

Bexley Childcare Sufficiency Assessment



September 2021

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1. Introduction to our Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

The London Borough of Bexley has a strong track record of supporting the development and quality improvement of early years education and childcare provision. Giving children the best possible early learning experiences coupled with a comprehensive range of early help support is a high priority. Our commitment to training and developing the workforce, improving practice and supporting the development of new provision reflects this.

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report illustrates how excellent Early Years Foundation Stage profile outcomes will be sustained, the impact of high quality childcare provision further explored and how additional places and capacity will be delivered.

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on our providers, children and parents during 2020 and 2021 has been hard to measure. At the peak of the pandemic, approximately 60% of providers encountered business and sustainability issues including being unable to access their premises, parents not being confident to send their child/ren and staffing issues due to having to isolate. Most providers reported some impact on attendance due to parents feeling apprehensive about sending their child/ren to settings during the pandemic. In addition, the school closures have had a detrimental impact on the sustainability of before and after school provision, with several providers reporting that they were unable to operate outside of school hours and during the school holidays. The full impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the landscape of early years in Bexley and across the UK is yet to be seen, however, in Bexley we have not lost the expected number of settings as a result of the pandemic, and have actually seen an increase in group settings becoming registered.

1.1 The Role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority has a duty of care under the Childcare Act 2006 to ensure there is sufficient good quality childcare for parents. It is essential that the Local Authority understands the demand for capacity across the borough and what our parents need. We also have a number of statutory requirements in relation to childcare sufficiency that include:

- Providing information, advice and guidance to parents seeking childcare.
- Providing information, advice, guidance and access to training for childcare providers.
- Ensuring there are sufficient early education places for all 3 and 4-year-olds if their parents want to access funded childcare and securing enough high quality childcare places for disadvantaged 2 year olds accessing the 2 Year Offer (Play2Learn).
- Meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010 when securing early learning places.

Bexley has a team of Early Years Support Officers and Advisers available to assist providers in delivering high quality childcare by helping them to meet all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. All providers are regulated by Ofsted but the Local Authority monitors providers and helps them to maintain and improve their quality of provision.

It is our aim to always meet the needs of parents where possible and to have the tools in place that enable them to source the childcare that best suits their needs. We also have a duty to ensure there is adequate provision for children with special education needs or disabilities in the borough and that parents can access this for their child/ren.

In this report, we have assessed sufficiency using data about the need for childcare, the amount of childcare available and feedback from local parents about whether they have been able to find childcare to meet their needs.

1.2 Main Achievements

The Covid-19 Pandemic has meant that the format of assistance provided to Early Years providers and parents has had to be adapted. Where in previous years the Early Years Support Officer and Advisors would visit settings to speak to parents, this year the visits and outreach have had to be adapted to be online rather than face to face. The Local Authority has still managed to provide a good level of help to settings and assist them through ever changing restrictions and guidance.

In 2019 our 2-year old funding (Play2Learn) take up figure was 71%, which was achieved through publicity and promotion. In 2020, this percentage dropped to 57%, largely due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. We expect this figure to rise again in 2021 as restrictions are lifted and parental confidence in using childcare increases.

95% of our preschools and nurseries have an Ofsted rating Good or Outstanding – (this is not including the 21 settings that have not yet been inspected by Ofsted). In total, 95% of settings with an early years registration (including out of school provision) are rated Good or Outstanding (data from Ofsted).

We were previously successful in rolling out the 30 hours funded childcare in September 2017 and continue to secure sufficient places to deliver the funding across the borough moving forward. The take-up of the extended 30 hours entitlement has grown year on year.

1.3 Key Priorities for the Coming Year

During the coming year, Bexley's priorities are going to be:

Early Help – Through evaluating practices, we will look to build upon and strengthen our partnerships with all Children and Family Centres and Family Wellbeing, supporting families to find solutions to their difficulties so that their well-being improves and the need for specialist services is avoided. This will be achieved by ensuring a shared multi-agency approach to supporting families and children in Bexley.

Exclusions – We will work in partnership with settings, and colleagues across SEND, Safeguarding, health and welfare teams to continue to advise and provide tailored training that enables them to minimise the likelihood of exclusion especially permanent.

SEND – We will review and build upon the co-ordinated work between education, health and care. We will trial and refine the early notification process, assessment and decision-making criteria and support systems that have been developed to ensure that those children with complex needs are addressed in an effective, timely and transparent manner. In addition, we will continue to offer, review and refine both the Bexley Early Years SEND Toolkit and intervention guidance and training, ensuring there is sufficient good quality SEND provision in the borough to allow parents / carers appropriate options when choosing their childcare. This will ensure that children with SEND have their needs met while receiving appropriate childcare.

Education - Collaboration and strategic partnership systems will be further developed and continue to prosper between the Local Authority and local education leaders. We aim to achieve this by not only ensuring that there are adequate places in the borough for children of all ages but through tailoring our offer of training and guidance to match the needs of the current educational landscape.

We will continue to work to reduce the attainment gap between the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children through maintaining a good number of funded 2-year olds in childcare and by finding additional ways to promote the 2 Year Offer (Play2Learn) and thus reach a greater number of potentially eligible families.

We will signpost Bexley's education providers to the latest thinking and legislation concerning best practice and in doing so, aim to maintain or achieve Good or Outstanding Ofsted outcomes. Through these actions, we aim to make sure that early years and childcare provision meets the borough's needs.

We will build upon existing and new strategic partnerships so that the Local Education System is confident, challenging and focused on the achievement of all children.

Funded Childcare Offer - We will continue to promote and find additional ways to advertise the Play2Learn offer for 2-year-olds, Tax Free Childcare, and the 30 hours free childcare as widely and as accessibly as possible to engage working parents.

2. Borough Context

2.1 Structure of Early Learning and Childcare Provision

Bexley has a range of childcare provision across the borough offering a variety of flexible childcare options to parents. New providers continue to register. At the time of publication Bexley has:

61 primary schools of which 38 have nursery classes

96 day nurseries and preschools

355 childminders

41 out of school clubs

Figures correct as of July 2021

Information on the above can be found on the [Family Information Service Directory](#)

2.2 Children and Family Centres

Bexley also has a number of Children and Family Centres across the borough as well as Children Wellbeing Centres and Children's Childcare Centres. These centres provide support and activities for children under the age of five and their families. In early 2021, the Children and Family Centres were undergoing a consultation process to restructure the support given to families. Therefore, at the time of writing, it is unclear what the structure of the centres will be, moving forward.

