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We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in producing this document including:

- All the childcare providers who completed our surveys; and
- Members of Halton Borough Council’s Early Years Team

Introduction

Research has proven that the earliest years of a child’s life are crucial to their development for laying the foundations of success at school and in later life. In Halton, we want to ensure we have high quality childcare available for all parents or carers that need it, in all age ranges. The Family and Childcare Trust Childcare Survey (2018) states: *‘Childcare supports parents to work, keeps valuable skills in the workforce, helps children do better at school and can narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers’.*

1. Purpose

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

The Act places a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to play a strategic role in facilitating the childcare market, ensuring there is secure, sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 years for disabled children). The Childcare Sufficiency Assessments, or ‘Sufficiency Duty Reports’ as they are now known, give Local Authorities the chance to work with local partners, filling gaps in the market and shaping childcare services in their area, to meet the needs of local families.

The Local Authority is not under a duty to provide the childcare directly. It is intended that formal childcare should, in the main, be delivered by providers in the private and voluntary sectors.

The information in this document has been produced to:

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

Whilst the information presented in this Sufficiency Duty Report provides a ‘snapshot’ of supply and demand for childcare places in Halton, this can change on a regular basis. Despite the impact of COVID-19, recruitment and retention issues and an increase in the cost of living, the childcare market in Halton continues to be secure and sustainable. However, with the ‘biggest expansion of early years childcare England has ever seen’, commencing from April 2024, it will be important to continue to monitor the market to ensure this sufficiency remains.

Note: Halton Borough Council does not guarantee the accuracy of this Sufficiency Duty Report, nor does the council accept any liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage or any other consequences arising from the use of the information in this document.

2. Rationale

Not all families require childcare. Some parents do not work, whilst others work flexibly. Furthermore, some parents rely on extended family members, such as grandparents, rather than use formal childcare. Because of these factors, it is difficult to accurately calculate the number of children that will require childcare in Halton.

In order to assess the level of demand for childcare provision across all market segments, an analysis of population and uptake trends has been undertaken. PCT GP registration data is used to identify the population of 0-1 Year Olds, 2 Year Olds, 3 and 4 Year Olds and 5-10 Year Olds by ward. Headcount data and Provider Surveys are used to identify how many children in each age group are accessing a childcare place. This information is used to calculate the % of children in each age group who have accessed a childcare place in each of the past three years. The trend identified is used to inform estimates based on the current population of children. The data is analysed at ward level as the percentage of children accessing childcare can vary significantly between wards.

It must also be noted that, unlike school place planning, which is based on compulsory attendance and defined school catchment areas, early education and childcare trends can be unpredictable. Families are able to choose whether or not they take up a place and are free to access early education and childcare wherever they wish across the borough, or even in other boroughs. Therefore, whilst some choose to access childcare close to where they live, others may prefer to take up places closer to where they work. When it comes to the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE), most families use all the hours available to them. However, some choose only to access part of their entitlement. This can make it difficult to accurately forecast the number of places needed.

Childcare market management is further complicated by the fact that providers can change the age profile of the places they offer without notice. These factors make precise forecasting extremely difficult and mean that caveats must be applied to information within the Sufficiency Duty Report.

3. Safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure and it is a requirement for all adults working with children to take the necessary steps to safeguard children. Childcare providers must also ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children, have the necessary policies and procedures in place and ensure that all staff are adequately trained in child protection.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 sets out the responsibility for Early Years and Childcare and states that early year's providers must:

- Train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues and that training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. Complete safeguarding training that enables them to recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect; and

- Have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and who should liaise with local statutory children's services agencies as appropriate. This lead should also complete child protection training.

Settings are encouraged to ensure that their staff attend appropriate safeguarding training to ensure that they meet the requirements of the relevant legislation and also ensure that they have appropriate policies and procedures in place. All settings are requested to regularly complete a safeguarding audit to ensure that they review their safeguarding practices regularly.

4. Context

Halton is a largely urban area. Its two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn, situated 10 miles upstream from Liverpool, and separated by the River Mersey. It consists of 18 wards. The ethnic composition of Halton remains predominantly white, with 96.5% of the population falling into this category (Census 2021). This is significantly higher than found regionally or nationally, suggesting a relative lack of ethnic diversity. The main language of 97.3% of the population is English. Christianity is the main religion in Halton, 58.6% of people identified as Christian on the 2021 Census. 35.2% of the population have no religion.

Halton shares many of the social and economic problems associated with its neighbours on Merseyside. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, and shows that Halton is ranked 13th out of 'the 20 local authority districts with the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally'.

A more in-depth breakdown of Halton's context may be found by following this link: <https://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/CensusandStatistics/CensusandStatistics.aspx>.

5. Quality of Childcare

It is acknowledged that the quality of childcare is a significant factor affecting a child's future. High quality early education improves children's school readiness.

The **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework** sets out the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to give children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. A revised framework came into effect on 1st September 2021.

