



Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Summary



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Executive summary

1. Introduction

From April 2008 Local Authorities are required to carry out a new duty to provide sufficient, quality, flexible, sustainable childcare for parents and carers (Childcare Act 2006, Section 6). This is to enable parents and carers to:

- Take up, or remain in work
- Undertake education or training, which could reasonably be expected to assist them in obtaining work.

Plymouth City Council is required to carry out a childcare sufficiency assessment (childcare Act section 11), as the key framework for ensuring sufficiency. To deliver this new duty the Day Care Trust, a nationally recognised childcare organisation, were commissioned to undertake a childcare sufficiency assessment, to establish current and future childcare needs across the city. Childcare information has been collected in the 43 neighbourhood areas of the city, but has been grouped into **childcare cluster areas** – which are in line with the children centre areas (See Appendix 1).

The resulting assessment is summarised in this document, and these findings will be used to enable the Plymouth City Council to plan and deliver a strategy for ensuring there is sufficient childcare in Plymouth.

2. Context

Plymouth is an urban unitary authority. A busy port in Devon, it has a varied industrial base with electronic, healthcare, advanced engineering, food and drink, boat building and call centre sectors being well represented. The current population stands at 246,100¹, with **45,000² of the population under 15 years of age**. It is the 3rd largest of the nine South West unitary authorities.

At 71%, the employment rate is **lower** in Plymouth than both the South West and England rates. Plymouth is currently ranked the 76th most deprived City in the country, and, under the heaviest weighted deprivation domains of “employment” and “income”, is the 2nd most deprived local authority regionally, and is ranked 46th and 52nd respectively at national level.

Almost one third of Plymouth’s Super Output Areas are ranked among the 20% most deprived in England. Plymouth has 43 neighbourhoods and the PCT has 6 sub localities for the purposes of commissioning. Appendix 2 shows deprivation and inequality levels by

¹ Census 2001

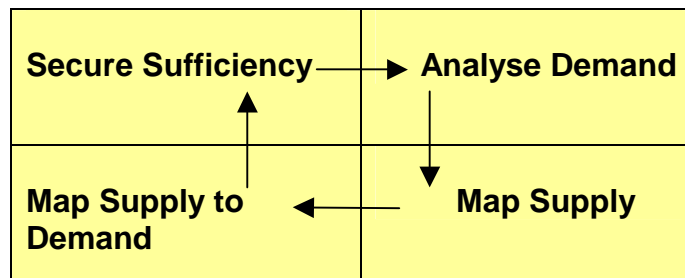
² N.B for the purposes of this report, the figures used were those of GP registrations which gave a total of 42,292 children aged 0-14

neighbourhood, with Barne Barton, City Centre, Devonport, North Prospect and Stonehouse being the most deprived and those with the highest levels of inequality.

3. Methodology

There are four key stages in meeting the statutory requirement of the childcare assessment. These are:

- Analyse demand
- Map supply
- Map supply to demand to identify gaps
- Secure sufficiency



4. Analyse demand

The first step is to assess and estimate local demand for childcare. Demand was analysed in a number of ways including:

Research – a collection of baseline data was analysed including numbers of lone parents, birth rates, children and young people by age, geographic distribution, ethnicity and also data on the number of disabled, looked after and foster children, and children from socially excluded groups.

Take up- Determining current levels and use of formal, and informal childcare (where known)

Employment - Collating information on the labour market and the training patterns of parents.

Housing - Considering current and future planning for housing developments.

Future childcare needs -based on regeneration and new businesses e.g. new hospital

Consultation

- 6 focus groups were held with parents, children and young people,
- 1000 parental questionnaires sent with over 400 returned
- 140 questionnaires to providers with 128 returned

- A questionnaire was also placed on the Devon Childminding Association's website
- Telephone interviews were also carried out with providers, employers and staff and through children centres managers.

