



Children and Young People's Services

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Summary of key findings

March 2008

positive contribution stay safe enjoy and achieve economic well-being be healthy
it's in our hands



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Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 places a new duty on all Local Authorities to assess whether the supply of childcare in local areas is meeting the needs of working parents and parents who are studying or training in order to find work.

The purpose of this assessment (known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) is to enable Local Authorities to identify where the gaps are between the supply and demand of childcare in preparation for April 2008, when the statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare comes into force.

In line with government guidance, the Early Years and Childcare Service of Bristol City Council undertook a citywide survey between July and October 2007 to assess gaps in childcare provision.

The Childcare Sufficiency Report reflects the information we gathered from parents of over 3,900 children, from 143 employers, and 350 childcare providers throughout the city. We also gathered information from research and consultation with other children's organisations.

In order to ensure that the parents, providers and employers who responded have provided us with a representative sample, we have profiled our responses (e.g. in relation to ages of children, location, ethnicity, business profiles, nature of childcare provision) and compared them to figures for Bristol. This has shown us that our sample is representative.

The Report sets out our findings in relation to:

- the type and number of childcare places available
- the flexibility in the hours that childcare is available
- the quality of childcare
- the affordability of childcare
- the location of childcare
- information for parents about childcare
- choosing childcare and barriers to childcare
- equalities and inclusion
- childcare for older children
- childcare for parents who are studying or training

The Summary Report and Ward Findings are available on www.bristol.gov.uk or from

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents, children, childcare providers, partners and employers who took part in the survey

There are currently 69,470 children aged between birth and 14 registered with GPs in Bristol. The highest number of children are in the Central, East and South of the City.

Although family employment and income in Bristol is comparable to the national average, figures vary significantly between different wards in Bristol, with some areas amongst the most income deprived in the country, and others in the least income deprived.

Children living in Henleaze, Stoke Bishop, Westbury-on-Trym, Redland, Cotham, and Bishopston have the least income deprivation, whilst children living in Lawrence Hill, Filwood, Southmead, Lockleaze and Easton experience severe levels of income deprivation.

Wards where children experience the highest levels of economic disadvantage are wards with the highest proportions of lone parents, high levels of unemployment and low earned income, high levels of ethnic diversity, larger families, and a higher proportion of disabled children.

Lone parents in employment

It has been documented that lone parents are twice as likely as families with two parents or carers to use formal childcare¹ but are also most likely to be in low income employment. 2005–06² figures show that 37% of families in Bristol were lone parent families.

Ethnicity of children

The ethnic profile of children in Bristol, particularly of young children, is changing rapidly. According to the May 2007 Pupil Level Annual School Census information, 24.2% of pupils in Bristol LA schools are from non-White British communities. For state maintained nursery classes, this figure is 32.5%.

Disabled children

We do not have sufficient recent data to determine how many children in Bristol are disabled, have Special Education or additional needs, nor where they live. The 2001 Census self reported figures show the average ward figure of 5.1% of dependent children in Bristol with a limiting long term illness or disability. The figure currently being used is 9%.

¹ Source: Department for Work & Pensions. Childcare use and mothers' employment: a review of British data sources. Working Paper 16. 2004

² Source: HM Revenue & Customs – Child Tax Credit Statistics Finalised 2005–06 awards

Sufficiency of childcare provision in the city by type

Bristol has a diverse childcare sector delivered through a mixed economy of public, private, voluntary and independent sector providers.

During the past eight years Bristol has benefited from government childcare initiatives targeted at local authorities with deprived neighbourhoods, including funding for Neighbourhood Nurseries,

Sure Start Centres, out of school clubs, childminders and, more recently, significant investment in the development of Children's Centres.

The table below summarises the opening hours normally offered by different types of childcare and the age groups registered and catered for.

Type of childcare	Hours normally offered	Age groups registered for	Age groups catered for
Childminders	8.00am – 6.00pm	0–8 yrs	0–11yrs
Children's centres and day nurseries	8.00am – 6.00pm	0–5 yrs	0–5 yrs
Nursery education sessions provided in nursery classes, nursery schools and playgroups	9.00am – 11.30am 12.30pm – 3.00pm	3–4 yrs	3–4 yrs
Breakfast clubs	7.45am – 8.50am	3–8 yrs	3–11 yrs
After school clubs	3.15pm – 6.00pm	3–8 yrs	3–11 yrs
After School Activities	3.15pm – 4.30pm	4–15 yrs	4–15 yrs
Holiday playschemes	8.00am – 6.00pm	3–8 yrs	3–11 yrs

Currently citywide provision includes:

Type of childcare	Number of providers	Number of places
Childminders	450	2079
Daycare	128	4833
Nursery education (sessional places)	153	838
Out of school care, includes breakfast/after school/or holiday	156	5003 (sessional places)

The trends in the supply of childcare in Bristol reflect national trends in that, following a period of supported growth in the childcare market, challenges for sustaining that growth and levels of occupancy has meant a general decrease in the supply of childcare.