2.3 Planning Areas – Early Years Services

Bexley is split into three localities which align to the wards covered by the three main Children and Family Centres. The table below shows a breakdown of population by age, in each locality. It also shows the number of childcare settings and schools in each locality. You can see that Central locality has the highest number of children across all 3 age groups. Although the Central locality has fewer childcare providers than the South, some of the settings are larger and we know there are sufficient places to meet the need of the population. Central locality has the highest number of primary and secondary schools which should ensure sufficiency of places for school age children.

Population	North	South	Central
Age 0-4	3,954	4,954	6,877
Age 5-9	4,013	5,112	7,484
Age 10-14	3,853	4,973	7,182
Headline Characteristics	The North Locality consists of 4 wards (Erith, Slade Green & Northend, Barnehurst and Crayford). The North locality has a high proportion of lone parent households, with the exception of Barnehurst ward. There are also a number of households where adults are unemployed (except in Barnehurst ward). The level of social housing is above the Bexley average. The North has seen a large increase in population.	The South Locality consists of 6 wards (East Wickham, Falconwood & Welling, Blackfen & Lamorbey, Longlands, Sidcup and St Mary's & St James'). The South locality is diverse with both affluent and less affluent areas, East Wickham is the least affluent area. St Mary's and St James is also a less affluent area and has a high number of pre-school children. Several of the wards in the South Locality contain the highest number of working households and the lowest number of preschool children.	The Central Locality consists of 7 wards (Thamesmead East, Belvedere, West Heath, Northumberland Heath, Crook Log, Bexleyheath and Blendon & Penhill) and stretches the length of the borough. The wards in the north of this locality are highly diverse culturally and shares characteristics with many inner London areas. Central locality has seen the second highest population increase in the borough with a significant number of lone parents, households where adults are unemployed and social housing. The wards towards the south of the borough differ slightly in that they have seen some of the lowest population growth and the population is less ethnically diverse. There is also a higher number of households where adults are employed in the south of the locality.

This table shows the population by age of the three localities (North, South and Central). The Central locality is the most populous with 6877 children aged 0-4, 7484 children aged 5-9 and 7,182 children aged 10-14. The North locality is the least populous.

Data Source: ONS population estimates (Mid-year estimates - Latest available by ward is 2019)

2.4 Population and Projection

As a Local Authority, we use information on birth rates and trends so that we can determine sufficiency in the borough. We have looked at the live birth rates from 2014 onwards and can see that the overall number has remained fairly consistent over the years. The wards with the most significant changes are Blackfen & Lamorbey and Falconwood & Welling which both saw the largest increases in live births since 2018 compared to the other wards. St Mary's saw the biggest fall in live births, with 32 less than 2018.

Population estimates - Local Authority based by five year age band

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Age	Number	Percentage
LB Bexley Total Population	249300	100
Aged under 1 year	2900	1.2
Aged 1-4 years	12700	5.1
Aged 5-9 years	16800	6.7
Aged 10-14 years	16200	6.5

This table shows the total population estimates by age for Bexley. The total population is estimated at 249300, with 1.2% of those being under aged 1, 5.1% being aged 1-4 and about 6% for both ages 5-9 and 10-14.

Live births by ward (2019)

2017 Ward	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
LB Bexley Total	3,036	3,162	3,091	3,095	3,030	4271
Barnehurst	103	137	136	131	117	165
Belvedere	195	188	217	214	208	251
Blackfen	121	123	95	129	110	174
Blendon	105	116	106	104	121	184
Brampton	82	98	96	88	97	N/A
Christchurch	131	144	124	133	139	N/A
Colyers	131	147	166	120	147	N/A
Cray Meadows	156	164	157	160	140	N/A
Crayford	194	192	169	164	187	212
Danson Park	136	159	166	150	118	N/A
East Wickham	145	105	127	142	136	175
Erith	247	210	215	229	225	221
Falconwood	129	121	122	128	127	190
Lesnes Abbey	146	159	150	151	131	N/A
Longlands	116	137	125	111	107	102
North End	220	236	222	235	209	N/A
Northumberland Heath	121	130	134	119	139	132
Sidcup	111	111	99	115	121	165
St Mary's	96	113	123	114	134	102
St Michael's	127	132	101	136	142	N/A
Thamesmead East	224	240	241	222	175	227

This table shows the live births by ward in 2019. The total number of live births in Bexley has increased from 3030 in 2018 to 4271 in 2019. Belvedere had the highest number of live births in 2019 with 251. St Mary's had the lowest number of live births in 2019 with 102.

The table below looks at the number of children and their ages by ward. Similar to the table above this will give an indication of sufficiency and need in the borough. As it is broken down by ward we are able to advise potential childcare providers of which wards could benefit from more childcare.

2019 Wards	All Ages	Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 0-5	Total
Bexley Total	248,287	2,995	3,165	3,193	3,246	3,186	3,338	19,123	-
Belvedere	18,090	246	303	267	257	243	270	1586	Central Locality 8,369
Bexleyheath	15,255	156	165	168	151	155	179	974	
Blendon & Penhill	16,005	211	194	175	203	181	215	1179	
Crook Log	15,762	176	176	196	191	219	223	1181	
Northumberland Heath	11,020	137	144	145	162	157	141	886	
Thamesmead East	17,513	200	233	262	236	254	297	1482	
West Heath	15,980	172	192	177	180	193	167	1081	
Barnehurst	12,290	158	144	162	168	181	167	980	North Locality 4,763
Crayford	16,470	207	197	216	226	192	208	1246	
Erith	11,996	221	218	207	223	232	205	1306	
Slade Green & Northend	12,919	186	204	220	217	175	229	1231	
Blackfen & Lamorbey	16,296	165	189	177	189	191	198	1109	South Locality 5,991
East Wickham	15,932	167	201	183	181	174	189	1095	
Falconwood & Welling	16,910	207	192	227	233	223	234	1316	
Longlands	10,073	99	108	116	129	132	123	707	
Sidcup	15,172	158	189	177	160	174	182	1040	
St Mary's & St James	10,604	129	116	118	140	110	111	724	

This table breaks down the ages of children 0-5 in each of the wards. Belvedere has the highest number of 0-5 year olds.

