

Oxfordshire County Council

Childcare Sufficiency
Assessment Gap Analysis

April 2008

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1 Introduction

This report presents a gap analysis in relation to the provision of childcare in Oxfordshire. It uses the headings specified in the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance on Childcare Sufficiency Assessments, i.e.

- Types of childcare available.
- Ages for which childcare is available.
- Affordability.
- Opening times.
- Geography.
- Meeting the needs of disabled children.
- Meeting the needs of families wishing to remain in work or seek work.

Evidence for the gap analysis is drawn from four separate reports which seek to profile various aspects of the childcare market in Oxfordshire. These are:

- **Analysis of factors affecting demand and the ability to pay for childcare.** This is based on secondary data and presents a range of demographic and socio-economic indicators that may affect either the demand or ability to pay for childcare. It also includes an analysis of enquiries made to the Oxfordshire Children's Information Service.
- **Analysis of the supply of childcare.** This presents an analysis of the supply of registered childcare in Oxfordshire. It includes: number of places, number of children per place, opening times, fees and vacancies. There is also a separate section on the take-up of the free entitlement to childcare.
- **Consultation with childcare providers.** This report presents an analysis of the views of a range of childcare providers, captured through questionnaires and focus groups. It looks at the current childcare market, improvement suggestions, plans for the future and support required.
- **Consultation with stakeholders on childcare.** Focusing on the level of demand for childcare and the improvements needed, this report includes a detailed

analysis of results from a questionnaire distributed to parents/carers in Oxfordshire. It also presents an analysis of focus groups held with parents/carers and children.

2 Gaps in the types of childcare available

The principal identifiable gap across Oxfordshire in the type of childcare available is in relation to holiday provision:

- Only 31.3% of parents/carers who use childcare that they pay for over the school holidays reported that childcare during this period met their needs fully.
- Data on supply suggests that there is an insufficient number of places during school holidays. For instance, there are, on average, 3.9 children per place during school holidays, compared to 3.0 children per place during term-time. This lack of places persists even when you take into account the overall lower use of childcare during school holidays. For instance, 48.3% of respondents used childcare over the school holidays, compared to 67.5% during term-time. Applying this ratio to the number of children per place would imply an average of 3.8 children per place is required across Oxfordshire to bring it to the term-time equivalent. Please note, however, that this doesn't take account of the fact that 46.0% of those who use childcare during school holidays require more hours than during term time, suggesting that 3.8 children per place may be an underestimate.

The overall stock of childcare within Oxfordshire appears healthy. Nearly 75% of providers are planning to be offering childcare in 5 or more years time. In addition, 12.3% have plans to increase the number of places.

There is evidence from consultations with parents/carers that generally more childcare is required. Parents/carers would like 13.6% of respondent children to attend more formal childcare. This is the fourth highest improvement suggestion. The main types of childcare that parents/carers would like to access are: after-school clubs and breakfast clubs (and to a much lesser extent childminders and pre-schools and playgroups).

Increasing the number of places is likely to benefit the following groups:

- Households where all parents/carers work full-time.
- Households where at least one parent/carer is studying or training.
- Households where at least one parent/carer is seeking work.
- Parents/carers with children aged 8, 9 or 10 years old.
- Parents/carers with disabled children.
- Households with annual incomes under £12,000.

3 Age gaps

Only 5.3% of those who do not use childcare say that it is because there is nothing suitable for the age of their child. This suggests that any gaps in provision by age are not significant barriers to take-up of childcare for the majority of parents/carers.

Parents/carers who use childcare highlight a number of improvement suggestions for children of different ages. These suggestions are presented in Figure 1 (showing differences by the age of individual children).

Overall, it appears that childcare for children aged 5 and over is less likely to be meeting the needs of parents/carers and is more likely to require improvements. For instance, families only with children aged 5 and over are:

- Less likely to strongly agree that the quality of childcare is high¹.
- Less likely to strongly agree that they are satisfied with their current childcare².
- Less likely to agree that childcare caters for their child's needs³.
- Less likely to agree that childcare is well-located⁴.
- More likely to disagree that there is good choice of childcare⁵.
- Over school holidays, they are less likely to have their needs fully met. 82.0% of households only with children aged 5 and over do not have their needs fully met, compared to 55.4% for those only with children aged 4 and under and 69.0% of households with children in both age cohorts. This is in addition to the findings presented in Figure 1 that shows that parents/carers with children aged 11-14 and 15-17 are less likely to have their childcare needs met overall.

