

# CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2011

Executive summary



## INTRODUCTION

The Childcare Act 2006 legislates the government's aim for high quality early learning and childcare services for children who are under 5 and their families. It places a series of duties on every local authority to manage their local childcare markets and work in partnership with their NHS and Jobcentre Plus partners to improve outcomes for children and reduce inequalities.

Section 11 of the Childcare Act states that all local authorities must carry out a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years, which should be regularly updated if there are any significant changes that could impact on the childcare market.

Section 6 states that this assessment is the key framework to ensure the delivery of the duty to provide sufficient, high quality, flexible childcare for parents in order for them to take up, or remain in work or to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

This is the second assessment, which will measure the extent of need for, and supply of, childcare within each of Plymouth's six localities. It will enable us to identify where there are gaps in the market. It will not only look at the current position, but also have regard to trends or developments that are likely to affect demand and supply in the foreseeable future. Using this information an action plan will be developed with partner agencies to support the childcare market.

Since the last assessment in 2008, there have been some significant changes in the early learning and childcare policy. Key strategic changes have had an impact on the delivery of childcare places and have included the extension of the nursery entitlement from 12.5 hours a week to 15 hours, the implementation of the single formula funding and the introduction of 10 hours of early learning and childcare for 2 year olds for 100 targeted, vulnerable children.

## CONTEXT

The strategic vision is for Plymouth to become one of Europe's finest waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.

As a Plymouth2020 theme group, the Children and Young People's Trust contributes to the City's vision and four shared priorities:

- **Delivering Growth:** Developing Plymouth as a thriving growth centre by creating the conditions for investment in quality homes, jobs and infrastructure
- **Raising Aspiration:** Promoting Plymouth and encouraging people to aim higher and take pride in the City
- **Reducing Inequality:** Reducing the inequality gap, particularly in health, between communities

- **Providing Value for communities:** Working together to maximise resources to benefit customers and make internal efficiencies

The Early Years Strategic Partnership as a sub-group of the Children and Young People's Trust aims to "improve outcomes for all children and to narrow the gap between those who are the most and the least vulnerable through the provision of child centred, high quality, safe, inclusive and integrated services for young children".

Having sufficient, high quality, affordable, accessible early learning and childcare is vitally important to support two of the key building blocks that have been identified to reduce child poverty.

- **Employment and adult skills:** Increasing employment and raising incomes, so more parents are in work that pays.
- **Services for children, young people and families, in particular education, health and family support:** Improving poor children's life chances, so poverty in childhood does not translate into poor outcomes.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

One of Plymouth strategic aims is to increase the city's population from 248,000 in 2005 to around 300,000 by 2026, with an additional 50,000 in the surrounding area. Plymouth currently has a population of 256,700 according to the 2009 mid year estimate by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), with a further 100,000 in its travel-to-work area. It is mainly white, but with a growing minority ethnic population. Around 40,000 students reside in the city, with the result that the percentage of 20-24 year olds is higher than that found nationally. The proportion of the working age population is also higher than that nationally, with that for older people below average.

### Key factors which impact on the childcare sufficiency assessment are:

- There is currently a baby boom and increased numbers of children are being born within the most deprived areas (SW and NW) and this will place an increased demand on early learning and childcare places.
- 41% of children and young people (0-17) live in the most deprived localities.
- Deprivation in Plymouth is significantly higher than the national average.
- Almost one in three of Plymouth's most condensed urban areas are ranked among the most deprived 20% in England. Two of these areas are among the most deprived 1% in England.
- One in four children and young people are living in families receiving means tested benefits.
- Just under half (46%) of all children who have a SEN live in the two most deprived localities.
- Disabled children and young people do not participate in sport and leisure activities as much as non-disabled children.

- Parents want to be engaged in their children’s learning at many levels. They say that they need clear and accessible information about what is on offer to their children in pre-school, school and post 16 settings.

## Child population

The city has experienced a ‘baby boom’ since 2001 but particularly during the last year. The number of children under one has recorded a year on year increase from 2,172 in 2001 to 3,578 in 2009, representing a 64% increase. Birth rates in 2009 rose 18.3% alone. This is particularly significant in the South West and the North West localities, the implications of which will be seen later in this needs analysis. The table below predicts **birth rates** until 2014.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central & North East	608	648	650	749	721	716	723	725	728
North West	638	663	630	725	722	709	710	714	720
Plymstock	236	230	233	237	255	248	249	247	252
Plympton	315	328	308	373	360	354	355	359	360
South East	474	491	482	607	557	551	559	566	563
South West	702	746	721	887	829	822	830	839	837
Total	2973	3106	3024	3578	3444	3400	3425	3450	3460

## Population (0-17) by Locality

Locality	0-17yrs %
Central/North East	24%
North West	21%
Plympton	12%
Plymstock	10%
South East	13%
South West	20%
<b>Plymouth City</b>	<b>100%</b>

64% of all children and young people aged 0-17 live in three localities. 41% of children and young people live in the South West and North West and as demonstrated later in this analysis, children and young people living in these two localities are significantly disadvantaged.