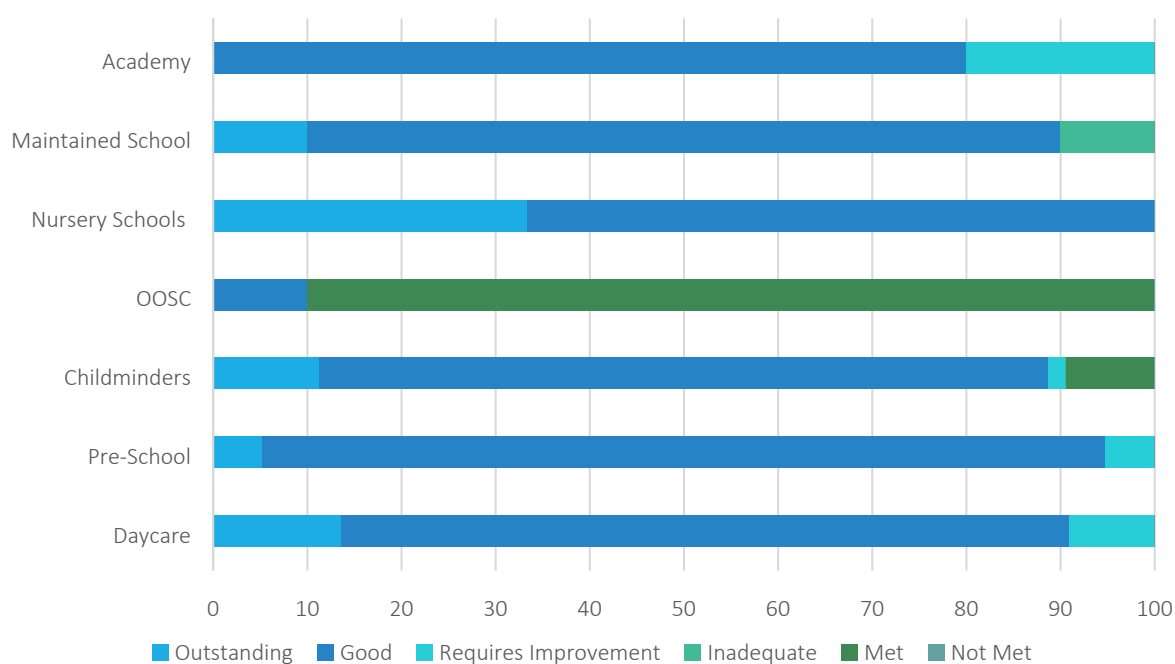
OfSTED

Ofsted is the sole arbiter of quality and through the inspection process, each childcare setting will receive one of four grades: 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. Some childminders have received a 'Met' grade, this is due to the fact that they did not have any early year's children on roll at the time of inspection. Out of School Clubs (OSC) can only receive a 'Met' or 'Not Met' grade.

Table 1 : Ofsted grades for Early Years sector in Halton (August 2023)

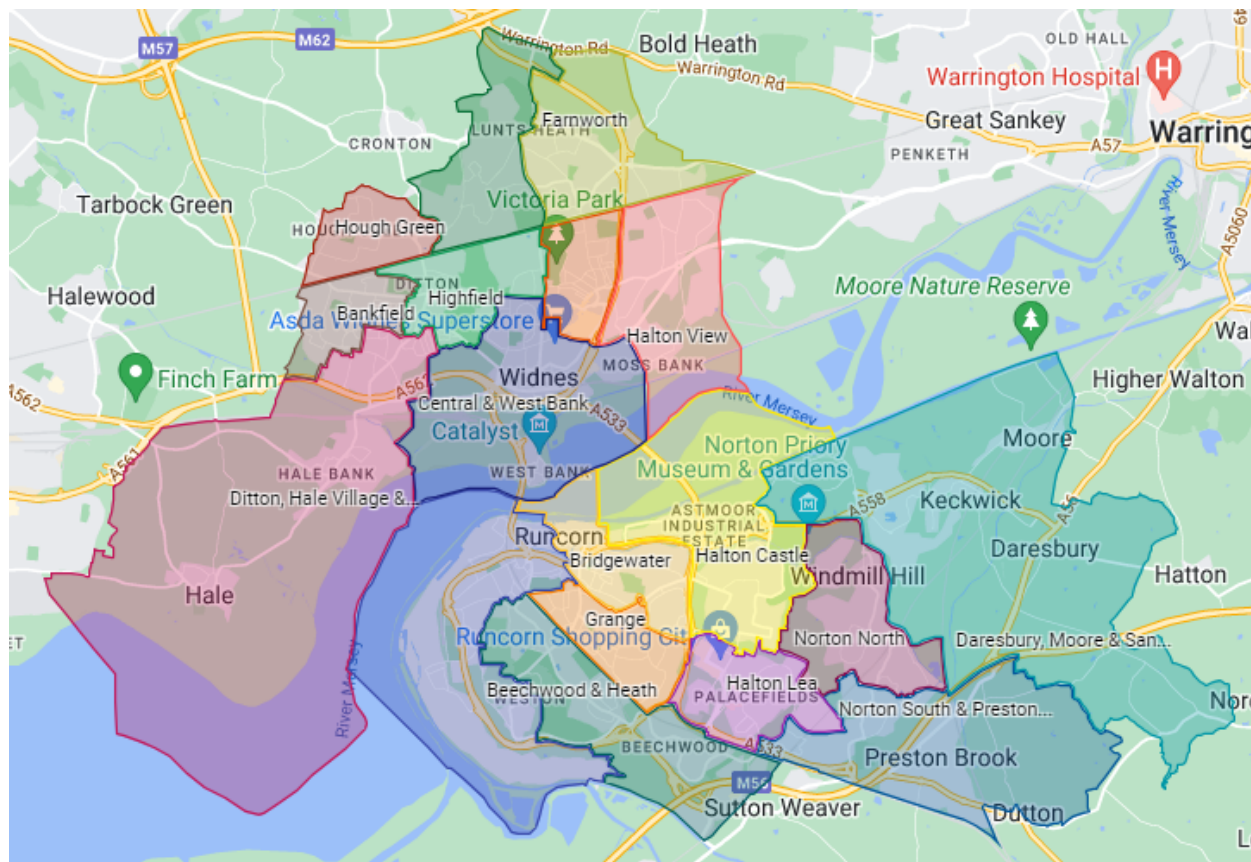
Current OfSTED Grades - Percentage of Inspected Settings						
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not Met
Daycare	13.64	77.27	9.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pre-School	5.26	89.47	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00
Childminders	11.32	77.36	1.89	0.00	9.43	0.00
OOSC	0.00	10.00	0.00	0.00	90.00	0.00
All PVI's	9.62	73.08	3.85	0.00	13.46	0.00
Nursery Schools	33.33	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maintained School	10.00	80.00	0.00	10.00	0.00	0.00
Academy	0.00	80.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
All Schools	11.11	77.78	5.56	5.56	0.00	0.00
All Early Years	10.71	79.46	4.46	0.89	4.46	0.00

% OfSTED Grade by Sector (August 2023)



6. Map of Runcorn and Widnes (split by wards)

MAP OF WARDS 2021



Map Source: [Halton Wards 2021 - Google My Maps](#)

CHILDREN'S CENTRE/FAMILY HUB REACH AREAS (BASED ON WARD BOUNDARIES)

RUNCORN		WIDNES	
Children's Centre / Family Hub	Wards covered by the Reach Area	Children's Centre / Family Hub	Wards covered by the Reach Area
Brookvale	Norton South & Preston Brook Halton Lea	Ditton	Bankfield Ditton, Hale & Hale Village
Halton Brook	Bridgewater Halton Castle	Kingsway	Central & West Bank Highfield
Halton Lodge	Beechwood & Heath Grange Mersey & Weston	Upton	Birchfield Hough Green
Windmill Hill	Daresbury, Moore and Sandymoor Norton North	Warrington Road	Appleton Farnworth Halton View