Summary of findings

High demand for after school, holiday and some weekend care based on: - Cost, flexibility and location

Cost/affordability

- ❖ Many parents believe childcare is too expensive, and are confused over eligibility for Tax Credits.
- ❖ Only 17 percent of low-income families claim Child Tax Credits.
- ❖ Majority of three and four year olds access nursery education.
- ❖ Unemployed parents and part-time workers access and pay for childcare as they need it.
- ❖ Use of families and friends to provide informal childcare to reduce costs, (often alongside formal childcare)
- ❖ Use of school based extended services activities to reduce costs

Flexibility/opening hours (offering childcare outside the normal hours of 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday)

- ❖ Childminders offer the most flexible service
- ❖ Although there is some demand for out of hour's childcare, day care providers do not feel this is a viable financial option.
- ❖ Childcare providers who offer hourly rates provide the most cost effective service.
- ❖ Cost varied significantly, with some providers offering sessions at less than half the cost of others (See Appendix 2).
- ❖ There are difficulties in meeting the needs of parents who are shift workers
- ❖ Use families and friends to provide out of hours care.
- ❖ Concerns were raised regarding emergency care e.g. hospital appointments, evening meetings etc.

Location: parents' priorities were:

- ❖ Location of work
- ❖ Proximity to home
- ❖ Location of school

- ❖ Walking distance
- ❖ Transport difficulties

The needs of children with disabilities

❖ **Specialist care**

- Parents, who require more specialist care for their children, expressed the same reasons for their childcare requirements.
- Parents of older disabled children require out of school services on school sites, as transport was a challenge for them when getting children from one site to another.
- Some parents were interested in the idea of specialist childminders who could be trained and qualified and could give one to one support.

❖ **Quality of staff**

- Parents require staff to be trained and qualified in managing the full range of additional needs, both medical and developmental.
- Parents of older disabled children wanted to see out of school services on school sites, as transport was a challenge for them in terms of getting children from one site to another.

❖ **Respite care**

Demand for respite care, especially for children in the younger age group, was also identified in the sufficiency assessment.

5. Mapping supply

Factors considered when mapping supply were:

- ❖ **Registered childcare** -details of which were provided by Plymouth City Council and Family Information Service including details of type of care provided, opening times, and age range catered for.
- ❖ **Unregistered childcare**- information and estimates including places offered for over 8's by registered providers and school based activities across the city. Information was provided by Family Information Service, Parent Partnership and the Extended Services Co-ordinators.
- ❖ **Suitability and sustainability of childcare providers** - determined through feedback, local knowledge, Ofsted inspection reports, and levels of business planning.
 - **Free nursery education entitlement** -the current availability of free early years provision and future plans for the increase in hours and flexibility.
 - **Childcare costs** across the city and the take up of tax credits to support costs.
 - **Integrated childcare** – the number of childcare places including the number of childcare places offered for children with disabilities.

Summary of findings

Key Points

- ❖ The majority of providers were found to have vacancies during the consultation period
- ❖ Only a small number of providers have a waiting list.
- ❖ Across the city there are 28 registered childcare places per 100 children, which is above the national average.
- ❖ The Nomony childcare cluster has the highest supply of childcare places with 44 places per 100 children.
- ❖ The Tamar Folk childcare cluster has the lowest number of childcare places with 17 places per 100 children.
- ❖ There has been an increase in the amount of all year round provision
- ❖ The development of extended schools services and the increase of funded sessions to 38 weeks a year have increased the availability and flexibility of childcare places.

Supply for children with disabilities

- ❖ Parents of children with multiple/complex needs
- ❖ Childcare for children with disabilities is strongly supported across the city, making the need for more formal specialised care less necessary.
- ❖ All providers will accommodate children with additional needs, where this is both physically and financially viable.
- ❖ Support is provided through the Plymouth Inclusion Childcare Support Service (**PICSS**) to enable children to attend mainstream provision, places may be funded and support workers are provided if appropriate.
- ❖ Ensuring staff are suitably trained is a high priority for parents, and concerns were raised about the high turnover of staff across settings.
- ❖ Difficulties in finding suitable holiday care for children with multiple/profound needs were also identified as an issue.

6. Mapping supply to demand

This involved comparing data on the childcare currently available to meet the needs of parents, with consideration given to age groups, operational times, costs and locality.

Gaps in the market were identified according to the following criteria:

- **Geographical** – shortage of childcare in a locality
- **Income** – shortage of affordable provision
- **Specialist needs** (disabilities) – shortage of provision for children with special needs, or who have additional requirements

- **Flexibility** – lack of availability at the times required by parents
- **Age** – lack of childcare for an identified age group
- **Type** – gaps in provision for particular types of care e.g. holiday care.