## **Population projections for children and young people:**

Thirty years ago, 22% of the UK population was aged under 16. In 2006, 19 per cent of the population were aged under 16. By 2031, it is projected that 18 per cent of the population will be aged under 16.

The average age in Plymouth is about the same as the figure for England, but less than the south west region. The figures for 2008 indicate Plymouth at an average age of 38.5, England at 38.6, and the South West at 40.6).

Plymouth has the third lowest percentage of older people, and the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest percentage of children in the South west.

## **METHODOLOGY**

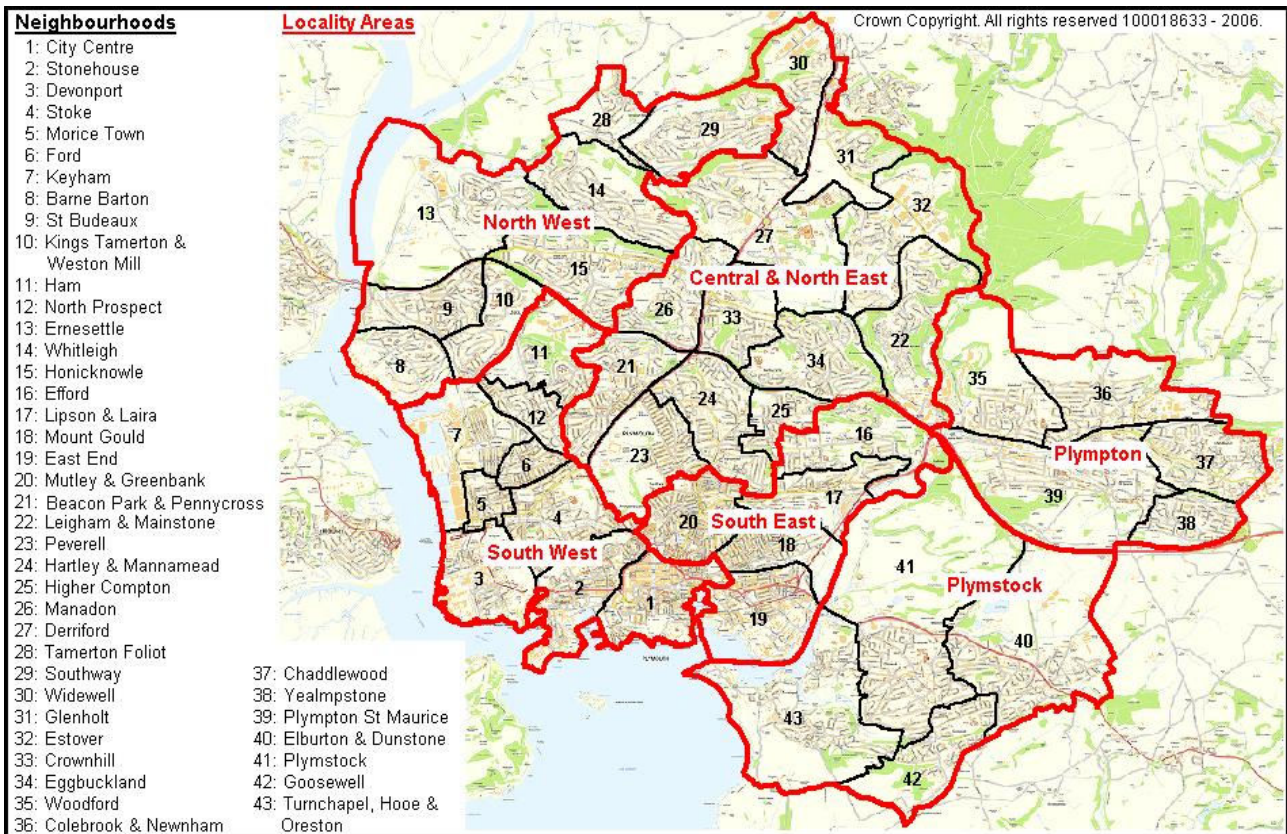
In order to gain an understanding of the needs (demand) for childcare, consultations were carried out with parents and carers, stakeholders including Family Information Service, Jobcentre Plus and children centre managers and employers.

To establish the supply of childcare, desktop research and consultation with providers also took place. . Analysis will show the correlation between the supply, demand and take-up of childcare places.

Since the last assessment in 2008, there have been some significant changes in the early learning and childcare policy. Key strategic changes have included the extension of the nursery entitlement from 12.5 hours a week to 15 hours, the implementation of the single formula funding as a pathfinder and the introduction of 10 hours of early learning and childcare for 2 year olds for 100 disadvantaged children

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is reported at a sub-locality level in order to help identify where gaps in services exist and to identify areas where there are specific issues.

Plymouth is working towards a model of locality service delivery, which will see Locality Commissioning Groups of key partner stakeholders come together in each locality in order to deliver services. Therefore, the six localities already created will be used to report our findings. These localities can be seen in the map below.