¹ They have an average rating of 3.9, compared to 4.4 for households only with children aged 4 and under and 4.4 for households with children in both age cohorts.

² They have an average rating of 3.9, compared to 4.4 for households only with children aged 4 and under and 4.3 for households with children in both age cohorts.

³ They have an average rating of 3.5, compared to 4.2 for households only with children aged 4 and under and 4.1 for households with children in both age cohorts.

⁴ They have an average rating of 3.4, compared to 4.0 for households only with children aged 4 and under and 4.0 for households with children in both age cohorts.

⁵ They have an average rating of 2.9, compared to 3.4 for households only with children aged 4 and under and 3.5 for households with children in both age cohorts.

Figure 1: Age gaps by age of child

Age of child	Finding
0-2 years	Affordability is the main issue for parents/carers with a respondent child aged 2 and under. Childcare for 36.7% of respondent children could be improved by being more affordable.
3 & 4 years	The need for improved flexibility is most likely to be highlighted by parents/carers with respondent children aged 3 and 4 years.
5, 6 & 7 years	There are no statistically significant differences in need for this age group.
8, 9 & 10 years	Availability at different times and access to more or different types of provision are the main issues for parents/carers with respondent children aged 8, 9 and 10 years olds. Childcare for 20.6% of respondent children could be improved by being available at different times; and childcare for 19.7% of respondent children could be improved by accessing more or different provision.
11, 12, 13 & 14 years	Overall needs are not being met. Parents/carers with respondent children aged 11-14 are more likely to state that their childcare needs are not being met.
15, 16 and 17 years	Overall needs are not being met. Parents/carers with respondent children aged 15-17 are more likely to state that their childcare needs are not being met.

4 Affordability gaps

There is general agreement across stakeholders in Oxfordshire that childcare should be more affordable and that this is the priority for improvement:

- 17.7% of parents/carers who do not use childcare say that this is because it is too expensive.
- Childcare for 26.7% of respondent children could be improved by being more affordable. This is the most popular area for improvement highlighted in the parent/carer questionnaire.
- Cost was the main concern in focus groups with parents/carers, especially in relation to day nurseries and after-school provision (see supply data presented below). This was reinforced in focus groups with childcare providers too.
- Childcare providers gave affordability the lowest rating, alongside flexibility and number of places (2.7 out of 4).

These perceptions are supported by data on supply which shows that:

- The average hourly rate for full day care in Oxfordshire is £3.24 which is above South East and England averages of £2.80 and £2.70 respectively.
- After school clubs are more expensive per hour in Oxfordshire compared to the regional average (£2.84 compared to £2.40) as are holiday schemes (£2.36 compared to £1.60).

However, this supply data also shows that sessional care hourly costs are in-line with regional averages (£2.26 compared to £2.20) but are above the England average (of £1.90) and that childminder costs are in line with regional averages (£3.50 per hour compared to £3.40).

With 15.1% of providers reporting that they have plans in place over the next 18 months to significantly increase fees, the gaps in affordability are likely to continue, if not widen. In addition, childminders were most likely to report a plan to increase fees suggesting a disproportionate impact on those who currently use childminders⁶.

⁶ From the questionnaire with parents/carers this is more likely to be: BME groups, households where all parents/carers work full-time, households where at least one parent/carer is in employment, households in which at least one parent/carer has irregular work patterns, households with incomes over £37,000, households with only one child, and households with children aged 0-3 and 3-4.

The following groups of parents/carers are more likely to highlight affordability as an area for improvement for their respondent children:

- Parents/carers from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Households where all parents/carers work full-time.
- Households where at least one parent/carer has irregular working patterns.
- Households where at least one parent/carer is studying or training.
- Households with only one child.
- Parents/carers using childcare for a child aged 2 years and under

In focus groups, there is a perception that it is particularly expensive for parents/carers seeking work, those with disabled children, those on lower incomes (especially those around the Working Tax Credit thresholds), and those with larger families.

5 Gaps in opening times

5.1 Opening times

Only 5.0% of respondents who do not use childcare highlight opening times as a barrier to uptake.

Of those who do use childcare, 15.6% of childcare being used for individual children could be improved by being available at different times. This is the third highest improvement suggestion.

Improvements to opening times are more likely to benefit respondent children in:

- Households where all parents/carers work full-time.
- Households where at least one parent/carer is studying or training.
- Households where at least one parent/carer is seeking work.
- Households with only one child.
- Parents/carers with children aged 8, 9 and 10 years.