7. Population of Halton

Table 2: Population of children and young people in Halton, identified by age and ward

Ward	0-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Appleton	68	87	59	75	73	83	87	72	83	95	69	90	67	76	81	77	51	63	55	54	1465
Bankfield	61	57	64	68	79	86	79	69	71	86	87	96	81	88	87	82	73	81	59	72	1526
Beechwood & Heath	54	49	53	61	67	66	58	67	70	84	82	66	91	77	73	101	71	75	74	57	1396
Birchfield	65	70	71	90	75	91	102	92	132	110	101	109	117	124	127	117	114	122	115	89	2033
Bridgewater	117	84	75	97	93	107	95	100	104	104	100	101	85	86	90	101	99	84	76	113	1911
Central & West Bank	71	95	105	81	103	83	98	103	91	93	103	120	116	89	110	124	87	125	83	81	1961
Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor	39	59	67	56	64	56	65	41	62	61	66	46	48	68	58	63	55	64	54	44	1136
Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank	82	96	91	100	102	105	98	95	99	113	101	96	92	87	94	82	84	77	67	70	1831
Farnworth	71	79	84	109	96	92	97	98	111	89	91	82	90	90	84	89	100	97	84	62	1795
Grange	88	97	76	93	107	119	93	104	95	109	104	110	100	125	119	112	112	81	73	95	2012
Halton Castle	96	84	77	73	84	75	91	79	88	79	97	92	85	98	93	87	74	73	74	62	1661
Halton Lea	48	51	74	60	79	80	66	82	87	118	87	104	80	101	75	91	97	84	84	59	1607
Halton View	71	78	73	69	91	81	87	74	74	69	75	63	82	73	77	69	63	71	53	60	1453
Highfield	47	60	63	49	68	64	54	74	70	75	69	75	84	82	70	72	72	65	53	58	1324
Hough Green	64	97	114	62	62	73	78	94	75	88	79	80	86	84	71	61	80	53	70	74	1545
Mersey & Weston	90	99	77	101	85	81	82	100	95	92	64	99	81	77	108	72	75	71	59	69	1677
Norton North	57	90	67	85	89	101	96	92	105	103	113	101	107	105	91	119	103	94	77	71	1866
Norton South & Preston Brook	73	86	77	80	84	86	94	98	107	116	103	95	98	115	106	103	99	97	75	66	1858
Total	1262	1418	1367	1409	1501	1529	1520	1534	1619	1684	1591	1625	1590	1645	1614	1622	1509	1477	1285	1256	30057

8. Childcare Market Segments

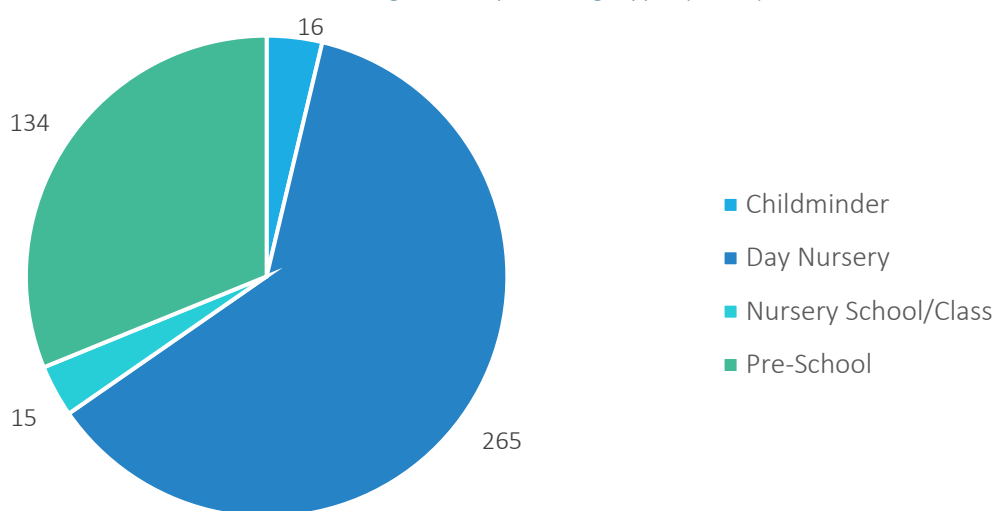
The childcare market in Halton, in common with all local authority areas, is sub-divided into a number of specific market segments; this differentiation is based on the age of the child and the type of provision that is being delivered.

It is important to recognise each of these market segments have distinct characteristics, which will influence demand and determine the most appropriate geographical area for the measurement of childcare sufficiency.

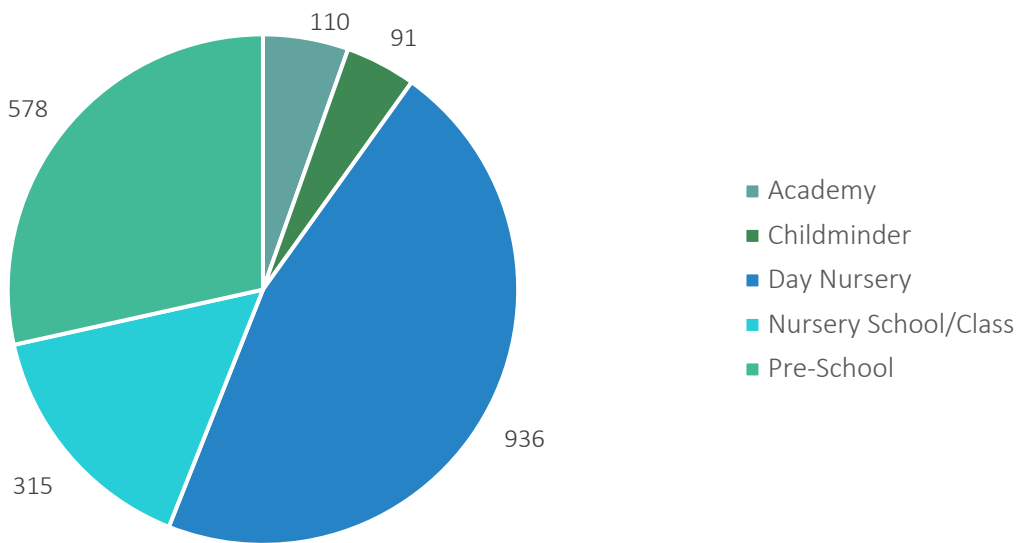
The Halton Early Years Market

The charts below show the distribution of FEYE places across the childcare sector.