The provision of full daycare places for the under 5's is an exception. There has also been a growth in the number of free nursery education places for 3–4 year olds. Responses to our survey showed that although there were no significant plans for expansion in places for most types of provision, there was a planned expansion of up to 10% for daycare places for 2–4 year olds.

Mapping the supply of childcare to childhood population by type

One way of assessing whether there are sufficient types of childcare available is to look at the number of places available in the local area compared to the local childhood population.

For the purposes of this section of the report we are looking at electorate wards in the East and Central, North and South of the City for comparison.

The table to the right shows the number of places for 100 children by ward.

Key findings

■ Daycare places for children aged 0–2 years

Citywide averages in Bristol show that, currently, 10% of all children in this age group would be able to access a childcare place. There is a significant variation in the number of places available, with the highest number of places per population in the North of Bristol, in Westbury-on Trym and Cotham (over 40%).

Bristol Central and East has the highest number of wards with no childcare provision for this age group. There is no provision in Eastville, Lockleaze or St George West. Other wards with no provision are Bedminster and Brislington West, in the South of the city.

■ Daycare places for children aged 2–4 years

Citywide averages in Bristol show that, currently, 26% of all children in this age group would be able to access a childcare place. The highest number of places per population is in wards in the North of Bristol.

Bristol South has the highest number of wards with the lowest childcare provision for this age group. The wards of Hartcliffe, Brislington West, Windmill Hill, Bishopsworth and Bedminster have less than half the citywide average. Other areas of low provision are in the East of the city, in Easton, and in Lockleaze where there is no provision.

Supply of childcare per 100 children in Bristol

Area	Ward	Daycare places for 0–2 yr olds	Daycare places for 2–4 yr olds	Childminder places for 0–8 yr olds	Out of school places 5–11 yr olds
Bristol Central/ East	Ashley	6.38%	22.38%	4.67%	28.89%
	Easton	2.64%	8.99%	3.30%	4.24%
	Eastville	0.00%	15.32%	5.63%	15.58%
	Frome Vale	7.83%	36.58%	4.80%	30.07%
	Hillfields	2.64%	16.77%	5.00%	8.78%
	Lawrence Hill	12.72%	28.62%	0.56%	19.34%
	Lockleaze	0.00%	0.00%	5.42%	7.92%
	St George East	16.07%	37.05%	7.05%	0.00%
	St George West	0.00%	11.91%	5.89%	17.34%
	Average	5.4%	19.7%	4.7%	14.7%
Bristol North	Avonmouth	7.89%	14.08%	4.98%	22.58%
	Bishopston	5.13%	22.01%	12.66%	25.88%
	Cabot	30.43%	30.20%	0.00%	26.61%
	Clifton	0.60%	48.60%	2.02%	98.21%
	Clifton East	22.73%	70.47%	6.15%	51.74%
	Cotham	47.20%	97.44%	1.13%	33.66%
	Henbury	11.58%	28.05%	1.92%	9.99%
	Henleaze	10.39%	44.62%	9.18%	22.69%
	Horfield	18.48%	40.93%	9.46%	27.74%
	Kingsweston	9.00%	21.31%	2.99%	3.60%
	Redland	30.63%	81.62%	8.67%	39.04%
	Southmead	9.22%	12.87%	3.04%	8.01%
	Stoke Bishop	8.96%	31.60%	2.81%	9.42%
	Westbury-on-Trym	40.00%	56.05%	6.35%	15.34%
Average	18%	42.8%	5%	28%	
Bristol South	Bedminster	0.00%	12.42%	10.24%	3.97%
	Bishopsworth	4.11%	10.95%	5.71%	9.96%
	Brislington East	15.54%	40.49%	8.90%	24.77%
	Brislington West	0.00%	6.23%	5.38%	19.49%
	Filwood	6.30%	14.97%	2.38%	10.28%
	Hartcliffe	3.52%	3.99%	3.56%	8.75%
	Hengrove	7.17%	32.68%	5.77%	0.00%
	Knowle	7.84%	32.23%	10.85%	0.00%
	Southville	37.07%	55.32%	6.70%	30.63%
	Stockwood	6.11%	19.39%	7.56%	11.29%
	Whitchurch Park	0.93%	30.92%	4.20%	9.27%
	Windmill Hill	0.83%	6.21%	8.48%	12.82%
Average	7%	22%	6.6%	12%	
City average	9.8%	26.2%	5.5%	16.2%	

■ **Childminding places for children aged 0–8 years**

Citywide averages in Bristol show that, currently, 5% of all children in this age group would be able to access a childcare place.