The priorities for improvements in opening times are:

- 8am to 6pm (43% of requests). This is the time period with the largest number of places available. This suggests that parents/carers either need more childcare that covers the full 10 hours or, more likely given the profile of parents/carers who make this request, at the fringes of this period, i.e. around 8am to 9am and 4pm to 6pm.
- 7am to 8am (27% of requests). Across Oxfordshire this time period has the second highest number of places available but responses from parents/carers suggests that there is higher demand.
- After 6pm (23% of requests).
- Before 7am (7% of requests). This time period currently has the smallest number of places available. Responses from parents/carers suggest that only a small number of parents/carers would benefit from more places being available at this time.

5.2 Flexibility

Flexibility of provision was explored as a separate issue, although it is connected to opening times.

A lack of flexibility in provision does not appear to be a major barrier to the take-up of childcare. Only 5.3% of those who do not use childcare say that this is because provision is insufficiently flexible.

However, flexibility is the second highest improvement suggestion from parents/carers who currently use childcare. The childcare for 17.0% of respondent children could be improved by being more flexible. Childcare providers agree, giving flexibility of provision the lowest rating in Oxfordshire (alongside affordability and number of places).

Responses in questionnaires and focus groups with parents/carers suggest that an improvement in flexibility would particularly benefit respondent children aged 3 and 4 years and, to a lesser extent, those aged 2 years and under and (from focus groups) those who used nursery provision.

6 Gaps in geography

6.1 Overall picture

Overall the location of childcare is viewed positively within Oxfordshire:

- Only 3.9% of those who do not use childcare say that this is because it is in the wrong location.
- Parents/carers generally agree with the statement that 'childcare is well-located'.
- Childcare for only 5.6% of respondent children could be improved by being in a different location. Within this request, parents/carers were most likely to request provision closer to home (27 out of 60 responses).
- Location and accessibility was given the second highest rating (after quality) by childcare providers.

Parent/carer questionnaire responses suggest that improvements to the location of childcare are more likely to benefit households with disabled children and those only with children aged 5 years and over.

6.2 Differences by locality

Figure 2 summarises differences at the level of localities within Oxfordshire. It presents data from the full range of analyses / reports produced as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (see Section 1 for further information).

Figure 2: Possible gaps in childcare provision by locality in Oxfordshire

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
Abingdon / Berinsfield	This locality has one of the largest number of children in all age ranges in 2007 and will continue to do so in 2013 and 2016. It also has one of the highest number of disabled children aged 0-7 years. This suggests that the volume of childcare required is likely to be one of the highest. This locality has one of the highest number of married couples with dependent children and also one of the highest number of households with children. It also has one of the highest number of people who are looking after the home or family. This latter indicator may depress demand for childcare in this locality.	With one of the highest number of children per place, the main gap in this locality is likely to be the number of places. Low fee rates for out of school care and for childminders suggest that affordability is not likely to be a key issue.	<p>Childcare providers tended to be the most positive about provision for specific groups of parents/carers in their area, i.e. low income families, families with disabled children, those seeking work and working families.</p> <p>Providers are likely to be facing difficulties with staff recruitment and retention as this was an area requiring most support.</p>	<p>Parents/carers in this locality are least likely to use childcare in order to go to work.</p> <p>Affordability is least likely to be an issue in this locality: parents/carers tend to agree that it represents good value for money and are less likely to believe that it is too expensive and that improvements to affordability are required.</p>

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
Banbury	<p>This locality has one of the largest number of children in all age ranges in 2007. In addition it has the highest number of disabled children aged 0-7 years. This locality will continue to have one of the highest number of total children in 2013 and 2016 but numbers will only tend to be highest for the 7 and under age ranges. This locality has one of the highest numbers of all family types. It also has one of the highest number of people who are looking after the home or family which may suggest lower demand for childcare overall. Banbury has one of the highest percentage of the population who are workless, highlighting possible issues with affordability. With a high number of households renting, this locality may also experience high population mobility / turnover which may also impact on childcare demand.</p>	<p>This locality has one of the highest total number of providers and total number of term-time and school holiday places. A higher than average percentage of all places is provided by childminders suggesting a possible need for greater diversity of provision in this locality. The take-up of free entitlement places is healthy with high number of take-up, high take-up rate and high percentage who use their entitlement within their locality and within their ward.</p>	<p>Providers in Banbury most need 'marketing support' and 'more involvement in local planning'</p>	<p>Parents/carers in this locality are more likely to use some sort of childcare. There is a higher than average use of childminders.</p>