Number of 2 Year Olds receiving FEYE by Setting Type (2023)



Number of 3 & 4 Year Olds receiving 15 hours FEYE by Setting Type (2023)



Number of 3 & 4 Year Olds receiving Extended Entitlement FEYE by Setting Type

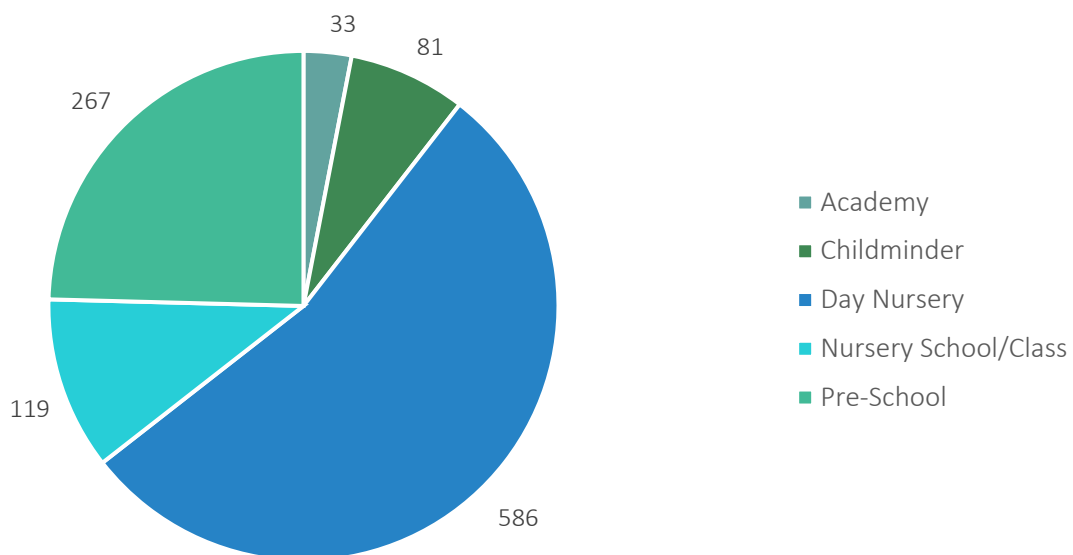


Table 3: Overall Numbers of Childcare Providers by Type, Ward and Children’s Centre/Family Hubs Reach Areas (August 2023)

Wards	Children Centre/ Family Hub Reach Areas	No of Childminders	No of Day Nurserie s	No of Pre- schools	No of Nursery Schools	No of Nursery Classes	No of Academies with Nursery Classes	No of SEN Nursery Classes	No of Breakfast and Out of School Clubs	No of Holiday Clubs	Totals
Appleton	Warrington Road	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	10
Bankfield	Ditton	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	8
Beechwood & Heath	Halton Lodge	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	9
Birchfield	Upton	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Bridgewater	Halton Brook	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	5
Central & West Bank	Kingsway	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	6
Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor	Windmill Hill	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	9
Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank	Ditton	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Farnworth	Warrington Road	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	10
Grange	Halton Lodge	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	8
Halton Castle	Halton Brook	4	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	9
Halton Lea	Brookvale	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	7
Halton View	Warrington Road	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	8
Highfield	Kingsway	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	7
Hough Green	Upton	5	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	10
Mersey & Weston	Windmill Hill	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	13
Norton North	Windmill Hill	9	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Norton South & Preston Brook	Brookvale	4	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	11
Totals		57	21	21	3	8	6	1	23	8	150

9. Supply and Estimated Demand of Childcare Places

The following tables show the current potential number of childcare places available in each market segment and the estimated demand for places in each.

With regards to the FEYE for 3 and 4 year olds, the summer term always has the highest occupancy and the autumn term the lowest. This is due to single point entry, as children who have turned 4 move into reception in September. Therefore, the supply figures used in this Assessment are a ‘snap-shot’ from a particular week in May 2023.

Like any other business, childcare providers will respond flexibly to meet the demand of the local market, therefore the figures in this report can be subject to change.

0-1 Year Olds – Childcare for this age range is delivered by day nurseries and childminders.

Not every child in this age range will require formal childcare. Maternity Leave and Shared Parental Leave, which allows parents to take up to twelve months off work after the birth of the child and can be shared between both parents, can reduce the demand for formal childcare for 0-1 year olds.

Table 4: Supply and estimated demand for 0-1 Year Olds split by Children Centre Reach Areas

0-1 Year Old Places			
CCRA	Estimated Demand	Estimated Supply	Sufficiency
Brookvale	56	36	-20
Halton Brook	75	30	-45
Halton Lodge	125	286	161
Windmill Hill	81	22	-59
Ditton	68	66	-2
Kingsway	63	52	-11
Upton	79	24	-55
Warrington Road	131	242	111
Runcorn	337	374	37
Widnes	340	384	44
Halton Overall	677	758	81
81 Surplus places overall			
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registration Data – May 2023</i>			
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23</i>			
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>			

The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across the borough of 81 places, 37 surplus places in Runcorn and 44 in Widnes. Supply from this age group is provided by day nurseries and Childminders. There are childminders across all CCRA's. In Runcorn there is plentiful supply of places in day nurseries in Mersey and Weston, Beechwood & Heath and Grange with fewer day nurseries elsewhere. Proposed new day nurseries in Halton Lea and Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor will increase supply in Halton Brook and Windmill Hill CCRA's for this age group. In Widnes there is provision from day nurseries and childminders in each CCRA. The highest number of day nursery places are in the Warrington Road CCRA where there is a large surplus of places. This is able to top-up supply in Kingsway and Upton where supply is lower.

The Childcare Provider Survey supports the analysis that there are sufficient places within this age group. Reported occupancy for 0-1 places is below 70% across the borough.

2 Year Olds – Childcare for this age range is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders.

Currently 2 Year Olds may access a paid place or access a funded 15 hour place based on DfE criteria. The number of children funded in Halton is, approximately, 523 per term. From April 2024 the children of working parents will also be able to access a 15 hour funded place.