Data Source: ONS population estimates (Mid-year estimates - Latest available by ward is 2019)

2.5 Ward Population Projections

The table below shows the projected population by ward in 2020 and 2025. This shows which wards are expected to have population growth, which then allows us to advise potential childcare providers of areas which may benefit from more childcare options.

Ward	2020	2025
Barnehurst	11242	11833
Belvedere	13707	13791
Blackfen and Lamorbey	11055	10922
Blendon and Penhill	11094	10909
Brampton	11043	11580
Christchurch	12181	13618
Colyers	10771	11057
Cray Meadows	12313	12679
Crayford	14101	14921
Danson Park	11568	12016
East Wickham	11588	12158
Erith	15249	16979
Falconwood and Welling	11193	11718
Lesnes Abbey	12658	13848
Longlands	10981	11252
North End	13794	14375
Northumberland Heath	10873	10673
Sidcup	12243	12727
St Mary's	11758	12386
St Michael's	11600	11836
Thamesmead East	13964	13974
TOTALS	254976	265252

This table shows the population projections by ward from 2020-2025. The total population is expected to rise from 254976 in 2020 to 265252 in 2025.

Data source: GLA 2016-based ward population projections, released November 2017, with conversion from old ward to new wards
<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/projections/> *Ward boundaries changed at the May 2018 local election

3. Bexley Borough Childcare Context

3.1 Do we have sufficient Childcare?

Bexley currently has sufficient childcare and parents have access to a wide and varied range of childcare providers. Since January 2020, there have been 9 new Private/Voluntary/Independent (PVI) settings registered with Ofsted, 28 new childminders and 10 out of school clubs. This has created a significant number of childcare places in Bexley that will benefit parents in finding childcare.

Bexley does not offer any dedicated specialist SEND provision in PVI early years settings. However, many settings are highly skilled and experienced in supporting children with SEND and early years settings that are funded by the Local Authority are required to have due regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2015). Regular training opportunities are offered to address staff development needs in relation to SEND skills and knowledge. There is also a process in place that childcare providers must follow before offering a place to a child with complex needs. Once parents have chosen their childcare setting, they will be supported to begin the process of completing a 'funding request' form. This outlines the type of childcare they would like and collates information from all professionals that are working with the family/child. This might include, for example, information regarding the specialist equipment he or she may need and how to use it, correct procedures for moving and handling, feeding, medication etc. This ensures that the setting has everything in place before a child starts and enables the setting to meet their needs, care for the child and keep them safe. Bexley aims to ensure that the settings parents choose are well equipped and supported to ensure the child is able to attend. There are generally sufficient childcare places available but these may not always reflect a parents' first choice and may not always be suitable for children with very complex needs.

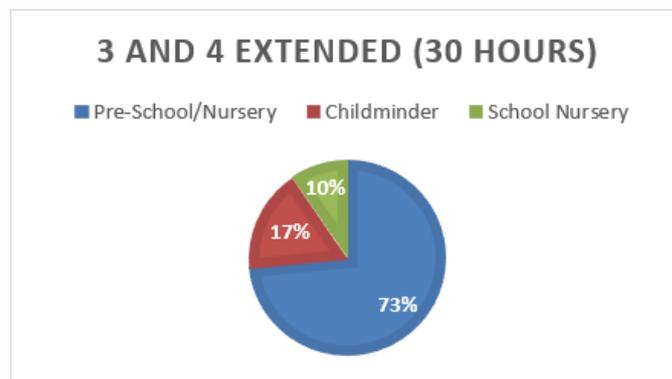
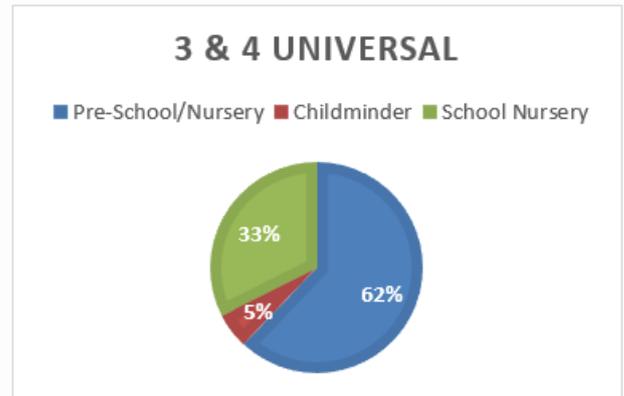
Bexley also has sufficient places for families wishing to access funded childcare places. Several more providers, both PVIs and Childminders have signed up to offer funded childcare in the past year; this has created more places available for children.

3.2 Childcare for Under 5's

In Bexley we currently have approximately 19,123 children aged under 5. Of these children, we know that 4757 are attending some form of funded childcare. We are unable to calculate how many children are in childcare that are not receiving funding as we have no access to the records of this.

Children receiving either the universal or extended hours funding can take a place at a nursery, preschool, childminder or school nursery. We have included graphs below that show where these children are currently taking up their funded place. You can see that take up of funded hours is greater at our day nurseries and preschools. Day nurseries are providing the most extended hours with schools and childminders having a fairly even take up.

Children receiving the Play2Learn funding can access their funding at a preschool, childminder or nursery. The largest proportion of Play2Learn funded places are being taken at day nurseries. The smallest percentage (2%) of places are being accessed at childminders. This is likely to be due to the limit on the number of 2-year-olds a childminder can have at one time. In addition, there may be limited awareness of childminding as a childcare option.



The pie charts above show a visual representation of the information discussed in the paragraph above. They show what type of settings children are taking up their funding entitlements.

Vacancies

Vacancy rates are hard to ascertain and whilst we ask providers to keep us updated, many providers choose not to notify the Local Authority. Therefore, the information we have is a snapshot at best, and often changes rapidly. In some cases, providers may have a vacancy which is only available for a specific age group, or for a particular part-time arrangement. In general, vacancy rates are higher in the autumn, when children move to school. Ofsted data tells us that in Bexley, we have 445 childcare providers on the Early Years Register providing a total of 6,969 places. This is an increase of 2,475 places since our last assessment in 2019. We also have some providers, including out of school settings and childminders on other registers (CCR/VCR) with a total of approximately 158 potential places.