Bristol North has the most wards with little or no childminding provision for children aged 0–8. There are no childminders in Cabot, and very little provision in Cotham, Henbury, Clifton and Stoke Bishop.

■ **Nursery education places for eligible 3 and 4 year olds**

The city average for the take-up of free nursery education places is 88%. Lowest take-up was in St George East, Frome Vale and Cabot (between around 65% and 75%) and high levels of take-up in Redland, Stoke Bishop, Knowle and Windmill Hill (100%).

■ **Out of school places for children aged between 5–11 years**

Citywide averages in Bristol show that, currently, 16% of all children in this age group would be able to access a childcare place.

Bristol South and Bristol Central and East have wards with the least number of out of school places. There are no out of school places in Hengrove, Knowle and St George East. Bedminster and Easton have very few places and in the North of Bristol, Kingsweston also has places well below the city average.

Childcare gaps

In order to narrow the gap of childcare provision per population of 100 children, the following number of places are needed (Area totals) to bring places up to the citywide average.

Area	Daycare 0–2 yr olds	Daycare 2–4 yr olds	Childminding 0–8 yr olds	Out of school care 5–11 yr olds
Bristol Central & East	50	80	7	51
Bristol North	19	34	21	34
Bristol South	63	114	5	78

In assessing the sufficiency of the opening hours of childcare provision for working parents, we have used the following information from our survey:

- The demand for childcare by parents at different times of the day, at weekends and in the school holidays by the type of provision of choice.
- The supply of childcare available at those times.
- Snapshots of waiting lists for part-time and full time care.
- What parents say about opening hours.

Childcare for the under 5's: Childminder and daycare provision

Our survey results showed that citywide there is a supply of provision for childcare at different times of day and school holidays, to match parental demand. This does not assume that the provision is in the right location, but it does give an indication of how the childcare market is responding to changes in overall demand.

Childminders are providing the most flexible childcare in that they are more available to provide care in the school holidays, for children under 5, than school based settings, and are more likely than other providers to provide weekend and overnight care.

Out of school providers

Out of school providers are by definition open at specific times of the day and year to provide care for groups of children during the hours that school is not open. Parents who responded to our survey expressed a significantly increased need for after school care in the next 12 months in relation to current use.

Number of hours childcare is needed

Our survey results show parents typically used childcare for less than 16 hours per week and would continue to do so in the next 12 months.

Waiting lists and occupancy rates

The information on the next page (page 10) on waiting lists for daycare providers (from our survey) and childminders (from our database) indicates that the highest pressure is on demand for part-time places particularly for children aged 2–4. The full childcare sufficiency report contains ward data with a breakdown of waiting lists and occupancy rates.

Parental satisfaction with opening hours

Over 90% of parents who responded were either satisfied or very satisfied with the opening hours of their childcare.

Improvements parents would like to see

- Increased availability of wrap-around care on site, for children accessing nursery education grant so that parents can work and make use of the nursery education grant.
- More flexible provision, e.g. hours that suit parents working shifts (healthcare workers etc), hours that suit parents who do not work regular hours/days.
- More flexible childcare for younger children.

Childminder waiting lists and occupancy rates citywide ward average

	Full-time	Part-time
Waiting lists	0.28	1
Vacancies	6	6

Daycare provider waiting lists and occupancy rates citywide ward average (0–2 yrs)

	Full-time	Part-time
Waiting lists	0	17
Vacancies	11	6

Daycare provider waiting lists and occupancy rates citywide ward average (2–4 yrs)

	Full-time	Part-time
Waiting lists	0	28
Vacancies	12	6

The highest pressure of places for children under 5 is for part-time places.

Over 5's citywide ward average

	Vacancies	Waiting lists
Full-time breakfast provision	1.54	0.29
Full-time after school provision	4.00	1.00
Full-time holiday provision	5.31	0.29
Part-time breakfast provision	2.86	0.29
Part-time afterschool provision	12.30	1.29
Part-time holiday provision – AM	11.20	0.14
Part-time holiday provision – PM	7.83	0.14

We have assessed the quality of childcare in Bristol by looking at the results of the latest OfSTED inspections, quality standards, staff qualification and training, and by what parents from our survey have told us about the quality of childcare for their children. Findings highlight that the quality of childcare in Bristol is continuously improving with high rates of satisfaction from parents.