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
Bicester / Kidlington	This locality has one of the largest number of children in all age ranges in 2007 and will continue to do so in 2013 and 2016. It also has one of the highest number of disabled children aged 8-17 years. This suggests that the volume of childcare required is likely to be one of the highest. Bicester / Kidlington has one of the highest numbers of all family types. A high percentage of the population economically active and one of the highest total hours worked for men and women suggest that full day care may be in highest demand in this locality. However, this is tempered by a high number of people looking after the home or family.	This locality has a high number of providers and high number of places during term time and school holidays; and one of the highest number of vacancies. Implying healthy supply of childcare. This locality has one of the lowest average fee rates for full day care, sessional day care and holiday schemes. It also has one of the lowest take-up rates of free entitlement.	Staff training is the main areas of support required by providers in this locality.	With one of the higher average childcare costs, affordability may be a key issue for this locality. In terms of types of provision used, parents/carers are least likely to be using after-school clubs.
Carterton / Burford / Chipping Norton	The main issues of note for this locality are that it has one of the highest average hours worked by men and one of the highest average kilometres travelled to work. This suggests possible high demand for full day care and possible issues regarding location of childcare.	This locality has one of the highest number of children per place during school holidays, suggesting the need for more holiday places. With one of the highest average fee rates for childminders, affordability may be issue, although this locality also has one of the lowest average fee rates for full day care.	There is a larger than average number of providers in this locality with plans to improve provision for disabled children. Areas of support required in this locality by providers are: staff training, inspection/ registration, and working with the local authority.	Affordability may be an issue in this locality as parents/carers are more likely to have higher childcare costs. Focus groups with parents/carers highlighted a lack of provision before school and after school.

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
Didcot	<p>Although in 2007 Didcot has one of the lowest number of children aged 3 and 4, aged 5 and aged 15, 16 and 17, this locality is expected to experience one of the largest percentage increases in the child population (all ages) in 2013 and 2016. This suggests that this locality may experience one of the largest relative increases in demand for childcare. This locality also has one of the highest economic activity rates and highest number of hours worked by women.</p>	<p>Didcot has one of the highest number of vacancies and one of the lowest average fee rates for full day care and for sessional day care which may indicate over-supply of places. This locality also has one of the lowest percentage of children taking-up their free entitlement within their ward of residence which may suggest the need for more NEF provision within Didcot locality.</p>	<p>Providers in Didcot view provision in their local area positively. They give each aspect of provision one of the highest ratings across Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Areas of support required by providers in this locality tended to be around staff recruitment and retention.</p>	<p>The demand for childcare in this locality is relatively low (parents/carers are least likely to be using some sort of childcare). However, where childcare is used it is more likely to enable a parent/carer to be in work. Affordability may be a key issue for this locality: parents/carers are more likely to agree that childcare is too expensive.</p>
Headington / Wheatley	<p>This locality has one of the lowest number of children in 2007, 2013 and 2016 which suggests that the volume of childcare required is likely to be relatively low. However, it is expected that this locality will experience one of the largest percentage increases in the number of children aged 2 and under and aged 3 and 4 in 2013 and 2016. The Index of Deprivation Affecting Children is one of the highest in this locality which has implications for the ability to pay for childcare.</p>	<p>Overall, supply in this locality appears healthy, with a low number of children per place during term-time and school holidays. However, this locality also has one of the lowest number of vacancies and one of the highest average fee rates for full day care. There is no provision available before 7am.</p>	<p>Opening times may be an area for improvement in this locality: there were no providers with plans to extend their opening hours.</p> <p>Staff training is the main area of support required by providers in Headington/Wheatley.</p>	<p>The demand for childcare is likely to be relatively high: parents/carers are more likely to be using some sort of childcare and to be using it to go to work. After-school clubs have high usage and pre-schools and playgroups low usage. Parents/carers are more likely to disagree that they would like their children to be attending more childcare, suggesting that supply is currently sufficient.</p> <p>Affordability, however, is likely to be a key issue in this locality: parents/carers are more likely to request improvements in this area for their respondent children.</p>