3.3 Childcare for 5-14-year olds

Childcare for 5-14-year olds is mostly provided in the form of wrap around provision before and after school. Bexley has 41 before and after school clubs, which are privately run as well as school run provision. These may offer childcare or activity provision. It is difficult to ascertain whether there are sufficient before and after school places, as data is limited. Therefore, it is not possible to say with accuracy whether or not we have sufficient places at this time.

3.4 Quality of Childcare

Ofsted inspection data shows that Bexley Early Years settings are providing a good standard of care. As of the March 2021, 96% of Early Years Providers in Bexley were rated Good or Outstanding.

Bexley has a strong commitment to ensuring that no childcare provision is less than Good across the borough. We have invested in the development of our quality improvement toolkit (Bexley 50Qq) which will support our endeavours towards this goal.

3.4.1 Bexley 50Qq

Bexley 50Qq (Bexley 50 Quality Questions) is a tool which has been designed for use as an evaluation aid to raise quality and assess the provision, care and standards for the young children in the borough. It is being delivered across Bexley's PVI settings, schools and childminders and is part of an offer under Bexley's Traded Services.

When delivering the Bexley 50Qq programme it is used alongside other statutory and non-statutory guidance, in particular the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage', the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years, 'The Early Years Inspection Handbook', The Education Inspection Framework, 'Development Matters' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.

Aims and Objectives of 50Qq:

- To enable leaders to raise the quality of their provision in line with all guidance including the common inspection framework.
- Provide settings with support to self-evaluate their setting in preparation for future inspections.
- To help settings who have already been recognised by Ofsted as at least 'Good' to reflect on what they could do to maintain and further enhance their current practice
- To give specific settings with a strong commitment to improve their grading the opportunity to be endorsed by Bexley as a 'Good' setting

After a successful pilot of the programme, 50Qq was launched in April 2018. Since then we have had over 20 providers engage with the 50Qq process. Eight settings have completed the entire programme and have been awarded their certificate of completion. Other settings are in the final stages of 50Qq, although there have been some delays in completing the programme due to COVID19 and lockdown. However, we have altered the delivery of 50Qq to take the pandemic into consideration and are completing much of the scheme virtually with these settings. Feedback from providers has been very positive and they report that 'the precision and detail of each section is so thorough, it's invaluable' and that it 'gave confidence and reassurance in the service we are providing.' Providers responding in this way can only be beneficial to the children as it will allow them to improve and develop their day to day practice. A number of settings have expressed interest in starting 50Qq next term and this will initially be completed virtually. We are hopeful that moving forward, there will be a mix of virtual and face to face visits to collect evidence for the five sections.

3.4.2 Local Authority help and assistance

The London Borough of Bexley has 96 PVI settings, (nurseries, preschools and out of schools) and several out of school providers with early years registrations. Each setting is allocated an Early Years Support Officer or Adviser who are their first point of contact for information, advice and guidance. Every PVI setting is contacted regularly during the year, according to their level of need. During a contact, officers provide information, advice and guidance as well as challenge managers and SENCO's around the quality of provision, inclusive practice and the welfare requirements. The restrictions in place during the Covid-19 Pandemic have meant that officers have not been physically visiting settings since March 2020. All contacts have been carried out virtually or over the phone to ensure the health of the children, staff in the setting and the officer. Additional assistance, training and contacts may be required to address any issues in the setting. Depending on the needs of the setting, this may take the form of targeted or intensive support. A similar approach to assistance is taken with childminders, where the allocation of officers is organised according to the ward in which the childminder lives.

3.4.3 Targeted support for new childcare provision

To ensure new childcare provision is of high quality, the Support Officers and Advisors carry out Welcome to Bexley Visits. These visits provide the foundation to building a strong working relationship with providers. The advice and guidance given during these visits encourages all new providers who establish childcare provision in the borough to have a good starting point, by receiving robust and high-quality support.

3.4.4 Traded services

In order to maintain high quality provision in Bexley, during all visits, officers & advisers record the requests that settings or schools make for engagement in the 50Qq programme or for Professional Development (training or consultancy). Settings and schools are then signposted to the training opportunities that are available to book via the Bexley Services Network website facility or a bespoke package is arranged. The training currently made available is well attended and helps us to ensure that settings have access to the information, advice and guidance they need to maintain good practice in regards to Safeguarding and , Learning and Development. We have created extensive training to support settings to implement the new EYFS Framework in September 2021, and to work with the new Development Matters Guidance. As part of our traded service, we also offer settings and schools bespoke packages which include training (either pre-written from the existing programme or written specifically for the setting), team meeting learning, setting health checks, and any other assistance the setting may require.

3.4.5 Moderation and transition support

We have a robust system in place for ensuring children's transition to school is well supported. Support Officers and Advisers work directly with their allocated settings to identify any children who may need additional support during transition and encourage settings to share this information directly with receiving schools.

The Big School Bear Transition Programme is now in place and is a useful tool to support children.. The aim of the programme is to help Early Years settings and families support children more effectively as they move into school.

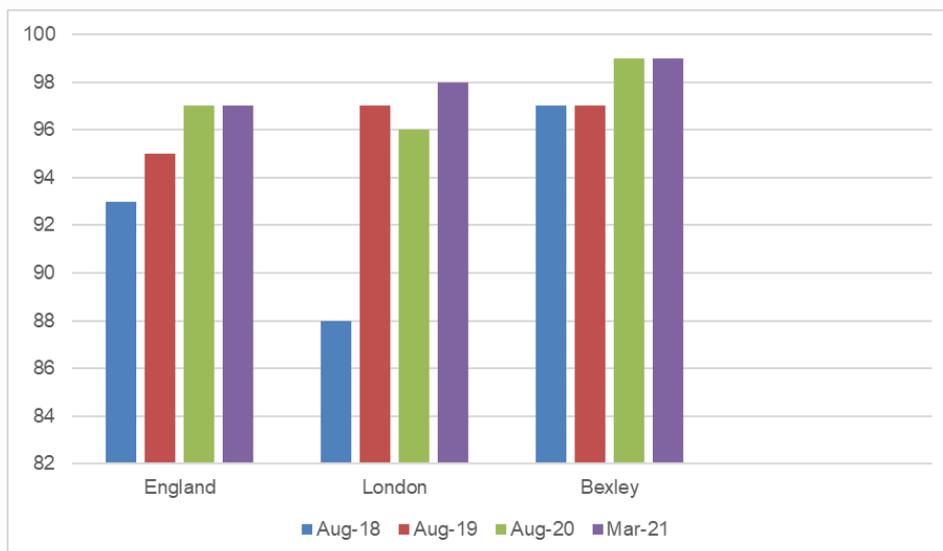
The new EYFS Framework, effective from September 2021, has removed the requirement for the local authority to moderate the Early Years Foundation Stage Profiles going forward. However, we will provide training on EYFS assessment and completion of EYFS Profile to providers who require it along with assistance with internal moderation should it be requested. The Local Authority will remain responsible for the collection of EYFSP data and its submission to the DfE.