OfSTED inspections

There have been 391 Childcare Inspections completed between April 2005 and September 2007 in Bristol and a total of 58 Nursery Education Inspections. In total 52.4% of childcare providers were judged good or outstanding. This compares to 60.6% of childcare providers in England.

Voluntary Childcare Register

The new voluntary part of the Childcare Register offers the choice of registration to providers of childcare for the over 8's and who are not eligible for the compulsory OfSTED registers. In addition to safeguarding children this can give parents the confidence that quality of care is being provided. This will help raise the standard of provision for older children across the city.

Quality Improvement Principles

The Quality Improvement Principles were launched in 2007 by the National Improvement Network (commissioned by the National Children's Bureau). Bristol has a representative on the South West Quality Improvement Network which has a remit of enabling early years and childcare settings in each region to achieve the highest standards of practice through whole staff engagement in continuous quality improvement processes.

Quality Standards

Quality Assurance – Bristol Standard

The self-evaluation framework, known as the Bristol Standard, is designed to help nurseries, pre-schools, reception classes and childminders to reflect on, assess and improve their practice. The Standard has an excellent reputation and is nationally acclaimed. The Bristol Standard (over 5's) has been developed more recently.

In Bristol we have:

- 76 providers accredited with the Standard and in addition a further 141 providers working towards it. Seven out of school groups achieved validation of the Bristol Standard with a further five groups being validated.
- 38 childminders are working towards the NCMA quality standard or the Bristol Standard.

Quality Assurance – BAND Standards

In addition to the Bristol Standard and OfSTED Standards, after school clubs, holiday schemes and breakfast clubs running on a not-for-profit basis are also eligible to join BAND as full members if they reach the BAND criteria. These standards exceed OfSTED minimum standards.

BAND is a local umbrella organisation which supports and develops childcare provision in and around Bristol.

At present 54 out of school clubs are full BAND members and are monitored for BAND quality standards annually.

Staff qualifications

71% of staff in daycare settings hold Level 3 qualifications, 13% Level 2 and 16% level 4.

An increase in the number of practitioners achieving qualifications at level 4 and above, and an increase in the number of settings employing graduates will contribute towards Bristol meeting the 07/08 staff qualification targets set by the Government.

Training

The EYCS gives a bursary of 90% towards the cost of course fees for a wide range of courses from introductory level up to degree level. 349 early years and childcare practitioners, including childminders, received bursaries between 1 April and 28 November 2007.

What parents say about the quality

When parents were asked about factors affecting childcare choice 'quality' was one of the most important. Generally parents are happy with quality of childcare across the city with positive comments far outweighing negative comments. Parents would like to see the high quality of childcare in Bristol maintained, but with lower costs and greater choice on the availability of quality childcare.

Positive comments

- "I find the standard of the two settings I have used for my son to be very high. Well done Bristol!"
- "Have used full time nursery and after school care – both very high quality and professional."
- "The nursery is excellent and I am very satisfied that my son is well cared for and is safe and secure in my absence."
- "I use two different childminders, both are excellent."

Improvements parents would like to see

- Quality childcare that is affordable: The care and provision is excellent, but the cost very high.
- Consistent quality of provision across the city.
- Good quality safe childcare available during the evenings for parents who work 'unsociable' hours.
- Better quality after school/out of school provision and holiday clubs.
- The quality of nursery provision in our area is high quality, but demand is beginning to outstrip supply.

The cost of childcare was seen as a major cause of concern, both in our survey and in focus group feedback. Parents least able to afford childcare are; parents on low incomes, lone parents, parents of disabled children, parents who are studying or training and parents with more than two children. Parents with pre-school children have also reported that the cost of care is a barrier to using formal childcare.

The cost of childcare in Bristol

Information provided by childcare providers shows that the cost of childcare in Bristol varies from one area to another. The table below highlights this and compares the range of costs to the national average.

Our survey shows that childcare in the most disadvantaged areas are comparable or less than the city average.

Childcare is most affordable when parents do not have to pay deposits to secure a place, or make payments in advance. Charges per hour of use, payment plans for families on low incomes and discounts for siblings also make childcare more affordable.