Table 5: Supply and estimated demand for 2 Year Olds split by Children Centre Reach Areas

2 Year Old Places			
CCRA	Estimated Demand	Estimated Supply	Sufficiency
Brookvale	102	76	-26
Halton Brook	126	90	-36
Halton Lodge	196	416	220
Windmill Hill	101	158	57
Ditton	105	178	73
Kingsway	102	86	-16
Upton	101	55	-46
Warrington Road	178	239	61
Runcorn	526	740	214
Widnes	485	558	73
Halton Overall	1010	1298	288
288 Surplus places overall			
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registration Data – May 2023</i>			
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23</i>			
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>			

The sufficiency factor of 288 shows that there are ample places available for this age range across Halton. However, there would appear to be deficit places in Brookvale, Halton Brook, Kingsway and Upton. This analysis is based upon children accessing a 15 hour place. Some parents will choose to access childcare for more than 15 hours, this will reduce the overall supply of 15 hour places. Following the initial expansion of the Early Years Entitlement in April 2024 further information will be available on the number of 2 year olds accessing more than 15 hours of childcare.

3 and 4 Year Olds— Childcare for this age range is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools, maintained nursery schools, classes, academies and childminders.

All supply and demand figures are based on 15 Hour places. The proportion of children currently accessing 30 hours places and wraparound care has been factored into these calculations.

Table 6 - Supply and estimated demand for 3 & 4 Year Old Places split by Children Centre Reach Areas

3 & 4 Year Old Places			
CCRA	Estimated Demand	Estimated Supply	Sufficiency
Brookvale	349	370	21
Halton Brook	354	420	66
Halton Lodge	546	895	349
Windmill Hill	381	330	-51
Ditton	394	388	-6
Kingsway	386	432	46
Upton	325	210	-115
Warrington Road	522	711	189
Runcorn	1630	2015	385
Widnes	1627	1741	114
Halton Overall	3257	3756	499
499 Surplus places overall			
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registration Data May 2023</i>			
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23</i>			
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>			

Table 6 shows we have approximately 499 excess 15 Hours places for 3 & 4 Year Olds in total across the borough. The only areas where there appears to be a deficit of places are Windmill Hill CCRA and Upton CCRA. The population of 3&4 Year Olds is decreasing, however the % accessing a Universal Hours place is increasing. The % of children accessing Extended Hours is also increasing, 49.5% of 3 & 4 year olds accessed some Extended Hours in Summer 2023. 13.3% also accessed paid wraparound provision in addition to their funded hours.

Distribution of Supply of Places

Table 7 indicates that there is a sufficient supply of places in Halton in all age ranges. However, the supply of places is not always distributed evenly across Wards and Children’s Centre Reach Areas.

The average distance travelled by Funded Children living in Halton and accessing provision in Halton is 0.88 miles. 87% of Halton’s 2 Year Old Funded Children and 85% of Halton’s 3&4 Year Old Funded children live less than 2 miles from their chosen setting. (Based on Summer 2023 Headcount data).

It is important to remember that parents do not always access childcare in the ward where they live, parents may choose a setting based on considerations other than distance from home.

Table 7 shows ‘at a glance’ which areas have sufficient/insufficient places to meet demand in each age range/childcare category.

Table 7 – ‘At a Glance’ Table

Children's Centre /Family Hub Reach Area	0-1 Year Old Places	2 Year Old Places	3 & 4 Year Old Places
Brookvale		N (-26)	Y
Halton Brook		N (-36)	Y
Halton Lodge		Y	Y
Windmill Hill		Y	N (-51)
Ditton		Y	N (-6)
Kingsway		N (-16)	Y
Upton		N (-46)	N (-115)
Warrington Road		Y	Y
Runcorn	Y	Y	Y
Widnes	Y	Y	Y
Halton Sufficiency Overall	Y	Y	Y

Key: Y =Sufficiency N = Insufficiency (includes number of places)

Childcare for Children Over 5

Ofsted allows before and after school providers to determine the number of children they provide care for, up to a maximum number, determined by the size of their premises. It is up to each provider, therefore, to ensure that they have the correct staff:child ratio in place for the ages of the children attending the setting. Instead of having a separate registration for school aged children, day nurseries and childminders have extended their provision to offer places to older children before and after school and during the holidays. Many schools also run breakfast and afterschool clubs, which are exempt from separate registration by Ofsted.

Additionally, most schools offer free extra-curricular after school activities for both primary and secondary aged children, and parents will use these as ‘childcare’. Consequently, use of these activities combined with informal childcare, such as family and friends, means that there is a lower demand for out of school care than would be expected. However, it should be noted, that these activities often only run for up to an hour and are not always consistent. Furthermore, they can be cancelled at short notice and vary from term to term. This makes the collation of any information regarding the provision of before and after school care more difficult as it is not possible to collect consistent data around extra-curricular activities.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of places available for out of school hours and holiday care. Some data is held on the places available at OfSTED Registered Providers. However, this information does not include extra-curricular clubs run by schools or non-registered holiday activities available at leisure, sports or arts centres. The information that follows details the number of OfSTED registered providers of out of school hours childcare and the estimated number of places available. As information is not held by the local authority on the number of children who require out of school care, the number of children who attend, and how often children attend, it is very difficult to accurately assess demand. Population data to which a number of discounting factors (based on ONS Labour Force Data and DfE Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents) have been applied is used to give a broad guide to potential demand. Taken together with information from Halton out of school providers who report a significant level of vacancies for wraparound and holiday care places this suggests that there is sufficiency in the sector within Halton.

Table 8: Estimated supply of 5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision

5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision		
CCRA	Estimated Supply of Breakfast Places	Estimated Supply of After School Club Places
Brookvale	345	100
Halton Brook	196	86
Halton Lodge	375	190
Windmill Hill	273	134
Ditton	254	154
Kingsway	114	28
Upton	106	106
Warrington Road	317	351
Runcorn	1189	510
Widnes	791	639
Halton Overall	1980	1149
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23 Census Out of Hours Childcare Data January 2023</i>		

Table 9: Estimated demand for wraparound care for 5-10 Year Olds

5-10 Year Old Wraparound Care Demand	
CCRA	Estimated Demand Wraparound
Brookvale	138
Halton Brook	139
Halton Lodge	203
Windmill Hill	132
Ditton	140
Kingsway	118
Upton	150
Warrington Road	195
Runcorn	612
Widnes	603
Halton Overall	1215
<i>Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	

Table 10: 5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision - Number of Providers

Providers offering Before & After School Provision 5-10 Year Olds		
CCRA	Before school childcare/ breakfast club	After School Childcare/ After School Club
Brookvale	10	9
Halton Brook	7	5
Halton Lodge	7	7
Windmill Hill	13	12
Ditton	8	8
Kingsway	4	3
Upton	9	9
Warrington Road	19	18
Runcorn	37	33
Widnes	40	38
Halton Overall	77	71
<i>Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23 School Census Out of Hours Childcare Data January 2023</i>		

Out of School Clubs – School Pickup Service

Details around Out of School Clubs and Childminders and the schools to which they offer a pickup and drop off service is available from the Halton Family Information Service.