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
Henley / Sonning Common / Woodcote / Wallingford	<p>This locality is projected to experience relatively large decreases in the numbers of children aged 7 and under in 2013 and 2016 which may affect the overall demand of childcare. That said, it is also projected to experience relatively large increases in the population aged 11-14 and 15-17 which may affect the demand for childcare for these age ranges.</p>	<p>Supply in this locality appears healthy, with a low number of children per place during term-time and school holidays. Affordability may be a key issue for this locality as it has one of the highest average fee rates for full day care, sessional day care, holiday schemes and childminders.</p>	<p>Affordability may be a key issue for this locality either now or into the future: more providers have definite plans to increase their fees.</p> <p>The main area of support required by providers is staff training.</p>	<p>There is differential use in the types of childcare in this locality. Children are more likely to be in pre-schools and playgroups and less likely to be in family and friends and childminders. Childcare is not so important for allowing parents/carers to enter work – they are less likely to use childcare for this purpose.</p> <p>There is no evidence of unmet demand for childcare in this locality: parents/carers are more likely to disagree that they would like their children to be attending more childcare.</p> <p>Affordability is unlikely to be a priority in this locality: parents/carers are less likely to agree that childcare is too expensive and that they want improvements to affordability and are more likely to agree that it represents good value for money.</p>
Iffley and Cowley	<p>Demand for childcare in this locality may change over time as it is anticipated that this locality may experience relatively high percentage increases in the number of children aged 5-14 in 2013 and 2016. Issues of affordability are likely to be key in this locality as it has one of the highest scores in the Index of Deprivation Affecting Children, high rates of economic inactivity and high numbers of people who are workless. This locality also has a high number and percentage of households renting.</p>	<p>Iffley and Cowley has one of the highest number of children per place during term-time and during school holidays, and one of the lowest number of vacancies. This suggests the need for more places. It has one of the lowest number of total places open during each time period. With a high percentage of full day care there may also be a need to increase diversity of provision within this locality. Finally, this locality has one of the lowest number of NEF places available and one of the lowest take-up rates which suggests the need for more free entitlement places in this locality.</p>	<p>Responses from providers suggest that this locality should be a priority area for improvements to childcare. They give different aspects of childcare one of the lowest ratings in Oxfordshire – both generally and for specific groups of parents/carers.</p> <p>Opening hours may be an issue in the future: there are no providers with plans in place to extend their opening hours.</p> <p>The main areas of support requested by providers in this locality were staff training and more involvement in local planning.</p>	<p>The demand for childcare is likely to be high: children in this locality are more likely to use some sort of childcare. Affordability may be a key issue: most parents/carers are likely to agree that childcare is too expensive. However, they also tend to agree that it represents good value for money.</p>

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
North Oxford / Cumnor / Botley	By 2016 this locality is projected to have one of the highest number of children aged 2 and under which may affect the demand for childcare for this age range. It will also experience high percentage increases in the number of 3 and 4 year olds and 8, 9 and 10 year olds by 2013 and 2016. This locality also currently has one of the highest number of disabled children aged 0-7 years. Affordability may be a key issue for this locality with high rates of economic inactivity and a high number of people who are workless. However, this locality also has one of the highest number of hours worked by women.	Supply in this locality appears healthy, with a low number of children per place during term-time and school holidays. Affordability may be a key issue for this locality as it has one of the highest average fee rates for full day care, sessional day care, out of school care and childminders.	The main areas of support requested by providers are inspection/ registration, support to network, working with the local authority, more involvement in local planning, and advice on specific groups.	Affordability is likely to be a key issue in this locality: parents/carers are likely to have higher childcare costs, to agree that childcare is too expensive and that it doesn't represent good value for money. Children in this locality are more likely to be using day nurseries for childcare.
Oxford South East	Generally, this locality has one of the lowest number of children in 2007, 2013 and 2016 which will affect the overall volume of childcare required. It is projected that this locality will experience one of the highest percentage increases in the 5 year old and 6, 7 and 8 year old age ranges. Affordability is likely to be a key issue for this locality with high score for the Index of Deprivation Affecting Children Index, high rates of economic inactivity and a high proportion of the population that is workless.	This locality has one of the highest number of children per place during term-time, suggesting the need for more provision during these periods. It also has one of the lowest percentage of children taking-up their free entitlement.	Evidence from providers suggests that the level of provision is good: they give the highest ratings for childcare provision for specific groups of parents/carers. Providers in Oxford South East most need external support in staff training, marketing support, and business support.	There is differential use of childcare in this locality: children are more likely to be using family and friends and less likely to be using day nurseries. Although parents/carers in this locality tend to have one of the lowest average childcare costs, they are also more likely to agree that it is too expensive and are least likely to agree that it represents good value for money. As a result, they are more likely to request improvements to affordability for their respondent children. In addition, they are least likely to disagree that they would like their children to attend more formal childcare. Altogether, this suggests that childcare costs may be acting as a barrier to take-up.