## DEMAND

In order to establish a clear understanding for the childcare needs of parents and carers in Plymouth a series of consultations were carried out. Family Information Service sent out questionnaires to all its clients who had used the range of projects that they provide. **302** responses were received by the closing date

Children centres managers and the early years team also distributed questionnaires carried out consultations at many events in the City throughout 2010, including Schools Out and National Play Day. **100** responses were collected.

The Family Support Survey 2010 is a survey for parents and carers to express their views on the family support services available. Questionnaires were completed at the Parents on the Plaza Event on Saturday 16 October 2010, groups and events organised by Parent Support Advisers and also through various Parent Partnership groups and events. The survey included specifically designed questions on childcare. 716 Questionnaires were returned.

Red Door Associates carried out consultations with some of Plymouth's children centres, between November 2010 and February 2011 which included telephone interviews with parents about the services that were provided, including childcare.

**From all these responses the key findings and/or perceptions are:**

Geographical gaps

- There are insufficient childcare places in the Barne Barton, Stonehouse areas
- Limited places in the area

Types and/or Age gaps

- There are insufficient places for children under 2 in the Barne Barton and Stonehouse areas
- Childcare for secondary school age children
- Holiday Places for special needs children

Affordability

- It was generally felt that childcare in the city was expensive, especially for those on the minimum wage or with more than 1 child.
- Many parents use family members, including older children and friends and stated that this is to reduce childcare costs.
- Parents share the childcare by working different hours or due to unemployment of 1 partner
- Finding fees in advance when starting employment (can be 1 month plus a registration fee.)
- Majority increase use when child becomes eligible for free places

Flexibility

- There was significant unmet demand for childcare places that opened earlier than 8 am and closed later than 6 pm
- Shift workers found childcare was not flexible enough to meet their needs
- More Day care open on Saturdays

Other

- The impact of the Little Teds incident

## **Use of informal childcare**

The main reasons provided by respondents for not using formal childcare were:

- They did not need formal childcare (not working)
- Their child/dren were too old to attend
- Their child is too young to attend
- The cost of formal childcare was prohibitive
- Childcare shared with partner
- Quality of childcare
- It didn't meet their child/ren's additional/special needs',
- They would not leave their children with strangers
- Formal childcare does not offer the hours required

The more detailed parental questionnaire attracted 302 responses of which 288 were from parents and carers for whom we could identify a locality for the analysis. There were significantly more responses from the north west locality and although we have included parents views in the assessment it has already been identified as a priority area. This detailed information is contained in the full assessment

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

### **Employers**

The views of employers were sought in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff. Plymouth City Council's Economic Development Officer sent out a questionnaire to employers to ascertain whether the use or lack of childcare had any impact on recruitment or retention of staff.

Those who responded felt that childcare had little impact on their recruitment or retention. However the majority supported their work force by offering part time or annualised hours, childcare vouchers and information on tax credits.

### **Family Information Services**

The Family Information Service, (FIS), which is funded by Plymouth City Council and managed by Routeways Centre Ltd, offers families free friendly and impartial guidance on childcare and out of school activities.

Key findings for FIS clients:

- Difficult to access childcare to attend interviews.
- Childcare does not start early enough.
- Flexibility of childcare to suit irregular shifts or short notice shifts.
- Baby Places not available in some areas.
- Cost of childcare comparative to earnings.
- Finding fees in advance when starting employment (can be 1 month plus a registration fee.)
- Holiday Places for special needs children.
- May not be sufficient in some localities with new housing
- Not comfortable with leaving child/ren with someone they don't know. It can be a very daunting thing for a parent to leave a child when returning to work.
- More day care providers to be open on Saturdays

## **Jobcentre Plus**

Key issues from clients using Jobcentre Plus were

- Lack of places in Stonehouse
- The challenge for clients to find childcare for children of different ages
- The impact of the Little Teds incident
- The reduction in tax credit support from 80% - 70%
- More people are expected to be actively seeking work after the Incapacity Benefit re-assessment.
- More information about what is available in the holidays
- Having to pay childcare costs in advance
- Childcare for secondary school age children

## **SUPPLY**

Since the last assessment the number of childcare places in the day care sector has been gradually increasing particularly for 2 year olds.

There have been five new day care providers opened (where none had previously existed) and three closed. Three new out of school club providers opened and four closed. Many other groups expanded their provision, moved premises or changed owners or management.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of schools delivering both breakfast and after school clubs and/or after school activities. There has, however been several closures, or "stand

alone”, Ofsted registered out of school childcare providers particularly in the disadvantaged areas of the city. This is reported to be due to lack of demand, which has an impact on their viability.

The range of after school and holiday activities were enhanced by Extended Schools Disadvantaged subsidy project otherwise known as ‘Allsortz, as well as Summer Mix and the Children’s University.

Disabled children have through Aiming High for Disabled Children funding been able to access a range of short break and leisure activities. Disabled Children’s Access to Childcare funding (Dcatch) supported the inclusion of disabled children into mainstream childcare, by providing, training and resources to the childcare sector.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Develop an action plan to identify how gaps in the market are to be resolved.
- Regular meetings to be arranged with all providers to establish how any barriers to parents accessing childcare can be diminished.
- Conduct follow-up research to gain a deeper understanding of some issues.