Summary of findings

Geographical gaps

- ❖ The range and distribution of childcare provision available across the city in general is good, enabling many parents to have a choice of provider in their preferred area, particularly for nursery education
- ❖ There is a high demand for out of schools provision, but this is not as universally provided. Some children may have to travel to access this form of childcare.

Income gaps

- ❖ Childcare costs across the city are variable, with some providers charging double that of others. **(See appendix 3)**
- ❖ Community based provision keep their charges lower to meet the needs of low-income families. However this can have a detrimental impact on their sustainability.
- ❖ Take up of tax credits is a vital tool in supporting families in accessing childcare, by making childcare a more affordable option. Currently there is only a **17** percent take up in Plymouth.
- ❖ Families that require additional support are likely to be those living in poverty and for whom the high childcare prices make it difficult for them to move from benefits into work. The proportion of income that childcare takes up for a family on the lowest incomes can make work seem unattractive.

Flexibility gaps

- ❖ In general, childcare provision meets the needs of working parents, covering the typical 8-6 hour working day.
- ❖ Some provision caters for parents working shifts, with sessions starting as early as 7.00 am.
- ❖ Care provided after 6.00 pm is most often provided by childminders, who offer the most flexible out of hours service.
- ❖ Day care providers, although recognising the need by some parents for out of hours care, do not feel it is financially beneficial to offer this.
- ❖ Lack of flexibility of session times is also seen as a concern, and an expensive option for some parents, who would prefer to pay for care on an hourly rate as and when it is required

Age gaps

0 - 2 year olds

- ❖ Increases in maternity leave have impacted on provision in this age group, with fewer younger babies now attending formal childcare.
- ❖ The consultation suggests that there is a relatively high demand for childcare in this age group, with over half of this provision type having no vacancies at the time of the assessment.

2 - 3 year olds

- ❖ Numbers of places for two year olds have increased over the last few years due to a significant number of pre-schools lowering their age range in order to accommodate them. This followed the introduction of a single point entry for primary schools, meaning that the number of four year olds in childcare settings is low.
- ❖ The consultation suggests that there is some unmet demand in both the 0-2 and the 2-3 year old age groups.

3 - 4 year olds

- ❖ The number of children accessing free nursery education sessions is high and supply meets demand.
- ❖ Day care provision is more likely to have vacancies in the Autumn Term, due to the number of children who leave to start school at this time. Evidence suggests that these places fill over the course of a year, however a number of vacancies generally remain.
- ❖ Some parents choose to access the funded nursery education sessions only, whilst others opt for wraparound care, enabling their child to stay for longer than the standard free 2.5 hour period.

5 - 7 year olds

- ❖ This is an area, which is identified as a gap with demand outstripping supply.
- ❖ The increase of extended services provision, however, is working towards addressing this issue, with more schools generating interest in providing out of school provision either directly or with other existing childcare providers.

8 to 17 year olds

- ❖ A gap in out of school childcare, particularly for those 8 -10 years, has been identified especially during holiday periods. Holiday playschemes and sports clubs for this age group fill quickly, although it was identified that not all children want to attend such clubs.
- ❖ Extended services are starting to address this problem in identifying a programme of the activities available, and together, with the introduction of the Ofsted Childcare Register, it is anticipated a wider range of services will be offered for this age group during after school and holiday periods.
- ❖ Less formal provision is available for this age group, which had already been identified by Plymouth City Council as a recognised area for development prior to the assessment.

Childcare gaps

The key area of demand is for out of school and holiday childcare for children over 8. This is an area which needs to be developed. Initial evidence suggests that expansion of other types of service is only within certain geographical areas.

Specialist needs

- ❖ Parents reported a lack of holiday and respite care for children with disabilities.
- ❖ Parents raised concerns regarding emergency or temporary care e.g. to cover job interviews, hospital appointments etc.
- ❖ It was difficult to identify the number of childcare places for children with disabilities

as:-

Specialist care for children is available across all age groups and in all settings within the mainstream childcare sector. Strong emphasis in Plymouth is placed on integrating children with their peers, and therefore additional support is available through PICSS, where funding and support workers are provided to enable mainstream settings to accommodate children with specific needs. This is a particularly popular and well-used resource in out of school clubs and holiday playschemes.

More focused specialist care is provided for children with complex and profound needs through services delivered directly through Plymouth City Council, such as the Child Development Centre and special schools.