Locality	Factors affecting demand and ability to pay	Supply of childcare	Consultation with providers	Consultation with parents/carers
Thame / Watlington	This locality is expected to have one of the lowest child populations by 2013 and 2016 which may affect the demand for childcare. The type of childcare required may be affected by the fact that this locality has high rates of economic activity, high average hours worked by men and high average kilometres travelled to work. This locality also has a high proportion of people looking after the home or family.	Affordability may be a key issue for this locality. It has one of the highest average fee rates for sessional day care, out of school care and holiday provision. A relatively low proportion of children take-up their free entitlement place within their ward of residence, which could mean that there is a need for more NEF places within Thame/ Watlington.	Providers are most likely to request external support in relation to inspection/registration.	Although children in this locality are least likely to be in some sort of childcare, those that are in childcare are more likely to be so to enable the parent/carer to go to work. Affordability is likely to be a key issue for this locality. Parents/carers are less likely to agree that it represents good value for money and are more likely to request improvements to affordability for their respondent children.
Wantage / Faringdon / Grove	A changing picture for this locality in relation to its child population. In 2007 it has one of the highest number of 6 and 7 year olds. In 2013 it will have one of the highest number of 11-14 year olds and 15-17 year olds. By 2016 it will have one of the highest number of 8-10 year olds, 11-14 year olds and 15-17 year olds. These changes may affect the type of childcare required over time. Currently, this locality has one of the highest number of disabled children aged 8-17 years.	Few pressure points for this locality, suggesting that supply is likely to be healthy. There may be an issue with diversity of provision, as it has one of the highest proportions of places made-up from sessional day care.	Evidence from providers suggests that childcare is good in this locality. They consistently gave all aspects of childcare the highest ratings – both generally and for specific groups of parents/carers. Numbers of places are likely to expand in this locality: it has the most providers with plans to expand the number of places that they offer. Providers are more likely to request support in relation to staff training.	Respondent children in this locality are least likely to be in some sort of childcare. As a result, parents/carers are more likely to have lower childcare costs and are least likely to use childcare in order to go to work. Affordability is not likely to be a barrier to take-up in this locality: parents/carers are least likely to agree that childcare is too expensive and are also least likely to request improvements in affordability for their respondent children. They see provision as good value for money.
Witney / Eynsham / Woodstock	This locality has one of the highest number of disabled children aged 8-17 years. It is projected to experience one of the largest percentage decreases in the child population by 2013 and 2016. This is likely to affect the demand / volume of childcare required in this locality.	Affordability is likely to be a key issue for this ward as it has one of the highest average fee rates for full day care, out of school care and holiday provision. However, it also has one of the lowest childminder fee rates.	Opening times are likely to be extended in this locality: it has the most providers with plans to extend their opening hours. Providers are most likely to need support with building alterations and working with the local authority.	There were no statistically significant findings for this group of parents/carers.

7 Meeting the needs of disabled children

In the questionnaire, the childcare for 45.5% of disabled children does not fully meet the needs of parents/carers. These parents/carers are also less likely to strongly agree that they are satisfied with their current childcare⁷ or that it caters for their children's needs⁸. This group has a lower number of total hours in childcare (10.2 hours per week, compared to 16.0 for non-disabled children). Disabled children are also more likely to use after-school clubs and holiday playschemes than their non-disabled counterparts.

Childcare providers also give provision for disabled children one of the lowest ratings.

However, only a small number of parents/carers (3.9%) report that they do not use childcare because it is not able to meet their child's impairment or additional need.

Responses to the questionnaire and focus groups highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- **Choice of childcare:** parents/carers with disabled children tend to disagree that there is good choice of childcare in Oxfordshire⁹. This is supported in focus groups where parents/carers report restricted choice in childcare and the challenges involved in finding childcare that is not only appropriate, but also affordable and high quality. Providers agreed and suggested that they be given support and funding to enable them to offer suitable provision (either changes to the fabric of the building or more intensive staffing or more training).
- **More opportunities to attend formal childcare:** parents/carers with disabled children are more likely to agree that they would like their child to attend more formal childcare. Childcare providers report that they need further support and advice in catering for disabled children.
- **Location:** respondents with disabled children are more likely to request improvements to the location of childcare¹⁰.
- **Information and advice:** parents/carers reported that finding childcare was time consuming, stressful and

⁷ Nevertheless, on average parents/carers with disabled children do tend to agree that they are satisfied with their childcare arrangements, i.e. average rating of 3.8 out of 5, compared to 4.3 for parents/carers without a disabled child.