Daycare provider waiting lists and occupancy rates citywide ward average (2–4 yrs)

	Lowest charge per hour	Highest charge per hour	Average hourly cost in Bristol	Average hourly Regional cost in England ³
Daycare for under 2's	£3.20 in Easton	£7.00 in Westbury-on-Trym	£4.70	£3.18
Daycare for 2–4's	£3.20 in Easton	£6.00 in Westbury-on-Trym and Stoke Bishop	£4.67	£2.98
Childminders	£2.47 in Hillfields	£5.00 in Stoke Bishop	£3.98	£2.93
Out of school providers ⁴	£0.50 in Knowle West	£3.36 in Redland	£1.95	£2.86
Holiday playscheme ⁵	£0.40 in St Pauls	£3.60 in Clifton East	£1.65	£2.86

³ Source: Daycare Trust Childcare cost survey 2008 based on 50 hours a week in a nursery or with a childminder and 15 hours a week at an out of school club

⁴ Source: Information provided by CYPIS from citywide information

⁵ Source: Information provided by CYPIS from citywide information

Childcare providers who responded to our survey reported the following:

Deposits	63% required some form of deposit.
Payments in advance	67% required one month's fee in advance.
Payment plans	61% reported that they had no payment plans for families on low incomes.
Discounts	53% reported that they had no discounted rates for siblings.
Charging period	67% reported that charging was by session, 32% by the day, and 19% by the hour.

Lone parents and childcare costs

Lone parents are twice as likely as families with two parents or carers to use formal childcare⁷ but are also most likely to be in low income employment. 2005–06 figures show that 37% of families in Bristol were lone parent families. There is significant variation in the distribution of lone parents in the city, with lone parents in Lawrence Hill twice the city average.

The table below shows Bristol wards with the highest percentage of lone parents, and those with the highest number of lone parents claiming support costs for childcare through Working Tax Credits. Demand for childcare and demand for affordable childcare is likely to be higher than average in these wards.

Parents on a low income

Parents claiming the childcare element of Working Tax Credits

An average of 8% of working families in Bristol claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Working parents whose income is low enough to qualify for help with childcare costs tend to live in the Central and East, and South of the city⁶.

Highest % of lone parents		Highest % claiming childcare element of Tax Credits	
Ward	%	Ward	%
Lawrence Hill	64	Southville	32
Ashley	54	St George West	30
Clifton East	52	Lawrence Hill	29
Henbury	48	Easton	29
City average	37	City average	19

⁶ Source: HM Revenue & Customs – Child Tax Credit Statistics Finalised 2005–06 awards

⁷ Source: Department for Work & Pensions. Childcare use and mothers' employment: A review of British data sources. Working Paper 16. 2004

Parents in Bristol were also making use of other support available for help with childcare costs. This included:

- Supported daycare scheme – support from Bristol City Council to parents with children in need
- Care To Learn – support for teenage parents who want to continue with study or training
- Employer run childcare voucher schemes
- Employer subsidies.

The largest source of help with childcare costs from the above was the use of childcare vouchers by arrangements with employers, also known as the “salary sacrifice” scheme.

What parents are saying about childcare costs

Parents in our survey considered the cost of childcare as an important or very important factor in choosing childcare. We received more comments about childcare costs than other aspect of childcare. These are a sample of comments received:

Positive comments

- Parents who were satisfied with the cost of childcare measured this against the benefits of childcare for themselves and their children.
- Parents put a high value on the well being and happiness of the children and these parents would pay more if they had to for excellence in quality of childcare.
- Parents were also satisfied if they had the choice to access competitively priced childcare i.e. if they were paying the “going rate”.

The majority of parents who submitted comments, however, found childcare unaffordable and had given up work or changed their working patterns because of this. As expected, parents who said they found childcare costs a struggle were pre-dominantly parents using daycare for pre-school children, parents with disabled children, lone parents, parents on a low income, parents with more than one child, and parents living in areas where childcare costs are high.

Improvements parents would like to see to make childcare affordable:

- Improved thresholds and ceilings for help with childcare costs for working parents, improved support through the tax and child benefit system.
- Discounted sibling rates for parents with more than one child.
- Incentives for employers to subsidise childcare costs.
- Lower rates for periods when child is not in childcare.
- More childcare for pre-school children to increase competitive fees.
- Regular billing by providers so parents can budget better.

Maps

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report includes a map of each of the 35 wards in Bristol with the location of childcare settings in the ward, to give an indication of the density of childcare settings and to allow for reference to childcare provision in neighbouring wards which parents may use.

Ward maps are available as separate documents for each of Bristol's three Areas.

Parents' views

Parents' views on the location of childcare can be summarised as follows:

- From the responses received from parents citywide, 58.1% were very satisfied and 32.3% satisfied with the location of their childcare.
- Most parents wanted childcare to be located close to home, with childcare close to school as the second most popular choice.
- Most parents would be prepared to travel up to three miles to access childcare.