However:-

Parents of children with additional needs are keen that they experience the same opportunities as their peers and therefore are able to access the same range of services as others. Promotion of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act ensures that where physically and financially viable, all settings meet the needs of children with additional needs.

Particular concerns raised however by such families included high emphasis on the need for staff receiving appropriate specialist training, and concerns over high staff turnover compounding these issues. Transport is also seen to be an issue, with a number of parents requesting on-site school or work-based provision. Respite care is also a popular request, particularly for children aged 2 years and under.

7. Securing sufficiency

In order for Plymouth City Council to meet its statutory duty, to ensure sufficient childcare for parents and carers (Childcare Act 2006, Section 6), a sufficiency assessment will need to be carried out every three years. However the assessment will need to be reviewed and updated, particularly if there are any significant changes in housing, employment or population.

To secure sufficiency of childcare in Plymouth an ongoing programme of work will need to be carried out. The key actions are set out below:

❖ **Consultation**

The draft summary of the sufficiency assessment, will be posted on the website, sent to providers and be made available to parents, colleagues and other agencies. Once the responses have been collated a final summary will be available on request. A full version, which includes tables and maps, will be available from the 1st April 2008.

❖ **Affordability**

Affordability remains an issue for many parents. Family Information Service (FIS) continues to provide tax credit calculations, both at their office and in localities through outreach sessions. "Childcare chats and taster" sessions, a joint project between FIS and Jobcentre Plus, aims to enable parents to access childcare where it has been a barrier to returning to work. A working party has been established to investigate how vulnerable families can be offered temporary, subsidized or free childcare when a family is in crisis.

❖ **Nursery education**

From 2009 there will be an increase of free entitlement to nursery education from 12.5 hours to 15 hours per week. Plymouth City Council will work in partnership with providers to ensure that the offer is delivered in the most flexible way possible to meet the needs of parents.

❖ **Managing the childcare market**

Plans are being developed to ensure that childcare provision is accessible to all those who need it. Areas, with low levels of childcare will be targeted in order to increase supply. A programme is already underway to address the shortfall of childcare places in the Barne Barton neighbourhood, which is part of the Tamar Folk childcare area.

Out of school childcare – as the Extended Schools programme continues to develop there continues to be an increase in the number of places available to children before and after school, and during holiday periods.

Provision for older children and young people – consultation will be carried out with secondary age children to determine their needs, so that any provision provided is appropriate and well used.

Schools Implementation Plan 2005-15 – School improvement and regeneration of the city are two key priorities for Plymouth. A list of factors including the decline in pupil numbers, the increasing number of surplus places, schools that are in poor condition and in need replacement or significant refurbishment have resulted in a plan that identifies a number of schools that will be amalgamated, and a schools building programme.

The impact on local childcare will be monitored and the local authority may need to instigate new childcare provision where any gaps are identified.

❖ **Children with disabilities**

We know that providing childcare services for disabled children can be difficult and we are continually exploring innovative ways to make sure that all children have access to childcare and out-of-school activities.

Plymouth Inclusion Childcare Support Service (PICSS) will continue to broker services for families with children with disabilities. The funding criteria have been adapted to enable more children to access the service.

More specialist equipment, including mobile hoists, has recently been purchased for the resources library. This will enable children with a physical disability or more complex needs to access childcare.

To address the specific gaps highlighted by the assessment we propose to investigate the opportunity for increased use of specialist childminders who receive additional training and support funding.

A working group will be established to work with providers to resolve transport issues and access for children with disabilities.

Glossary

Childcare Act 2006

The Childcare Act, which became law in July 2006, is the first ever legislation exclusively concerned with early years and childcare for children aged 0-14 or 17 years if they have a disability.

Children's Centres

Offer a core range of integrated services to children (0-5 years) and their families, including childcare, family support and access to family health services.

Childcare

Childcare places are defined as those, which enable parents or carers to:

- i) Take up, or remain in work
or
- ii) Undertake education or training, which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

Extended Schools

Offer a core range of services to children in primary and secondary education, including wraparound childcare 8am-6pm and a varied menu of activities such as study support, sports and arts and crafts.