3.4.6 Ofsted Registration and Grading

Where appropriate, all childcare providers must register with, and be inspected by Ofsted who award them an overall grade for the quality of their provision. Childminders and PVI providers (nurseries and preschools) are usually on the Early Years Register, and schools and stand-alone maintained nursery schools are on the schools register. The grades for both registers are equivalent. Schools with nurseries have an overall inspection grade for the whole school and most also have a separate early years graded reported. Both schools and early years providers have four possible Ofsted grades: 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement', and 'inadequate'. Some providers are still awaiting their first full inspection.

Percentage of Preschools and Nurseries judged good or outstanding

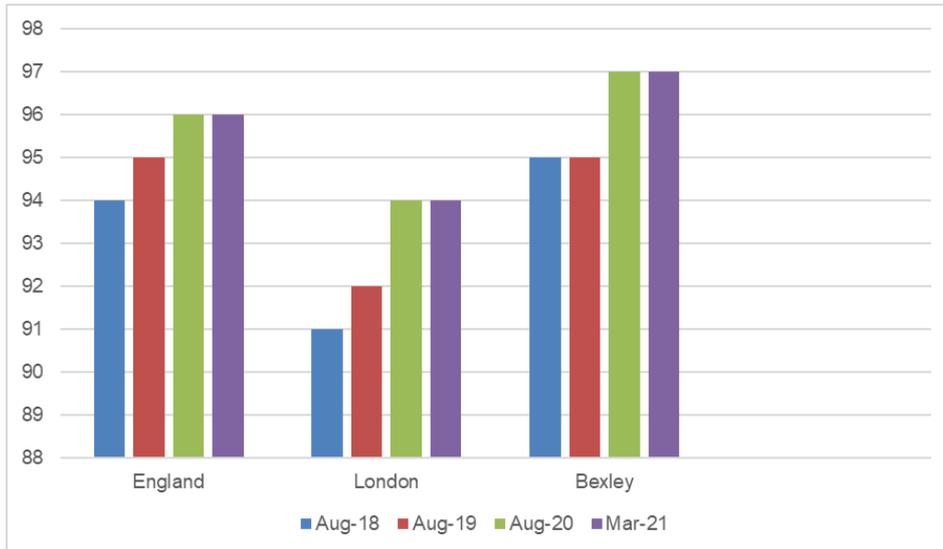
The graph below shows the percentage of preschools and nurseries that are currently judged Good or Outstanding in Bexley compared to London and England. As you can see Bexley has had an increase to 99%, compared to 97% in 2019. This increase is due to the systems that Bexley has put in place, including the Professional Development Programme and the Bexley 50Qq, which ensures quality in the future, along with regular advice and guidance from the Early Years Support Officers and Advisors.



This bar graph shows the percentages of nurseries and preschools rated as good or outstanding in Bexley, London and England. Bexley had 99% of nurseries rated good or outstanding in March 2021. This was higher than London, which had 98% and England, which had 97%.

Percentage of Childminders judged good or outstanding

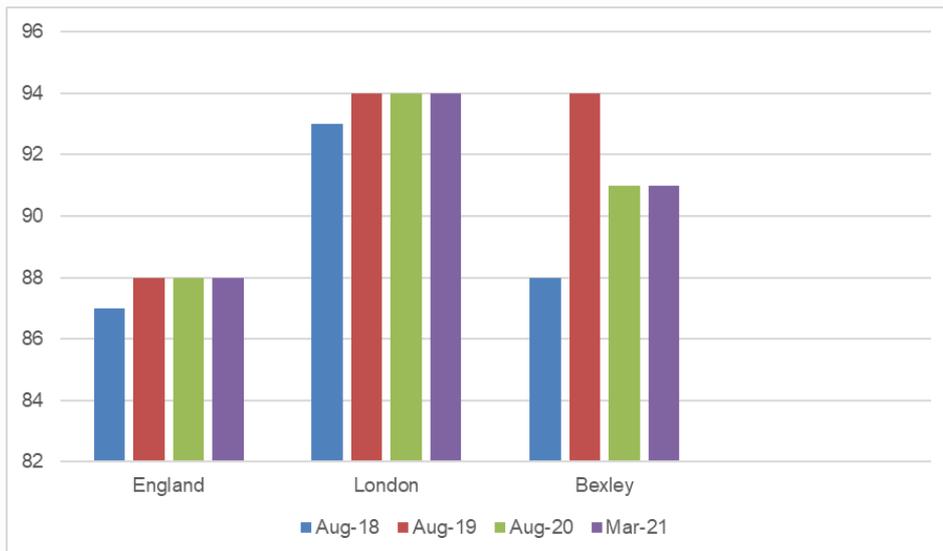
The graph below shows the percentage of childminders that are currently judged Good or Outstanding in Bexley compared to London and England. As you can see all areas have improved since 2019. Bexley has increased from 95% to 97% since 2019.



This bar graph shows the percentages of childminders rated as good or outstanding in Bexley, London and England. Bexley had 97% of childminders rated good or outstanding in March 2021. This was higher than London, which had 94% and England, which had 96%.

Percentage of Primary Schools judged good or outstanding

The graph below shows the percentage of Primary Schools that are currently judged Good or Outstanding in Bexley compared to London and England. You can see that the percentage has dropped since 2019 but Bexley is at a good 91% currently.



This bar graph shows the percentages of primary schools rated as good or outstanding in Bexley, London and England. Bexley had 91% of schools rated good or outstanding in March 2021. This is lower than London, which had 94% but higher than England, which had 88%.

3.5 Flexibility of Childcare

Bexley has a number of childcare settings offering parents a variety of options for their childcare needs. The majority of providers are open all year round with just a short break at Christmas. Childminders are often able to offer a greater flexibility to parents than a nursery or preschool as they are not restricted by opening hours. That being said, Bexley nurseries and preschools are able to offer a range of hours or sessions to meet the requirements of the parents where possible. Details of opening hours and sessions are provided by individual providers which are listed on the [Family Information Directory](#).