What parents say about the location of childcare

Positive comments

- Pre-school and after school facilities were thought to be the best as little travelling was involved.
- Parents wanted more schools to offer their premises during the holidays.
- Local childcare was important because family members would be able to collect the children if need be.

Improvements parents would like to see

- More childcare close to school facilities, preferably in school.
- More childcare close to public transport facilities.

Childcare information

Accurate, up to date information on local childcare is essential if parents are to make informed choices on the range of childcare services available.

Parents who took part in our survey were asked to tell us how they found out about childcare in their area. By far the biggest method of accessing information is by word of mouth i.e. through recommendations from friends and family. Schools and the Children and Young People's Information Service (CYPIS) were the second most commonly used source.

Figures from the CYPIS showed that between April 06 to March 07, 20,000 families contacted the service with enquiries related to childcare information; 57% of callers found the type of childcare they required with 11% being unable to access their childcare requirement.

Over 93% of callers would use the service again and customer satisfaction rates for the service are high with 94% of callers rating the service excellent or good.

What parents say about accessing childcare information

Comments from parents surveyed on improvements they would like to see on accessing childcare information

- CYPIS to provide on-line information that is updated regularly.
- Better search facilities on the CYPIS database, links to OfSTED Reports and better access to contact details.
- More providers to have their own websites.
- Schools to provide more information.
- Schools to display information about childcare e.g. posters and leaflets.
- Information/help in finding childcare, understanding childcare and accessing childcare to be easily accessible to parents who do not already have access to other social or council services.

In planning childcare services it is important for us to listen to what parents consider to be important in making childcare choices. We received a 100% response to the question about what parents took into account when choosing childcare. Factors taken into account are listed in order of importance:

- Safety and security
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Qualified staff
- Good facilities
- Close to home
- Costs/charges
- Close to school
- Close to work
- Caters for additional needs.

When choosing childcare the majority of parents across the city would like their children to be in a safe and secure environment that offers good facilities, a welcoming atmosphere and staff who are qualified. These factors were more important than cost and location.

What parents are saying about other factors they consider when choosing childcare

- Opening hours/flexibility to accommodate hours that vary from week to week
- Offers a good range of facilities and variety of activities
- OfSTED report
- Recommendations from friends/other parents
- Quality of care provided – happy children
- Reliability of service provided
- Short waiting lists
- Facilities offered for children of different ages so that children from one family can all go to the same place
- Catering provided must be good quality, fresh, healthy and nutritional.

Barriers to finding childcare

We received a 99% response to our question on difficulties parents experienced in finding childcare. 63.40% of parents reported experiencing no difficulty in finding suitable childcare with 36.50% saying that they experienced some difficulties.

Barriers ranged from 'quality' and 'distance' to 'fees'. However the highest percentage of respondents reported 'hours on offer' as the main barrier to choosing childcare.

Parents who lived in the more deprived areas of Bristol were significantly more likely to experience difficulties in finding suitable childcare.

What parents are saying about barriers to childcare

The parent questionnaire responses have highlighted flexibility and availability as the most frequently occurring barriers to accessing childcare.

Improvements parents would like to see regarding flexibility

- More childcare that fits around school hours
- More one-off childcare
- Flexibility to accommodate hours/days that vary from week to week, sometimes at short notice
- Childcare that can accommodate children of different ages: At one point they were in three different types of care.

Improvements parents would like to see regarding availability

- Shorter waiting lists
- More local choice
- 'Official' childcare for evenings and weekends.

Black and Minority Ethnic children

Ethnic backgrounds of children in Bristol

The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) taken on 18th January 2007 shows that:

- Most of the pupils in the nursery years were from the White British ethnic group (67.5%). The largest BME groups are: Black African at 6.8% and Pakistani at 4.5%
- Most of the pupils in Bristol LA schools were from White British backgrounds (75.9%). The largest minority ethnic group is Mixed White and Black Caribbean, followed very closely by Black Somali.

The same Census showed a wide variation between Bristol wards of where BME pupils live. In Bristol Central and East, i.e. Lawrence Hill, Easton Ashley and Eastville, more than half the children in YR R to Yr 11 were from non-White British background.

National research

In June 2007, the Daycare Trust conducted a survey of the views of Black and minority ethnic parents on childcare⁸ and highlighted:

- BME families experience higher levels of poverty.
- Black women are the most economically active of all women but are the most likely to be in poorly paid and unsocial hours work; and more likely to be lone parents than White women.
- Black Caribbean and mixed race ethnic groups were more likely to have received childcare in the last week than the other main ethnic groups, including Black African, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

⁸ Source: Listening to black and minority ethnic parents about childcare: Daycare Trust July 2007.