Formal Childcare

Includes the following childcare options:

- Childminders - Self-employed carers registered in their own homes to care for children 0-7 years.
- Maintained nurseries – nurseries run by the local authority and which are usually attached to schools. Generally operate school hours.
- Private and community nurseries - can offer care to children aged 0-7 depending on their Ofsted registration. These settings usually operate throughout the year and from 8am – 6pm.
- Nursery classes in schools – operate term time only as part of the school.
- Nursery schools – maintained provision run as an independent school for children 3-5 years, with wraparound options and care available for younger children, depending on the school's registration criteria.
- Out of school clubs and holiday play schemes - offer care to older children from 4 years upwards, before or after school or during school holidays.
- Pre-schools – offer care for 3-5 year olds, although many now take 2 year olds. Most operate on a sessional basis, either morning or afternoon, and offer the 2.5-hour free sessions. Some pre-schools offer wraparound services to increase the hours of care available.
- Crèches - childcare offered on a flexible basis, where children attend on an irregular basis.

Informal Childcare

Informal childcare covers a range of care, which in most cases is not required to be registered by Ofsted and is often provided by families and friends.

Nursery Education Funding (NEF)

This is the free education entitlement of 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks for all 3 and 4 year olds, outlined in the Government's 10 Year Childcare Strategy. The offer starts in the term following a child's third birthday. It is intended that the flexible offer will extend to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks over the next few years.

Ofsted

Office for Standards in Education. Ofsted is responsible for registration and inspection of all registered childcare settings.

Out of hour's childcare

Childcare provided outside the core hours of 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

Plymouth Family Information Service (FIS)

A service commissioned by Plymouth City Council to provide advice and support on childcare services for children (0-20 years) and families.

Plymouth Inclusion Childcare Support Service (PICCS)

Service offered by Plymouth City Council to support children with additional needs (0-17 years) and their families.

Registered childcare

Childcare provision for children under 8 years which is registered with Ofsted. Childcare on a school site that operates for more than two hours a day and for more than five days in a year will also need to be registered.

Super Output Areas (SOAs)

Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a new geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. Unlike electoral wards, SOAs have a consistent size and their boundaries do not change.

Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC)

The childcare element of Working Families Tax Credit helps eligible parents with the costs of childcare dependent on how many hours they work and their joint earnings.

Unregistered childcare

Childcare which is exempt from registration, because it is offered for less than two hours a day, and/or for less than 6 days in a year. Activities clubs and provision for children age 8 years and over are exempt from compulsory registration.