⁸ 3.4 out of 5, compared to 4.1 for parents/carers without disabled children.

⁹ Average rating of 2.7 out of 5, compared to 3.3.

¹⁰ 12.4% compared to 5.3% of parents/carers without disabled children.

frustrating. Childcare providers agree and suggest that services for disabled children should be better marketed and that the number of providers should be expanded so parents had a real choice.

- **Affordability:** childcare providers highlighted that it was unfair to pass on to parents/carers any additional costs incurred in supporting a disabled child. They suggested that further support be given to enable childcare to be appropriate but affordable.

Finally, although on average parents/carers tend to disagree that they have problems with childcare arrangements that breakdown often and experience problems with travel and transport, they don't disagree as much as parents/carers without disabled children. This suggests that there may be some barriers in relation to these two issues faced specifically by parents/carers with disabled children. Childcare providers also suggested that travel / transport may be a particular issue for parents/carers with disabled children especially if families are using different types of childcare and where children have higher dependencies.

8 Meeting the needs of working families

8.1 Families who are in work

Childcare is important to working families: 69.4% of those who use childcare do so in order to work. The groups of parents/carers who are more likely to use childcare in order to work are: two parent families, parents/carers with only one child, households with annual incomes of over £37,000 and parents/carers who only have children aged 5 years and over.

Parents/carers in households with at least one family member working irregular patterns are the only employment status group who are more likely to report that their childcare arrangements are not fully meeting their needs. This is reinforced by childcare providers who give childcare for working families the highest rating.

Generally, households with at least one parent/carer in employment do not want their child to attend more childcare. The only exception to this is households where both parents/carers work full-time.

There are differences between working families in the improvements they would like to see made:

- **Affordability:** households where all parents/carers are working full-time and those where at least one parent works irregular patterns are more likely to request improvements in affordability. In focus groups, childcare providers agree that working families would benefit from more affordable provision.
- **Opening times:** households where all parents/carers are working full-time are more likely to request improvements to opening times.

Other suggestions for improvements from childcare providers included: increasing the length and flexibility of hours and provision of more breakfast clubs and after-school clubs. Provision during school holidays (especially half-term holidays and over the summer) were highlighted as areas for improvement.

8.2 Families who are seeking work

The childcare for 52.8% of respondent children in households where at least one parent/carer is seeking work report that their childcare is not fully meeting their needs. In addition, 45.6% of children in households where at least one parent/carer is

studying or training report that their childcare needs are not being fully met. This latter group is also statistically less likely to have their needs met over the school holidays: 86.0% report that their needs are not being fully met over the school holidays.

There is general agreement between these two groups of parents/carers about the improvements they would like made to childcare in Oxfordshire (see Figure 3):

- Both would prefer to use family and friends for their childcare, but also want their children to attend more or different types of childcare.
- Both would like provision to be available at different times.
- Parents/carers who are studying or training would also like provision to be more affordable.

Figure 3: Differences between respondents

Finding	Seeking work	Studying / training
Prefer to use family and friends	●	●
Use more formal childcare	●	
Affordability		●
Different times	●	●
More and different types of childcare	●	●

A different emphasis in relation to gaps came across in focus groups with parents/carers and with providers. The main view here was that childcare needed to be more flexible, to enable parents/carers to attend courses and/or search for work. Affordability was also highlighted as a key issue, as well as the need for more childcare places attached to studying/training courses.

Recent Welfare Reform developments by the Department for Work and Pensions may have an impact on the Council's market management role in relation to the provision of childcare for those seeking work, and especially lone parents with older children¹¹. Those localities with the highest number of lone parents are: Banbury, Bicester/Kidlington, and Witney/Eynsham/Woodstock. Lone parents with older children may also benefit from the improvements highlighted in section 3.

¹¹ *Ready for work: full employment in our generation* (2007) DWP. This states that "Lone parents with older children, who are claiming benefits and who can work, will have to actively seek work. We intend this will be introduced for lone parents with a youngest child of 12 or over from October 2008, a youngest child aged 10 or over from October 2009 and a youngest child aged 7 or over from October 2010".