All funded childcare can be used flexibly either during term time or all year round as a stretched offer. This is arranged between the parents and their childcare provider. Parents can also use their funded childcare hours across different settings to ensure they are able to get the most out of their funded hours if one provider can't offer what they need.

Childcare is most commonly delivered during the typical working day – between 8am and 6pm on weekdays. Some parents require childcare outside these times in order to fit with their work or other responsibilities. The results from our parent survey did show that a few parents feel there isn't enough provision offering extended opening hours to meet parents working needs.

The majority of day nurseries and childminders offer services year-round, with a significant number opening before 8am and after 6pm. Several childminders offer atypical hours and overnight care and there is currently one group provision that operates on Saturday.

3.6 Cost of Childcare and Affordability

The table below represents a comparison between the average hourly rate for nurseries and preschools and childminders in Bexley. We are reporting on average prices per hour, as notified to us by settings. There may be variations to prices based on the number of hours a family uses, with reductions for longer hours, or discounts for sibling groups. There may be also additional payments for lunch and other meals which are not included in these prices.

Bexley

Average Price per hour	Day Nurseries	Preschools	Childminders
2 years old and under	£6.56	N/A	£5.75
3 and 4 year olds	£6.35	£5.65	£5.75

This table shows the average price per hours of childminders and day nurseries in Bexley. The cost for 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year olds at day nurseries is higher than the cost at childminders. Figures correct as of July 2021

The data shows that day nurseries are more expensive than preschools. The offering in preschools and day nurseries can vary widely, with most preschools offering sessional care for 3 hours in the morning or afternoon. This would not generally fit in with a working family unless they were using a preschool as part of a shared childcare package with another setting. In contrast, day nurseries tend to offer full-time, full year places, with the option of 1-5 days a week and possibly half days.

Day nurseries have a higher hourly rate and this is reflective across London and the UK as well. The table below shows the average hourly rate of day nurseries and childminders across London and the UK. We were unable to find accurate data on the hourly rate of preschools other than to say they charge between £12.00 and £15.00 per session.

By comparing the two tables you can see that average childcare costs in outer London (including Bexley) are higher than the UK as a whole. This is to be expected as we are a London Borough.

UK and London

Average Price per hour	Day Nurseries	Childminders
Under 2s - UK	£5.27	£4.55
Under 2s - Outer London	£6.13	£5.82
2s and over - UK	£5.09	£4.59
2s and over -Outer London	£5.85	£5.78

This table shows the average price per hour of day nurseries and childminders in the UK and Outer London. Data from Coram Family and Childcare Survey 2021

Nationally, childcare costs have increased since the previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2020.

After School Provision

The following table compares the costs of after school provision in Bexley, London and the UK. These are usually 3-hour sessions and there would be variation in price depending on a number of factors, such as siblings attending the same provision. Cost in Bexley is slightly lower than the London and UK average.

Average Price per session	After School
Bexley	£11.08
London	£11.55
UK	£12.40

This table shows the average price per day of after school provision in the UK, London, and Bexley. The average price in Bexley is lower than London and the UK.

3.7 Accessing childcare and Support

Parents and carers can access support and find information about childcare on the [Bexley website](#) and can search for childcare by proximity, type, or funded service by visiting the [Family Information Directory](#)

Parents of children with additional needs can find support services and information by visiting [Bexley Local Offer](#)

Parents can also contact the council directly by calling 0208 303 7777 and requesting to speak to the relevant team or person.

3.8 Feedback from local parents and carers

We have consulted with parents through an online survey shared in a variety of ways, including on Facebook, in our Early Years Newsletter, through Family Lives, and through our Children and Family Centre teams. Face to face events to gather feedback were not possible due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. We asked parents for information including:

1. Do you currently use childcare? If no, please explain why.
2. Did you find a childcare offer that met your needs? If not, please explain what you were looking for in terms of childcare but could not find.
3. What type of childcare do you use?
4. Are you accessing any early years funding for your child?
 - a. If yes, which funding scheme?
 - b. If no, why not?
5. What were the biggest factors for you in choosing a childcare provider?

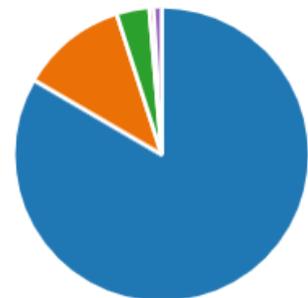
The results show that of all the responses 92% of families were accessing childcare. Of those families, 97% said they found childcare that suited their needs. Some respondents (6%) reported that they did not find childcare to suit their needs – some reasons include “hours are limited,” “childminder not available full time,” and “earlier start/finish to be able to get to work earlier and leave later.”

8% of those surveyed do not use childcare for a variety of reasons, including not currently working, being on maternity leave, the Covid-19 situation, and the cost being too expensive. Families are also accessing a wide range of childcare including day nurseries and preschools, childminders, and out of school clubs. A small percentage were using a nanny or babysitter. There were a variety of factor parents considered when choosing childcare, including distance, cost and quality.

3. What type of childcare do you use?

[More Details](#)

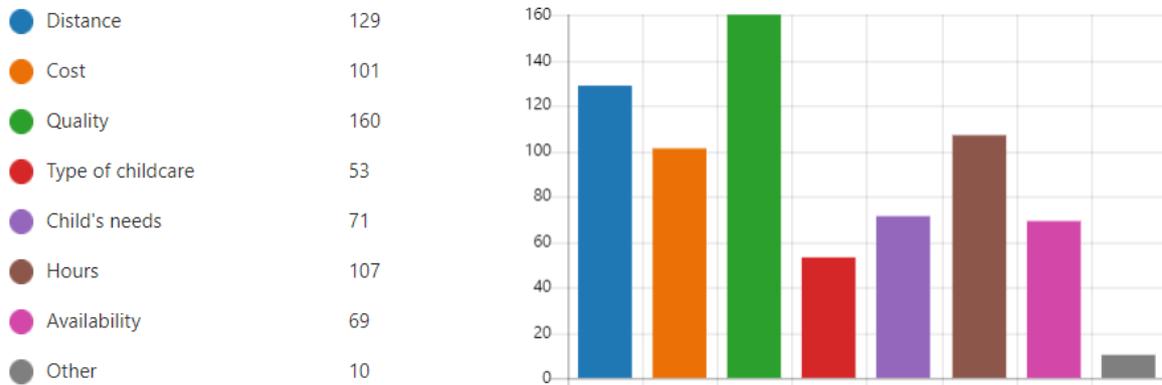
● Day Nursery or Preschool	186
● Childminder	26
● Out of School Club (breakfast,...	8
● Nanny	1
● Other	2



This pie chart shows a visual representation of what types of childcare families who completed the survey use. 186 families use a day nursery or preschool, 26 use a childminder, 8 use an OOS club, 1 uses a nanny and 1 uses another type of childcare.