Wraparound Programme

The government will invest £289m over two academic years, from September 2024, to enable schools and local areas to set up wraparound childcare provision. This is the first step in the government’s ambition for all parents of primary school children who need it to access childcare in their local area from 8am – 6pm.

There are several possible delivery models ranging from:

- School-based provision, delivered by school;
- School-based provision, delivered by private provider;
- Cluster/hub model (on or off a school site);
- Childminders.

However, it is expected that Local Authorities will adopt a model that best suits their local needs and could be combination of approaches.

Funding will be provided to local authorities for both internal costs and delivery costs. LAs will be expected to map supply and demand, including identifying schools with no provision, un-met need and limited hours. Local authorities will also be expected to support schools/trusts or providers to set up/scale up existing provision, including testing innovative and sustainable solutions. Schools/trusts will have the option to deliver themselves, use PVI’s/childminders, or look off site (with transport). It is

expected that by September 2026, most parents will be able to access the provision they need. Programme funding will be tapered over 5 terms, with ongoing support from the LA and delivery partners. By the end of the scheme, provision should be self-sustaining with continued support from local authorities.

5-10 Year Old Holiday Provision

Table 11: Number of Ofsted registered settings providing 5-10 Year Old Holiday care and the estimated number of places available

5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision		
CCRA	Estimated Supply of Holiday Care	OfSTED Registered Settings Providing Holiday Care
Brookvale	40	8
Halton Brook	86	5
Halton Lodge	153	8
Windmill Hill	72	11
Ditton	24	4
Kingsway	48	2
Upton	48	7
Warrington Road	133	16
Runcorn	351	32
Widnes	253	29
Halton Overall	604	61

*Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23
School Census Out of Hours Childcare Data January 2023*

Table 12: Estimated demand for holiday care for 5-10 Year Olds

5-10 Year Old Holiday Care Demand	
CCRA	Estimated Demand Holiday Care
Brookvale	64
Halton Brook	65
Halton Lodge	95
Windmill Hill	62
Ditton	66
Kingsway	55
Upton	70
Warrington Road	91
Runcorn	286
Widnes	282
Halton Overall	569

Halton Demand Analysis 2023

11-14 Year Old Out of School and Holiday Care

Many parents and carers consider children within this age group to be 'old enough to look after themselves'. Therefore, families tend to access more informal arrangements for childcare, through play schemes, leisure and recreational activities.

Halton provides FREE activities and food to children and young people via the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme. Eligibility criteria apply. This programme runs during the Easter, Summer & Christmas breaks. The activities aim to engage children aged between 4-17 years. However, many are targeted at the cohort of 11-14 years.

Halton is also pro-active in commissioning a variety of services from different organisations to provide short breaks, educational, artistic and sporting activities for young people across the borough. For the purposes of the SDR, these activities are classed as 'childcare' for ages 11-19. The activities are held at various times during the evenings, weekends and school holidays throughout the year. For more information go to;

- o Halton Play Council www.haltonplaycouncil.co.uk
- o The Vibe www.vibe.org/halton

Full information on the different organisations that work with 11-19 year olds in Halton can be found on Halton's [Local Offer](#) and [Family Information Service](#) websites.

10. Halton SEND Provision

Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to publish a Local Offer. Schools and early years providers must provide information for parents on how they support children with SEND and should regularly review and evaluate the quality and breadth of the support they offer. The [Local Offer](#) is published on the Halton Borough Council website.

In addition, childcare providers can apply for 'Top-up Funding'. The purpose of this funding is to support providers to address the needs of individual children with SEND. Currently, there are three opportunities a year for providers to apply for Top-up Funding. Once awarded, the funding remains in place for twelve months.

Halton's Families Information Service (FIS) offers a Brokerage Service to parents, which helps to find suitable childcare for their child's disability/additional needs

11. Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Disability Access Funding (DAF) is available for early years provider to support children who have disabilities and/or special educational needs. It should be used to make reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or help build inclusive capacity (this may be for the child in question or to benefit children as a whole attending the setting).

Detailed information about DAF eligibility criteria, entitlement, documentary evidence required, procedure, payment and application process can be found in the DAF section on the [Local Offer Website](#).

DAF funding is a one-off annual payment, which is paid directly to the childcare provider. It is available to 3 and 4 year olds who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and who are claiming FEYE.

12. Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is additional funding designed to narrow the attainment gap between young children from low-income families and their peers.

Early Years Providers receive an additional payment per year, paid termly, for each eligible 3 and 4 year old claiming the Universal Hours of the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE).

13. Affordability of Halton Childcare

The table below gives details of the average prices for day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders as at May 2023.

Table 11: Average Prices by Early Years Sector

	£ Per Hour	£ Per Half Day	£ Per Full Day	£ Per Week
Day Nurseries	6.95	31.75	51.30	243.82
Pre-Schools	5.11	14.69	34.62	175.73
Childminders	4.77	24.08	41.67	207.50

Halton Provider Survey 2023
Important Note: For most day nurseries a full day is 10 hours, for pre-schools a full day is 6 hours (2 three hour sessions)

Table 12: Average Prices for Out of School Clubs

	Session Length	£ Per Session
Breakfast Club	45 minutes – 1 hours	3.80
After School Club	2.5 – 3 hours	9.38
Holiday Club	Half Day	14.19

Halton Provider Survey 2023

The table below gives the Halton average rates for 2023 compared to the North West and England averages.

Table 13: Average Charges Comparison Table

	Day Nursery 25 Hrs Per Week £	Day Nursery 50 Hrs Per Week £	After School Club 3 Hour Session Per Week £	Childminder After School 3 Hour Session Per Week £
Halton Average	134.35	243.82	46.86	71.52
North West Average	130.02	255.22	62.33	56.14
England Average	146.00	283.95	67.68	72.46

Halton Provider Survey 2023
Coram Family & Childcare Survey 2023

The table above shows that Halton’s 50 hours per week rates are lower than the North West and England averages. Halton’s 25 hours per week rates are lower than England but higher than North West.

