runcorn and 259 surplus places in Widnes

3.8 As the full expansion rolls out in September 2025, projected estimates indicate that we will continue to have sufficient places for 2 year olds, however a shortfall of places for babies 9 – 23 months is projected.

3.9 Although sufficient places are projected for 2 year olds it is important to protect places for eligible 2 year olds from families receiving additional support (FRAS) from the anticipated increase in 2 year old places of families claiming the working entitlement.

3.10 The report shows the projected estimates of sufficiency for the final phase of childcare expansion in September 2025, as follows:

- 0-1 Year olds – The projected estimates show a deficit of places across Halton of -96 places, -48 places in Runcorn and -48 surplus places in Widnes
- 2 Year olds - The projected estimates show a surplus of places across Halton of 146 places, 27 places in Runcorn and 119 places in Widnes

3.11 The National Wraparound Programme has seen a large increase in the availability of term time wraparound childcare for primary aged children. 96% of mainstream primary schools now have access to onsite or offsite before and after school care, this is likely to increase to 100% by September 2025.

3.12 The early years sector have indicated that there are continuing concerns around recruitment and retention of staff, this is reflective of the national situation in regards to early years recruitment. As a response the government has launched a national recruitment campaign.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Halton is taking a proactive approach to address the potential shortfall in childcare places through the development of a sufficiency strategy and workforce development plan.

- 4.2 The key components of the sufficiency strategy and workforce development plan include;

The Childcare Expansion Capital Grant which has been targeted to create new places for 2 year olds and under, this specifically addresses gaps in provision and protects the sufficiency of places for eligible 2 year olds (FRAS) from the likely increase in demand on places from parents claiming working entitlements.

School Based Nurseries, An increase in school based nurseries has the potential to create flexibility in the market to release more spaces for younger children in PVI settings. The DFE School Based Nurseries Capital Grant has enabled schools to fund new nursery classes.

Recruitment of childminders and raising awareness of new childminder flexibilities. The new flexibilities allow childminders to consider new models of delivery such as working from a community hall or school. This also allows for an increase to 4 people that can work together under a childminders registration.

Early Years workforce development This includes a wide promotion of government campaign resources and borough-wide targeted recruitment campaigns, collaboration with key partners such as job centres, colleges to develop pathways for students entering the workforce, and promoting new career development opportunities for level 3 qualifications and graduate pathways.

RELATED NATIONAL POLICIES

Early Education and Childcare

[Early education and childcare - GOV.UK](#)

This statutory guidance from the Department for Education is for English local authorities on their duties to secure childcare free of charge for qualifying children.

Childcare Expansion Capital Grant

[Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Allocations Guidance](#)

This funding is intended to support the expansion of childcare places. The department is providing £100m of capital funding in 2023-24 to support local authorities in delivering the expansion of the 30-hours early years entitlement for working families and of wraparound provision in primary schools.

Early Years Workforce Development

[Do something big - Early Years Careers](#)

The Government has launched a national recruitment campaign to encourage new workers into the sector

School Based Nurseries

[Establishing school-based nursery provision - GOV.UK](#)

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It has been produced to help schools, governing bodies and childcare providers to establish nursery provision on school sites, in collaboration with local authorities and responsible bodies.

Wraparound Childcare

[Wraparound childcare: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

This guidance explains the role of local authorities and the funding to expand the availability of wraparound care in their areas from September 2024.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The childcare expansion capital grant must be used to support the childcare expansion. Halton is targeted the use of Capital Grants on projects to create places for 2 year-olds and under.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

Raising children's achievements through access to early years childcare provision will have a positive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of children. Access to quality provision also plays a key role in the early development of language and communication skills which are essential to future learning, vocabulary development and access to the wider curriculum and developing and maintaining relationships.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

Parents being able to access childcare enables them to work and supports childcare businesses to become sustainable offering employment opportunities and training through apprenticeships.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

Children's experiences and relationships in their earliest years fundamentally shape their future. A positive experience of early education can help children overcome disadvantage and fulfil their full potential.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Inequality can impact on children's health, development and learning. A high-quality early education and childcare can play a part in redressing inequalities, children can make progress when they receive the right support. Working in an integrated way across education, health and care offers timely support and intervention to families who need it most.

- 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
None
- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**
Attending a school or early years setting can help support children and families to develop a sense of belonging within their community.
- 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**
- 7.1 There is a risk that without adopting a sufficiency strategy, Halton will have insufficient childcare places and children would not be able to access their early years education which would be a disadvantage to them starting school.
- 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**
- 8.1 All early years providers have duties under the Equality Act 2010 and must comply with the SEND code of practice and requirements of the EYFS in regards to their responsibilities to inclusion and equality.
- 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1 None
- 10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**
- 10.1 **Childcare act 2006**
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>
- 10.2 **Early years foundation stage – Statutory guidance**
[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#)
- 10.3 **Early Education and Childcare**
[Early education and childcare - GOV.UK](#)
- 10.4 **Childcare Expansion Capital Grant**
[Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Allocations Guidance](#)
- 10.4 **Early Years Workforce Development**
[Do something big - Early Years Careers](#)
- 10.5 **School Based Nurseries**
[Establishing school-based nursery provision - GOV.UK](#)
- 10.6 **Wraparound Childcare**
[Wraparound childcare: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)