9. What were the biggest factors for you in choosing a childcare provider?

[More Details](#)



This bar graph shows the biggest factors for parents in choosing a childcare provider. The most important factor for 160 parents was quality, followed by 129 parents saying distance was the biggest factor.

Of the families who reported using childcare, 60% were accessing Early Years Funding. Of these, 26% were accessing the Universal entitlement for 3 and 4-year olds, 61% were accessing the Extended 30 Hour Entitlement, and 7% were accessing the Play2Learn Funding. 6% of these listed “Other” as their entitlement and commented that they were using Tax Free Childcare.

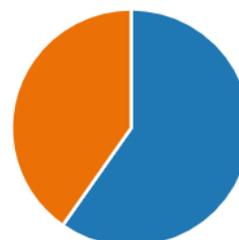
Promotional activities for Play2Learn continue on a regular basis at the Children and Family Centres and associated hubs in the community. Links have been established and are maintained with our health partners, children’s social care and Job Centre teams, to raise awareness amongst staff so that they can signpost parents to appropriate forms of childcare to meet their needs. We also continue to work with PACEY as part of their Together for Twos programme to raise the profile of the 2-year offer, and provide information, advice and guidance to parents.

4. Are you accessing any early years funding for your child?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	120
No	81



5. If you are accessing funding, please select which scheme:

[More Details](#)

Play2Learn (2 year old offer)	8
Universal 15 hours for 3 and 4...	32
Extended 30 hours for 3 and 4...	75
Other	7



These pie charts show the percentage of parents who responded to our survey who are using early years funding. 120 parents said yes, 81 said no. Of the yes responses, 75 are using the extended 30 hours, 32 the universal 15 hours, and 8 using the Play2Learn offer.

4. Children with SEND in Bexley

Local authorities and settings should promote equality and inclusion for all children with disabilities or SEND. Bexley does not have a dedicated specialist provision for early years. Instead, we promote and support inclusive practice across all of our settings. Inclusive practice addresses and supports the individual needs of each child. In doing so, it will benefit each child in the setting and will create an environment in which all children, including those with SEND, have the opportunity to flourish. This includes removing barriers that prevent children accessing early education and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. In Bexley, 96% of early years children with an EHCP attend private nurseries or preschools and the other 4% attend childminders.

4.1 Inclusion Funding

Bexley can provide short term Early Years Inclusion Funding to settings for children 2, 3 & 4 years old to support with new and emerging needs. Early Years Advisors and Support Officers offer information and guidance to settings to support the inclusion of children with special educational needs in accordance with the terms of the SEND Code of Practice (2015/4?). Funding is allocated by a multi-agency panel who use band descriptors to agree the amount to be received by the setting based on the child's presenting needs.

4.2 Additional Support funding for children with an EHCP or receiving DLA

During the period of 1st April 2020-31st March 2021 the Educational Psychology Service received 108 referrals. Of these, 72% of children had speech, language and communication (SLCN) needs as a primary concern, 21% had complex developmental needs, 3% had social, emotional, mental health (SEMH) needs, 2% had complex medical needs, and 2%, physical needs. These percentages are stable since the last Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was published. The data continues to highlight the need for SLCN support and provision, particularly support in regards to complex language, social communication, and interaction needs. The needs are reflected in the Autism Assessment Service list, Bexley Early Autism Service Referrals, and EHCP Preschool requests.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is a fund to support children in Early Years Settings who are claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA). In the 2020-2021 Academic Year, there have been 60 DAF payments to settings, equalling a total of £36,900.

There are approximately 15,785 children under 5 living in Bexley. As of June 2021, 45 children have had an EHCP finalised in the 2020-2021 academic year. The primary area of need for the largest group of children is Autism Spectrum Disorder (36%). 27% of children with EHCPs in the past academic year have Speech, Language and Communication Needs. The other primary needs were 11% other, 13% Severe Learning Difficulty, 7% Moderate Learning Difficulty, and 7% Physical Disability.

Below is a table that shows the number of preschool children that currently have an Educational Health Care Plan in place, as well as the different diagnosed need types. As you can see, there has been an increase in the total number of EHCPs year on year from 2018 to 2020. It is difficult to ascertain the impact the Covid-19 Pandemic has had on this data as many children were not in settings for extended periods of time and may not have been able to see professionals. (Data is for the Academic Year beginning in Sept of the year listed).

Diagnosed need types of preschool children with EHCP in place	2018	2019	2020
Speech, Language and Communications Needs	26	29	12
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	4	6	16
Other Difficulty/Disability	5	3	5
Hearing Impairment	0	0	0
Severe Learning Difficulty	2	2	6
Visual Impairment	0	0	0
Moderate Learning Difficulty	0	1	3
Physical Disability	1	0	3
Total	38	41	45

The table above shows the numbers of preschool children with EHCP in place broken down by primary need. The highest need was ASD, with 16 children in 2020. There were no children with EHCPs in 2020 whose primary need was Visual or Hearing Impairment. 12 children with EHCP had Speech

Figures correct as of [June 2021](#)

4.3 Bexley Local Offer

The Local Offer provides information about the services available to children and young people with SEND and their families across Education, Health and Social Care. Knowing what is out there and having the right information in one place gives parents more choice and therefore more control over the services they use. Our [Local Offer](#) is published as part of the SEND reforms under the Children and Families Act 2014 and will be developed over time. The Local Offer holds all the information in one place making it easier for parents to find out what they need to know. It enables them to find the nearest and most suitable services for their children and makes provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations.

5 Funded childcare

Some children are entitled to free childcare, funded by the government. These entitlements are for 38 weeks per year or equivalent (e.g. the setting offers a 'stretched offer' of less hours over more weeks of the year).