A three hour after school session in Halton, costs less than the North West and England averages. The Halton figures include prices of after school care provided by schools which tends to be lower than private providers.

14. Sustainability

All childcare providers need to ensure they remain financially sustainable by ensuring they have sufficient children attending each term to cover their costs. However, childcare also needs to be affordable to parents.

To help providers with marketing their vacant places, the Families Information Service offers free advice to parents detailing local childcare providers suitable to their needs.

The FEYE funding rates for 2, 3 and 4 year olds paid to providers are determined by the amount of income received from the Government each financial year.

In April 2017, as part of the 3 and 4 year old FEYE funding, Halton introduced an additional ‘Quality Supplement’, which is paid to providers who have staff with a Level 5+ relevant childcare qualification.

15. Staffing

Staffing costs are the largest expense for childcare providers and increase each year. Staff must be paid at least the minimum wage. An additional expense is the introduction of the Work Place Pension scheme. This will have financial implications for childcare providers regarding their sustainability.

A common difficulty that childcare providers have is recruiting high quality, well experienced staff. Staff of this calibre expect higher wages, however, the childcare sector is traditionally amongst one of the lowest paid professions. Consequently, young people are not taking up childcare as a career.

Table 14 - Number of Staff Employed in the PVI Sector

Staffing			
	Total	Female	Male
Pre-schools	141	139	2
Day Nurseries	420	410	10
Out of School Clubs	41	39	2
TOTALS	602	588	14
TOTALS %		97.7%	2.3%

Source: Childcare Survey 2022/23

16. Average Hourly Rates of Pay – PVI Sector

Table 15: Average Rates of Pay - Day Nurseries

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Room Leader/ Senior (L3+) £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
Day Nurseries	15.71	12.62	11.51	10.63	10.50

Source: Childcare Provider Survey 2023. Not all settings provide this information.

Table 16: Average Rates of Pay – Pre Schools

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Senior Practitioner (L3+) £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
Pre-schools	13.43	12.02	11.43	10.90	10.42

Source: Childcare Provider Survey 2023. Not all settings provide this information.

Table 17: Average Rates of Pay – Out of School Clubs

	Manager £	Deputy/Senior Supervisor £	Playworker £
Out of Schools	13.82	11.77	11.28

Source: Childcare Provider Survey 2023. Not all settings provide this information.

17. Flexibility of Childcare in Halton

This section provides details on how the various childcare sectors offer flexibility, especially for those parents working irregular hours.

Childminders

There are currently 59 Ofsted Registered childminders in Halton (31 in Runcorn and 28 in Widnes).

Childminders can care for up to six children aged under 8 years of age – usually no more than one under 1 year old and two between the ages of 1-5 years old. They can also care for a number of children over the age of 8. If they work with another childminder or have an assistant, they can care for more.

Childminders in Halton offer a flexible service to suit parent's needs, particularly with regards to early starts and late finishes. They provide breakfast, after school and holiday care services.

Many of the childminders delivering the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE) are able to offer all, or some, of the FEYE hours. They also offer a drop off/pick up service to pre-schools/day nurseries/nursery schools/classes and deliver wrap-around care.

Opening hours for Halton childminders generally range between 7am-6pm, some also try to accommodate shift patterns.

Day Nurseries

All 23 day nurseries offer full day care to children between the ages of 0-5 years. They generally open 8am-6pm (however, some do open earlier/later). All day nurseries in Halton offer the Free Early Years Entitlement.

In Halton, 5 day nurseries also offer breakfast, after school and holiday care for children aged between 4-11+ years of age.

Pre-schools

All 24 Halton pre-schools offer the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE). The majority are open for morning and afternoon sessions, however, a few only open for either morning or afternoons. All open term time only and are therefore able to offer the FEYE over 38 weeks. Of the 24 pre-schools, 23 offer 30 hours. Flexibility is further increased as 18 pre-schools also offer a lunch club. This enables parents to use their free entitlement for part of the day and pay for any additional hours, at a considerably lower rate than a day nursery.

Some pre-schools also have before and after school clubs on the same site. This enables families to extend their daily childcare usage for more hours, which gives the child consistency of care. These families can split some of their 30 hours (if entitled) between the breakfast/after school club and pre-school.

Out of School and Holiday Clubs

Halton currently have 23 registered Out of School Clubs and 6 Holiday Clubs.

Opening times for breakfast clubs range between 7:30am-9am, and after school clubs generally run between 3pm-6pm.

Some primary schools in Halton run their own breakfast clubs. The majority of remaining primary schools have access to either an independently run (Ofsted registered) breakfast club on the school site or, off-site registered OSCs/childminders who offer breakfast clubs and a drop-off service.

The majority of primary schools offer extra-curricular or after school activities ranging from 1-2 sessions per week, for up to 5 sessions per week. Many of these activities are free and reduce demand for formal after school care run by Ofsted registered clubs. Some Primary Schools also run their own after school clubs which operate until 5:30-6:00pm.

Families may use after school activity clubs for their childcare needs as they are usually less expensive or, in some cases, free of charge. However, these clubs are not consistent as they may not cover the whole term and can be cancelled at short notice. These activities can reduce demand for formal OSC care.

Halton's Family Information Service holds up to date information on the schools which each out of school clubs drop off/pick up from. Further information is available at [Family Information Service \(halton.gov.uk\)](http://www3.halton.gov.uk/pages/educationandfamilies/familiesinformationservice/Families.aspx) (www3.halton.gov.uk/pages/educationandfamilies/familiesinformationservice/Families.aspx)

Changes to Provision

Table 18: Settings who have closed, opened, or are hoping to open, since the last SDR.

	Settings Closed	Proposed to Close	Opened	Proposed to Open
Day Nurseries	2	0	0	2
Pre-Schools	1	0	2	0
Childminders	2	0	1	3
Out of School Clubs	3	0	2	0

18. Expansion of Funded Childcare

As announced in the 2023 Spring Budget, the early education and childcare entitlements will be expanded to include children aged 9 months and above. This expansion will take place in stages, as follows:-

- from April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare per week (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's birthday;
- from September 2024, this will be extended to parents of children aged 9 months and above;
- from September 2025, working parents will be able to access 30 free hours per week (over 38 weeks a year) for children from age 9 months up until 1 September following his or her fifth birthday.