Our findings from the Bristol survey show that these characteristics are closely reflected and influence the childcare needs of BME parents in Bristol.

The childcare needs of parents of BME children in Bristol

The common themes emerging from our interviews and focus groups were:

- A reliance on family and friends for childcare.
- Insufficient childcare support available for parents to access training and employment opportunities and lack of awareness of existing support arrangements.
- Lack of knowledge about how to find childcare, and about help with childcare costs and general unfamiliarity with types of childcare provision in Bristol, including early education.
- Most of the parents were on low incomes and transport difficulties and costs of childcare were identified as barriers to using childcare.
- Many parents felt that there was no provision to cater for their needs and that they would find it difficult to communicate with childcare staff about their child's progress and well-being at the childcare setting.
- Parents were concerned that their children would be bullied and were not confident about how well their children would be protected.

Take-up of childcare places by BME children

At the time of our survey, there was proportionally less take-up of childcare places by BME children than by White British children.

In provision for children under 5 there was 12% less take-up; for nursery education 16% less take-up; and for after school care 11% less take-up.

Disabled children

National research

Work undertaken for the Government's Disabled Children's Review on the costs and benefits of childcare for disabled children estimates that there are significant monetary benefits for parents from increased employment.⁹

In September 2006, a campaign briefing by Every Disabled Child Matters presented the results of research and surveys which highlighted the experiences and concerns of the parents of disabled children seeking childcare. These included:

- No funding to increase the number of places for childcare for disabled children
- Local authorities not planning childcare based on the increased numbers of disabled children
- Families with disabled children not being consulted about their childcare needs
- Current tax credit ceilings and rules do not make childcare affordable for families with a disabled child.
- **Disabled children are less likely to be looked after by grandparents than other children and are more reliant on formal childcare.**

The parents of disabled children we surveyed had similar comments to make as those reported above, particularly in relation to the prohibitive cost of childcare for disabled children, which continues to deny the opportunity for parents to seek or remain in employment.

⁹ Source: Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families, May 2007, HM Treasury

Disabled children in Bristol

It is recognised both nationally and locally that the quality and level of data on the number of disabled children is insufficient for service planning and efforts are currently underway to improve this.

The 2001 Census self reported figures identified where dependent children in Bristol with a limiting long-term illness or disability lived. The wards with the highest number of disabled children are the wards where there are high levels of deprivation. The city average for the number of disabled children in 2007 with a limiting long-term illness or disability is estimated at 9%.

The views of parents with disabled children

What parents of disabled children think about childcare

Although we received very positive comments about individual childcare providers, the majority of parents with disabled children were finding it difficult to access appropriate childcare. Some of their concerns are set out below:

- Parents wanted more support for childcare providers, particularly childminders so that they could provide inclusive provision.
- Parents of disabled children should be given additional support and possibly funding to meet childcare costs.
- There was also a need for registered childcare linked to special schools.
- Parents asked for better quality and better co-ordinated childcare information.
- The lack of provision of continued care needed by older children was a cause of worry and anxiety for parents.

Childcare for older children

The Early Years and Childcare Service is developing strong working links with the Extended Schools Partnership towards our shared aims of ensuring that there is access to high quality childcare on school sites or through other local providers all year round, from 8am to 6pm.

The Extended Schools Partnership also co-ordinates the provision of out of school activities, which some parents use while they are in work as a form of supervised childcare.

Childcare supply for school aged children

The chart below sets out the current patterns of supply of primary schools which provide access to out of school care and out of school activities. We have also included for reference the number of out of school places per 100 children aged 5–11 in the area.

Bristol Central and East

Total number of primary schools	32
% of schools with links to out of school care	100%
The number of out of school places per 100 children aged 5–11 in the area	15%

Bristol North

Total number of schools	38
% of schools with links to out of school care	90%
The number of out of school places per 100 children aged 5–11 in the area	23%

Bristol South

Total number of schools	44
% of schools with links to out of school care	89%
The number of out of school places per 100 children aged 5–11 in the area	11%

Childcare for children over 11

Child population figures show that there are currently 13,734 children aged between 12–14 in Bristol. The distribution of this population is as follows:

Bristol Central and East	28.92%
Bristol North	34.34%
Bristol South	36.74%

Patterns of childcare use by parents with children aged 12 to 14

Only 10% of parents in our survey had children in this age group. The most common form of childcare currently used by those families for children aged 5–14 include out of school activities, families and friends.

Comments from our parents' survey has shown that childcare for over 11's is often difficult to find or is expensive. We have identified the Extended Schools Service and Young People's Service as two of our key partners in developing affordable services which enable parents with children aged 12–14 to work or study, confident that their older children are in a safe learning or leisure environment.