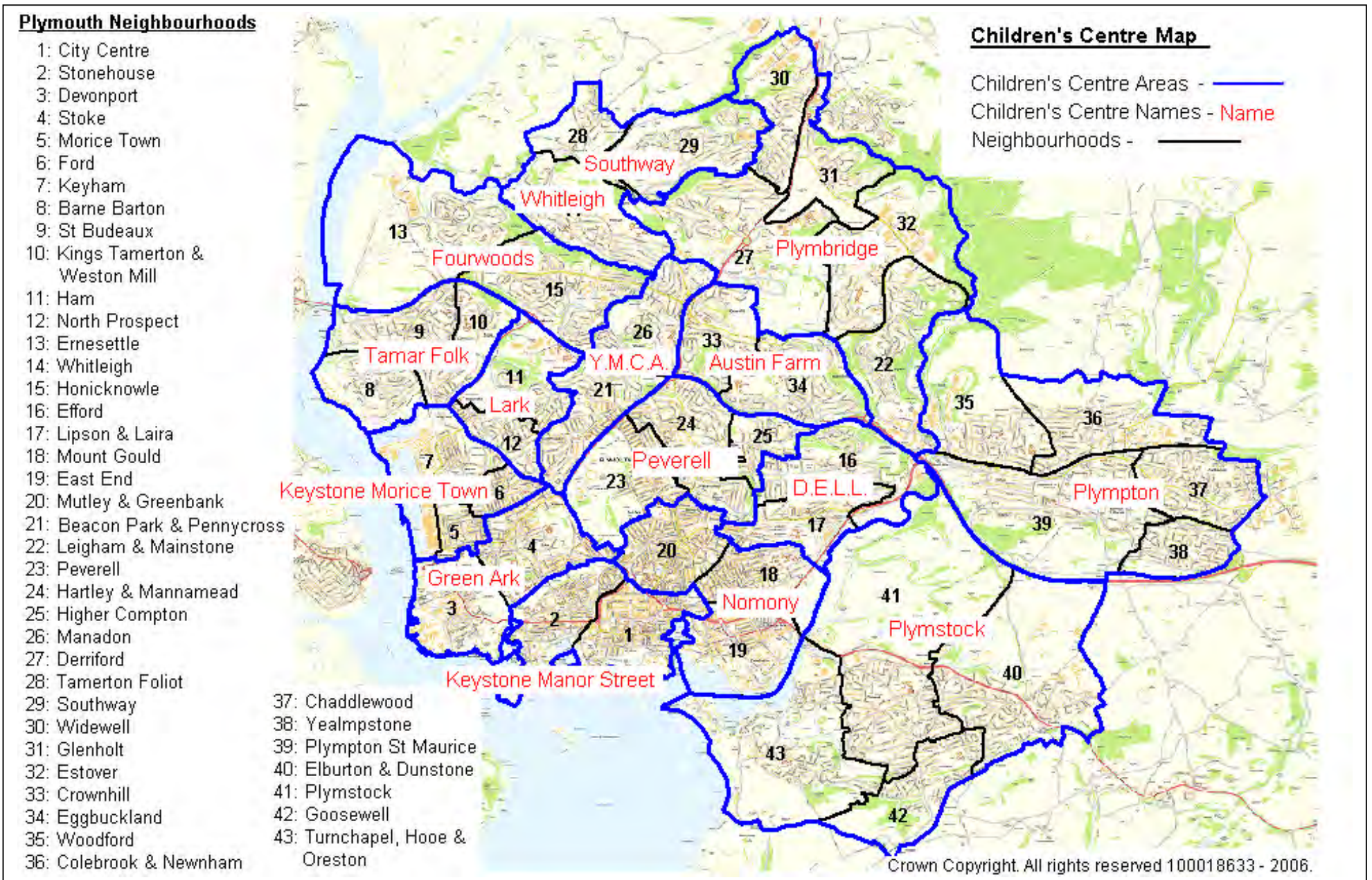
Voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register

A voluntary registration system introduced in April 2007, and which allows provision which is exempt from compulsory registration to register, subject to eligibility.