Glossary

Explanations of types of childcare are drawn from the Sure Start document *Looking for childcare? A SureStart guide to help you make the right choices*. It is available at:

<http://www.surestart.gov.uk/doc/P0002413.doc>

Term	Explanation
After-school club	See out of school activities below.
BME	Black and minority ethnic group.
Breakfast club	See out of school activities below.
CDO	Childcare Development Officer
Childminder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered childminders look after your child along with other children, usually in their own home. They are allowed to care for up to six children under the age of eight, including their own – but only three of them can be aged under five. Self-employed, they decide on working hours. Most are willing to work early mornings, evenings and weekends, as well as part-time. All registered childminders are required to undertake a basic training course, including first aid, and most go on to do further training and professional development. Your child should experience learning and development activities suitable for their age.
Children's Centre	See Sure Start Children's Centre below.
Day nurseries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A day nursery provides care and education for children between the ages of six weeks and five years. (Many also offer out of school care for five- to eleven-year-olds.) Day nurseries can be run by the council, the community, based in the workplace or privately run. Opening times are from around 7am to 7pm (hours vary but many nurseries may start before 8am), 50 weeks of the year. You can send your child full or part time. Your child should experience learning and development activities suitable for their age.
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families. Further information is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk
IDACI	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index. This is a subset of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Further information is available at www.communities.gov.uk
Nannies and other home-based carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nannies and other home-based child carers are employed by you to provide care for children, usually in your home. They will fit in with unusual working hours, and work part time or even live in. Some may agree to do additional jobs around the house (cooking, tidying etc.). Shared nannies work for you and another family. Most nannies and some other home-based child carers have a recognised childcare qualification or nursery nurse training, but this isn't compulsory.
NEG/NEF	Nursery Education Grant or Nursery Education Grant. This is the grant to childcare providers in order to provide the free entitlement to 15 hours of childcare per week for 38 weeks for children aged 3 and 4 years.

Term	Explanation
Nursery schools and classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery schools and nursery classes provide early education and childcare for children between three and five years old (some will take children from two and a half). Some schools and classes are part of the state education system; others are run by private and voluntary sector organisations. Private provision charge fees which vary across the country. Nursery schools are open during school hours, usually 9am to 3:30pm in term time for full or half-day sessions. Many have extended their provision to cater for the needs of working parents. Your child should experience learning and development activities suitable for their age. Some may also offer out of school care before or after school during term time and in the school holidays, which could include a range of services for children under five and their families.
OCIS	Oxfordshire Children's Information Service. Further information available from www.oxoncis.org.uk
Ofsted	Responsible for regulating and inspecting care of children and young people and education and skills for learners of all ages. Further information is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk
ONS	Office of National Statistics. Further information is available at www.statistics.gov.uk
Out of school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many schools offer a variety of formal childcare and other activities outside usual school hours. These range from formal childcare in primary schools to music, art, sport and other study support activities. As a result the school is often open from 8am to 6pm, including during holiday periods. Breakfast clubs are normally open from 8am. After-school clubs are typically open from 3.30pm and up to 6pm. Holiday play schemes tend to be open from 8am to 6pm and run outside of term time. Sometimes referred to as out of school clubs, these services are based on school sites, but may also be in youth clubs, community centres or nurseries. Some schools organise the childcare themselves, but others will work with local voluntary groups, private providers and childminders, who will provide staff and sometimes facilities.
Pre-school and playgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-schools or playgroups provide care and most offer early education for children between two and five years old. A pre-school or playgroup can be organised by the community on a not-for-profit basis, often with help from parents. They offer sessions from two-and-a-half hours to four hours, during term time, every day or for several days a week. Your child should experience learning and development activities suitable for their age. Some are developing their services to offer longer sessions or full-time daycare.
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent. Usually refers to a type of childcare provider that isn't run by the local authority.
SEN	Special Educational Need.

Term	Explanation
Sure Start Children's Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sure Start Children's Centres provide a range of easily accessible and flexibly tailored services for families and children from pregnancy until the age of five. Their services include integrated early years provision and health services for children. • They will also offer parenting education, family support services, outreach to parents, a base for childminders and links with Jobcentre Plus, Children's Information Services (CIS) and adult learning. • They are open a minimum of 48 weeks a year, five days a week, ten hours a day. • Many centres will be developed from Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and Early Excellence Centres, Maintained Nursery Schools and health centres, and will involve private/voluntary provision. • A Sure Start Children's Centre usually serves a community with about 800 children under five years old. In rural areas with a more dispersed population numbers may be smaller. Note: early years provision means early learning integrated with care.



Cordis Bright Limited

Epworth House
25/35 City Road
London EC1Y 1AA
Telephone 020 7330 9170
Facsimile 020 7330 9171
www.cordisbright.co.uk
Email: info@cordisbright.co.uk

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