Teenage parents

Compared to England, Bristol has a higher teenage pregnancy rate. Data from 'Catching in the Rye 2006' shows the following wards as having the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Bristol:

- Ashley
- Avonmouth
- Filwood
- Henbury
- Lawrence Hill
- Whitchurch Park

This reflects national research which has found that girls from the poorest backgrounds are ten times more likely to become teenage mothers than girls from professional backgrounds.

The common themes emerging from our focus group with teenage parents were:

- Lack of information available about how to find childcare, with most parents doing their own research or relying on recommendations from family and friends.
- **Barriers to accessing childcare included long waiting lists, opening hours, flexibility and a lack of baby places.**
- Parents would like childcare within walking distance of their home or college; however the quality of provision overrides the location.

It is important to note that 80% of the focus group had their childcare paid for by funding from the Care To Learn scheme and therefore cost of childcare was not an issue at present. However general consensus was that childcare in Bristol is too expensive and therefore it would not be worth going to work if they had to pay for it.

Student parents aged 20 years or more

The Government has made available extra money through a number of sources for help with childcare costs for parents who are studying or training. This includes the Learner Support Funds, the Childcare Grant for students on low incomes, the Access to Learning Fund and Childcare Bursaries which are managed by the Early Years and Childcare Service.

The co-ordination of funding and access to funding for childcare costs for training or studying parents is an issue which needs to be addressed, particularly for specific communities. This is essential if we are to support parents in improving their skills and knowledge to lift their families out of unemployment or poor income.

Listening to children

We used an experienced childcare consultant to find out what children think about their childcare as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The consultant worked with young children in daycare provision and with children of school age attending out of school provision.

Children under 5

Learning Story observations were the main method of consulting young children. This involved making observations of groups and individual children and recording children's comments in relation to the Learning Story framework of Belonging, Well-Being, Exploration, Communication and Contribution.

An analysis of the findings shows that the majority of participating children enjoy and benefit from their early years provision. The majority of children attending many different kinds of early years provision in Bristol were thought to be "happy and playful" in their settings. Specific recommendations were made in relation to children's learning and in incorporating young children's home and family lives into discussions, activities and resources.

Consulting with older children

The main method of investigating what children and young people thought about their out of school care was through a questionnaire.

They were asked to respond to a rating scale, with statements linked to the outcomes in Every Child Matters, and answer two open questions. In addition, some limited Learning Story observations were carried out in some of the settings, where time permitted.

It confirmed that children in out of school care would often like more access to outside space and also identified that boys feel less well listened to than girls and are less likely to share problems that may arise during the school day, in their childcare setting.

The outcome of this consultation is that the majority of children and young people using services in Bristol, on the whole, enjoy and participate in their childcare provision. Those that do not are usually clear about stating a preference for being at home.

A full copy of the children's consultation conducted by Kate Hulm is available from our office and on-line.

Small, medium and large employers in Bristol were canvassed during June – October 2007, with questionnaires asking for details of their specific business, their staff and the support they provide or hoped to provide for working parents.

Employers who responded to our survey reflected the demographics of Bristol's business sector, as the majority of respondents were from the public administration, education and health sectors. We also received a range of responses from different sized companies.

The response from employers showed that:

- 82.5% thought that the availability of childcare did not impact on the recruitment or retention of their employees.
- The majority of responses, 59%, did know where to get information on local childcare provision. 34% would direct employees to the Children & Young People's Information Service, 23% would signpost to local childcare providers and 20% would use the internet.
- 52% of businesses did have a member of staff who takes responsibility for supporting staff with childcare information.
- 21% of employers would like us to contact them so that we can provide them with information on Working Tax Credits, Children & Young People's Information Service and advice on introducing family friendly policies.

It appears that employers are increasingly providing flexible working arrangements and leave for parents as part of their employee benefits, as well as introducing salary sacrifice childcare vouchers. It is noted that the introduction of flexible working may be influenced by recent employment legislation.

Employers reported that in the next 12 months this trend will continue, and employers will be providing more information to employees on Working Tax Credits.

If you would like this information in a different format, for example braille, audiotape, large print or computer disk, or community languages, please contact Administration Team, Early Years and Childcare 0117 903 7426

positive contribution stay safe enjoy and
 achieve economic well-being be healthy
 it's in our hands

2005-2006
Promoting Racial Equality
 2006-2007
*Transforming the Delivery of
 Services Through Partnerships*
 2007-2008
Healthy Schools
 2007-2008
*Preventing and Tackling
 Anti-social Behaviour*