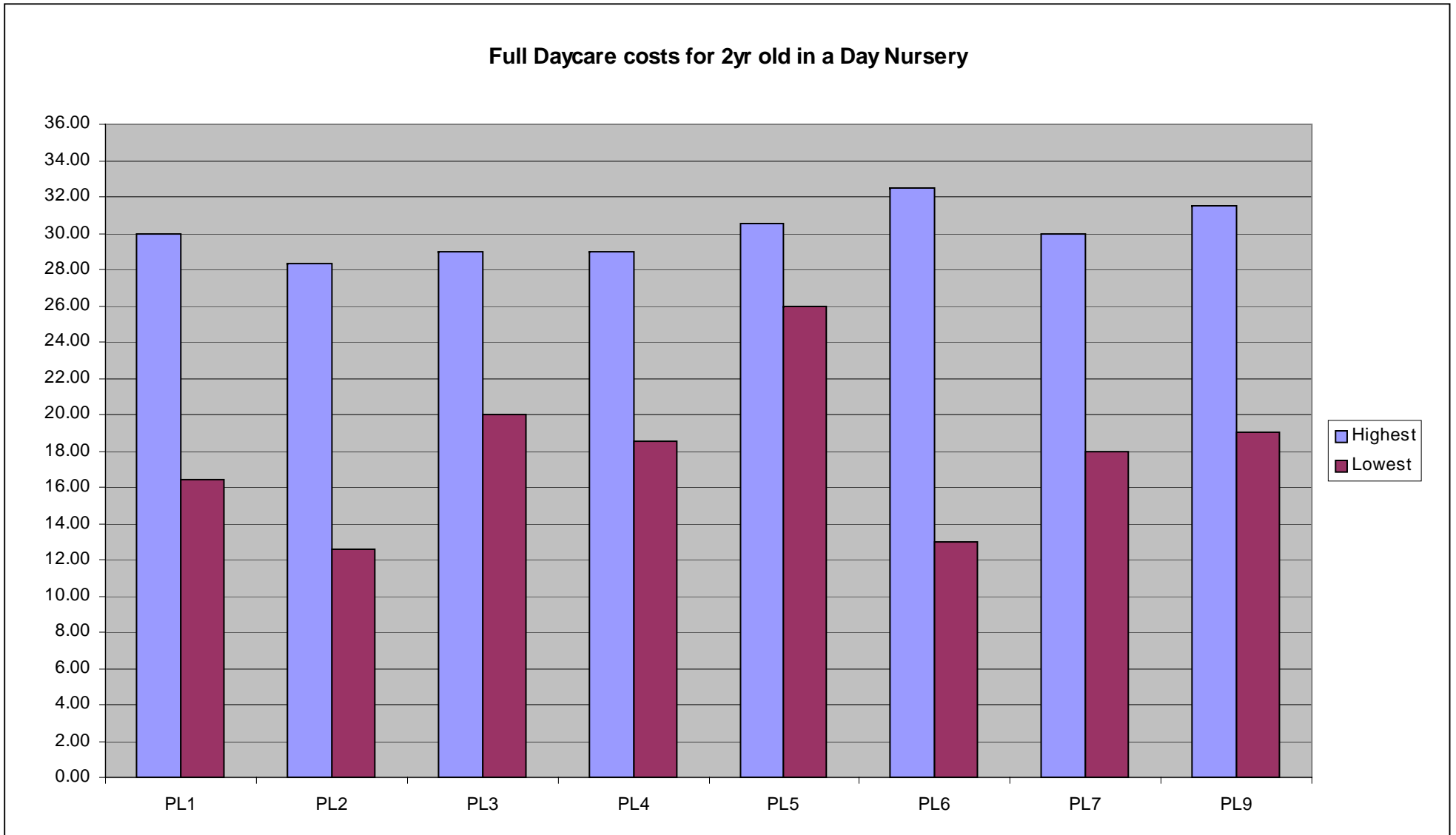
Wraparound sessions

Care which is offered around the core free offer of a 2.5 hours session, or around a school day to offer a longer period of care e.g. breakfast or after school clubs.

Appendix 1 – map showing childcare cluster areas



Appendix 2: Childcare costs by Postcode



Data Source: Family Information Service

Appendix 3 Childcare places by childcare cluster areas

Childcare Areas	<2	2	3&4	5-7s	Total <8s	8 to 10	11 to 14	CM 8+	Total >8s	TOTAL
Austin Farm	17	25	177	61	280	22	0	28	50	330
Population	228	136	244	400	1008	440	620		1060	2068
D.E.L.L.	23	26	173	44	266	45	5	8	58	324
Population	351	159	315	439	1264	503	672		1175	2439
Four Woods	15	12	145	172	344	75	35	16	126	470
Population	345	183	365	527	1420	549	785		1334	2754
Green Ark	48	12	262	18	340	14	0	2	16	356
Population	338	155	309	406	1208	469	606		1075	2283
Keystone Manor Street	16	75	209	58	358	64	32	0	96	454
Population	407	176	303	394	1280	434	632		1066	2346
Keystone Morice Town	68	75	166	25	334	2	0	0	2	336
Population	330	143	243	290	1006	318	379		697	1703
Lark	33	8	127	44	212	40	17	5	62	274
Population	250	131	248	411	1040	424	563		987	2027
Nomony	133	68	444	72	717	25	6	7	38	755
Population	501	208	388	516	1613	539	856		1395	3008
Peverell	39	103	282	70	494	42	10	35	87	581
Population	376	197	398	589	1560	617	876		1493	3053
Plymbridge	56	80	293	181	610	41	17	15	73	683
Population	357	186	387	566	1496	606	868		1474	2970
Plympton	66	132	558	194	950	22	23	24	69	1019
Population	662	319	656	932	2569	1072	1569		2641	5210
Plymstock	29	44	398	88	559	128	7	24	159	718
Population	467	251	498	761	1977	892	1194		2086	4063
Southway	0	4	88	83	175	42	3	1	46	221
Population	234	100	236	316	886	328	496		824	1710
Tamar Folk	6	8	210	53	277	15	0	7	22	299
Population	444	208	411	572	1635	622	839		1461	3096
Whitleigh	30	21	91	45	187	35	4	5	44	231
Population	225	86	186	215	712	250	347		597	1309
YMCA	27	20	205	136	388	20	22	6	48	436
Population	287	141	293	397	1118	418	618		1036	2154