- A child will be entitled to the additional free hours from the term after both of the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the child has attained the specified age of eligibility; (2) the child’s parent has a current positive determination of eligibility from HMRC i.e., a valid eligibility code.

The expansion of funded childcare is expected to have an impact on the sufficiency of places. Ongoing analysis is being undertaken, both locally and nationally, to assess the likely numbers of additional childcare places that will be needed at each stage of the expansion. Not every child who becomes eligible for the entitlement will need an additional childcare place. Many children are likely to be already accessing paid provision, some will be accessing an existing 2 Year Old Funded place and some parents will choose not to use formal childcare.

April 2024 – 15 Hours Free Childcare for Working Parents of 2 Year Olds

Initial estimates based upon population data, the estimated number of parents eligible for the new entitlement and the DfE projected demand level have been calculated. These estimates suggest that there are sufficient places in Halton to accommodate the initial phase of the expansion in April 2024.

Table 19: The estimated additional demand for places April 2024.

	Estimated New Demand for Places – April 2024
Runcorn	66
Widnes	72
Halton	138
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registrations Data May 2023</i>	
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	
<i>DfE Central Scenario Estimate</i>	

September 2024 – 15 Hours Free Childcare for Working Parents of 9 Months and Over

Table 20: The estimated additional demand for places September 2024.

	Estimated New Demand for Places – September 2024
Runcorn	170
Widnes	171
Halton	341
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registrations Data May 2023</i>	
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	
<i>DfE Central Scenario Estimate</i>	

Table 21: The estimated additional demand for places September 2025.

	Estimated New Demand Places – September 2025
Runcorn	342
Widnes	330
Halton	672

*Population Source: PCT GP Registrations Data May 2023
Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023
DfE Central Scenario Estimate*

These initial estimates will be reviewed periodically prior to and during the roll out of the new entitlements to ensure the accuracy of estimates and to inform planning.

19. Help with Childcare Costs

The cost of childcare can be a major expense, and this may be a deciding factor in whether parents return to work or training and, if so, whether they use ‘formal’ (registered or approved) or ‘informal’ (family and friends) childcare.

Financial help is available, providing the childcare provider is a:

- Registered childminder/play scheme/nursery or club
- Childminder with an Ofsted registered Childminding Agency
- Registered school

The Government introduced the ‘[Childcare Choices](#)’ website which provides details of all the financial help available towards the cost of childcare. This is a ‘one-stop shop’ which allows parents/carers to see if they are eligible and, if so, to apply directly on-line.

The website also has a calculator, which gives estimates of amount of help available to enable parents decide which scheme is the most beneficial to them financially.

Foster Carers who work the equivalent of 16 hours on minimum wage, outside of their foster caring role, may also be entitled to claim 30 hours childcare (subject to specific criteria). Foster Carers should contact their Social Worker for more information.

20. Other Factors Impacting on Childcare and Sustainability

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 has radically changed the way we live our lives. The early years sector, both locally and nationally, has seen a change in the way families are accessing early education. Parental work patterns have altered and there is a greater dependency on family members to support with childcare.

The early years sector are also feeling the effects of the cost of living crisis. The increase in the national minimum wage, together with an increase in overhead costs, is having a detrimental effect on some settings, especially the smaller pre-schools.

Early Years settings are seeing qualified staff withdrawing from the sector to pursue better paid employment with less pressure and responsibility. Some staff are experiencing burn out post Covid and have chosen to take early retirement or leave the profession altogether. This, coupled with the fact that increased numbers of children attending the provision are presenting with additional needs, including behavioural challenges, is contributing to a national shortage of suitably qualified early years practitioners.

Despite the acknowledgment of the increased number of young children with significant additional needs, statutory staff ratios remain the same and funding has not increased to reflect the increased support needs of the children.

Local intelligence indicates that several providers, although currently reporting that they are sustainable, are extremely concerned for their ongoing financial viability for the coming financial year in the absence of any additional support funding. Some report that in order to remain sustainable they have had to make the difficult decision to reduce staff numbers with a knock-on effect on the number of childcare places they are currently able to offer, others have had to reduce the number of places on offer due to staff leaving.

Moving forwards, providers will need to ensure that they can viably continue to supply early education and childcare places at a time of economic uncertainty and a market that has yet to re-stabilise.

In the Government's 2023 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced a range of measures to support early education and help parents with childcare so they can return to work more easily. This expansion to childcare is the largest ever seen in England and Local Authorities will need to carefully monitor the market to ensure sufficiency of places is maintained.

21. Conclusion

Halton continues to provide a sufficient, flexible and high-quality early years and childcare market. Despite the challenges being faced by the early years sector, new provisions are opening up and parents and carers continue to have a wide choice of high quality and affordable childcare services.

However, the Early Years sector have indicated that there are continuing concerns around recruitment and retention of staff, the high numbers of children coming into settings with Special Educational Needs, and the reduction of numbers of children, especially in Pre-Schools. There are also concerns around the increasing costs of fuel and overheads, which are not reflected in the funding figures.

The implications of the Spring budget cannot yet be predicted and therefore the impact on sufficiency is unknown at this time. However, the local authority will continue to engage proactively with the sector to identify any potential reduction in sufficiency to ensure that the childcare market in Halton remains vibrant and buoyant.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
CCRA	Children’s Centre Reach Area
CSA	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
DAF	Disability Access Fund
DfE	Department for Education
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium
FIS	Families Information Service
FEYE	Free Early Years Entitlement
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HBC	Halton Borough Council
HCYPSP	Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OSC	Out of School Club
SDR	Sufficiency Duty Report
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

Definition of a ‘Reach’ Area

A Reach Area is a number of wards based around a Children’s Centre/Family Hub that is meaningful and accessible to local parents.

References

www.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

[Halton Families Information Service](#)

[Halton council democracy statistics and census information](#)

[Halton’s Synergy Children’s Database \(Servelec\)](#)

2021 Census

Office of National Statistics

Childcare Provider Surveys 2023

Coram Family and Childcare – Childcare Survey 2023

Contacts

For further information regarding childcare in Halton, please contact 'Halton Families Information Service' on 0151 511 7375, e-mail: haltonfis@halton.gov.uk or visit: www.halton.gov.uk/fis

For advice on how to set up childcare, please refer to the 'Local Authority Guide to setting up childcare provision on non-domestic premises', which may be accessed via the following link -[Setting up Childcare in Halton](#)