All children aged 3 and 4 are entitled to 15 hours per week (570 hours a year) from the term after their third birthday until they are eligible to start school.

Children aged 3 and 4 where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, could be eligible to receive an additional 15 hours per week (30 Hour entitlement).

Children aged 2 whose families receive certain benefits could be eligible to receive 15 hours per week (570 hours per year). This also applies where the child has a disability (is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance), is looked after by the Local Authority or has been adopted. Nationally, about 40% of 2-year olds are entitled to this offer, but the proportion varies by area.

Children aged 2 may also access free childcare if parents are receiving support under the Immigration and Asylum Act and have either claimed asylum in the UK and are waiting for a decision (known as 'part 6') or have been refused asylum in the UK (known as 'section 4').

A 2-year-old may also access funded childcare if the household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, and parents have either leave to remain with 'no recourse to public funds' on family or private life grounds, or the right to live in the UK because they are the main carer of a British citizen (known as a 'Zambrano Carer').

Information on all funding and support with childcare costs is on the [Childcare Choices](#) website.

The statistics across the UK for funded childcare are below:



The photo above shows the percentage of 2 year old children registered to receive funding in the UK is 62%, down from 69% in 2020. The percentage of 3 and 4 year old children registered for universal hours is 90%, down from 93% in 2020. The number of 3 and 4 year olds registered for the extended hours was 328662, decreased 5% from 2020.

- The number of eligible two-year-olds registered to receive **funded** early education entitlements has fallen by 13% to **124,500** in 2021.
- The number of three and four-year-olds registered to receive **funded** early education has fallen by 5% to **1,212,000** in 2021.
- The number of three and four-year-olds registered to receive **extended** early education has fallen by 5% and is now **similar to the number in 2019**.

The decrease in the number and proportion of children registered to receive funded entitlements reflect the impact of COVID-19 uncertainty on supply (providers) and demand (parents) for early years provision in January 2021. [Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting Year 2021 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

5.1 The 2 Year Offer – Play2Learn

The Play2Learn funding provides funded childcare for the boroughs most deprived 2-year olds, this is for low income families and based on an economic eligibility criteria, unless the child has a disability, is a looked after child, or meets one of the extended criteria. Play2Learn funding is usually taken as 15 hours a week over 38 weeks a year but can be stretched over more weeks with fewer hours taken per week. This may help parents who intend to use the hours to work or study.

Parents can check eligibility and apply for the funding by going to the [Bexley website](#) and completing the application via the [citizen portal](#). Parents will then have their eligibility checked and will be issued a reference number to take to their chosen childcare provider. Funding can then start the term after the child turns 2.

Most Play2Learn places are taken at PVI settings. However, after promoting our funded childminders, we do have a number of children placed with childminders as well. Currently, Bexley has sufficient places for 2 year olds wishing to access a funded place. In highly populated areas parents may not always get their first choice but there are other options available. We have found that most parents prefer a place close to home and are often unwilling to travel far for childcare provision. This was highlighted in our parent survey where distance was the second biggest factor in choosing a provider.

Take up of Play2Learn places (as a % of number eligible according to the Department of Works and Pensions)

You will see that that the percentages in Bexley are broadly in line with the national percentages, with a downward trend in 2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

	Spring	Summer	Autumn
2018	64%	63%	67%
2019	65%	59%	71%
2020	62%	52%	56%
2021	58%	58%	N/A

The table above shows the take up percentages of Play2Learn places in Bexley. In the spring term in 2020 take up was 62%, dropping to 58% in the spring term of 2021. In the summer of 2021 the take up percentage was 58%.

5.2 Funded childcare for 3 and 4 year olds

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to receive 570 hours of funded childcare a year. This is usually taken as 15 hours over 38 weeks but can be stretched to meet parent's needs and accommodate working hours. At the time of writing the number of 3 and 4-year olds accessing a 15 hour funded place is just over 4000. According to past trends, the summer term is when the highest number of places are taken so we would

expect to see a peak in places then. Parents do not need to apply for this, just find a childcare setting who then claim the funding directly from us.

Table showing number of 15 hour take up by term

	Spring	Summer	Autumn
2018	4024	4628	3220
2019	4022	4612	4031
2020	4204	4650	3168
2021	3879	4451	N/A

The table above shows the number of 15 hour places taken up in Bexley. In the spring term in 2020 there were 4204 places taken, dropping to 3879 in spring 2021. In summer 2021 the number was 4451. (Figures correct as of August 2021).

5.3 30 hours funded childcare

From September 2017 eligible families have been able to access an additional 570 hours funded childcare a year to use flexibly, so 1140 in total, usually taken as 30 hours a week.

In a two-parent family, both parents must each expect to earn (on average) at least £120 a week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage) and up to £100,000 a year each. If either parent is on maternity, paternity, or adoption leave, or they are unable to work because they are disabled or have caring responsibilities, they could still be eligible. If in a lone parent family, the same criteria will apply.

In Bexley we have worked hard to engage providers to offer the 30 hours. We have held a series of information briefings for schools, PVI's and childminders as well as virtually meeting with settings if requested. Childminders in particular have been keen to engage. This has worked well to engage providers and currently we have: 16 schools, 96 Pre Schools/Nurseries and 216 childminders offering extended hour places.

Take up of extended hours places

	Spring	Summer	Autumn
2018	1130	1113	945
2019	1267	1471	1226
2020	1356	1597	1023
2021	1379	1667	N/A

The table above shows the number of extended 30 hour places taken up in Bexley. In the spring term in 2020 there were 1356 places taken, rising to 1379 in spring 2021. In summer 2021 the number was 1667. (Figures correct as of July 2021).

5.4 Assessment of Impact of Funding Provision

Since the implementation of the 30 hours, we have seen some limited evidence that the 30 hours has caused places to reduce for families wanting to access a Play2Learn place or universal 15 hours. This has resulted in a bottleneck of places for 2-year olds, where they are held on waiting lists at some preschools or nurseries. However, a number of new settings have opened, more childminders are delivering funded places and settings have extended their opening hours. We are also continuing to receive enquiries from schools looking to extend their provision to offer the 30 hours and the Play2Learn Funding. The results from our parent survey only show one parent who was waiting for a place at a nursery to use funding. This shows that we have sufficient childcare places to support the children and families to use their funding at our high-quality early years settings.