



Bexley Childcare Sufficiency Report



September 2022

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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 Report illustrates how excellent Early Years Foundation Stage profile outcomes will be sustained, how the impact of high-quality childcare provision will be 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. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme has provided a welcome boost to the holiday playscheme providers.

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 existing and potential childcare providers.
- Securing sufficient early education places for all 3- and 4-year-olds if their parents want to access funded childcare and 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 them 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

Until early 2022, the Covid-19 Pandemic meant that the format of assistance provided to Early Years providers and parents had to be adapted. Where in previous years the Early Years Support Officer and Advisors would visit settings to speak to parents and practitioners, 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. Moving forward, we expect to be able to go back out into settings, and we are aiming to keep the best of the virtual delivery coupled with face-to-face assistance where needed.

In previous years, we worked hard to publicise and promote our 2-year-old funding (Play2Learn) and our take up figure peaked at 71%. During 2021, this percentage dropped to 57%, largely due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, this figure has risen to 70.5% as restrictions are lifted and parental confidence in using childcare increases. We continue to promote and publicise the funded offer to parents and other professionals.

97.5% of our preschools and nurseries have an Ofsted rating Good or Outstanding – (this is not including the settings that have not yet been inspected by Ofsted, but they are nominally rated Good as they will have just recently been registered).

We continue to secure sufficient places to deliver the 30-hour funding across the borough moving forward. The take-up of the extended 30-hour 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, Family Wellbeing and our Heath colleagues 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 children being either temporarily or permanently excluded.

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 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), thus reaching 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 needs of the borough.

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

93 day nurseries and preschools

327 childminders

39 out of school clubs

Figures correct as of July 2022

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

2.2 Children and Family Centres

Our Children's Centres aim to improve outcomes for young children, ensuring they are happy, healthy and ready to begin school. The Centres also provide help and support to families around parenting, health and well-being and employability. The services they provide are designed for parents and carers who may be expecting a new baby or have a child under the age of five.

Centres offer a range of services, including:

- pre-school education and access to early education and childcare (on some sites)
- access to health services, including health visiting and midwifery care
- adult learning opportunities to help parents/carers progress into training or employment
- access to play opportunities that are available to everyone, such as Stay and Play
- access to services delivered by private providers that are available to everyone with small fees attached

In Bexley, you can access Children's Centre services from one of our Children's Centres and also from venues across the borough, including libraries, leisure centres and community buildings. This means that families have more choice and can access services nearer to their homes.

Our centres welcome all Bexley families who are expecting a baby or who have a child under five.

Our main centres are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm with some timetabled sessions on a Saturday.

We have a dedicated Children's Centre Team who are available to support you in accessing services and information. They will also deliver sessions across the borough together with some of our partners.

2.3 Planning Areas – Early Years Services

Bexley is split into three localities. 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	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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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

The 2021 Census showed that Bexley's population has risen by 6.3%. and Bexley ranked 71st for total population out of 309 local authority areas in England. There has been an increase of 10.2% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 4.9% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 7.7% in children aged under 15 years. The number of 0-4-year-olds in Bexley has dropped by 1% and the number of 5- to 9-year-olds has risen 16%. 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 2016 onwards and can see that the overall number has fallen from 2017-2020 with a slight increase in 2021.

Population - Local Authority

[Data from 2021 Census]

Age	Number	Percentage
LB Bexley Total Population	246500	100
Aged under 4 years	15000	6.1
Aged 5-9 years	16,200	6.6
Aged 10-14 years	16400	6.7

This table shows the total population by age for Bexley based on the 2021 Census. The total population is 246500, with 6.1% of those being aged 4 years and under, 6.6% being aged 5-9 years, and 6.7% being aged 10-14 years.

London Borough of Bexley Birth Rates

[Data from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/births-and-fertility-rates-borough>)

Year	Number of Live Births
2016	3091
2017	3095
2018	3030
2019	2954
2020	2786
2021	2837

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 September 2021, there have been 3 new Private/Voluntary/Independent (PVI) settings registered with Ofsted, 12 new childminders and 10 new out of school clubs. There have been 2 out of school clubs close, and 14 childminders leave the profession. This has maintained the 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.

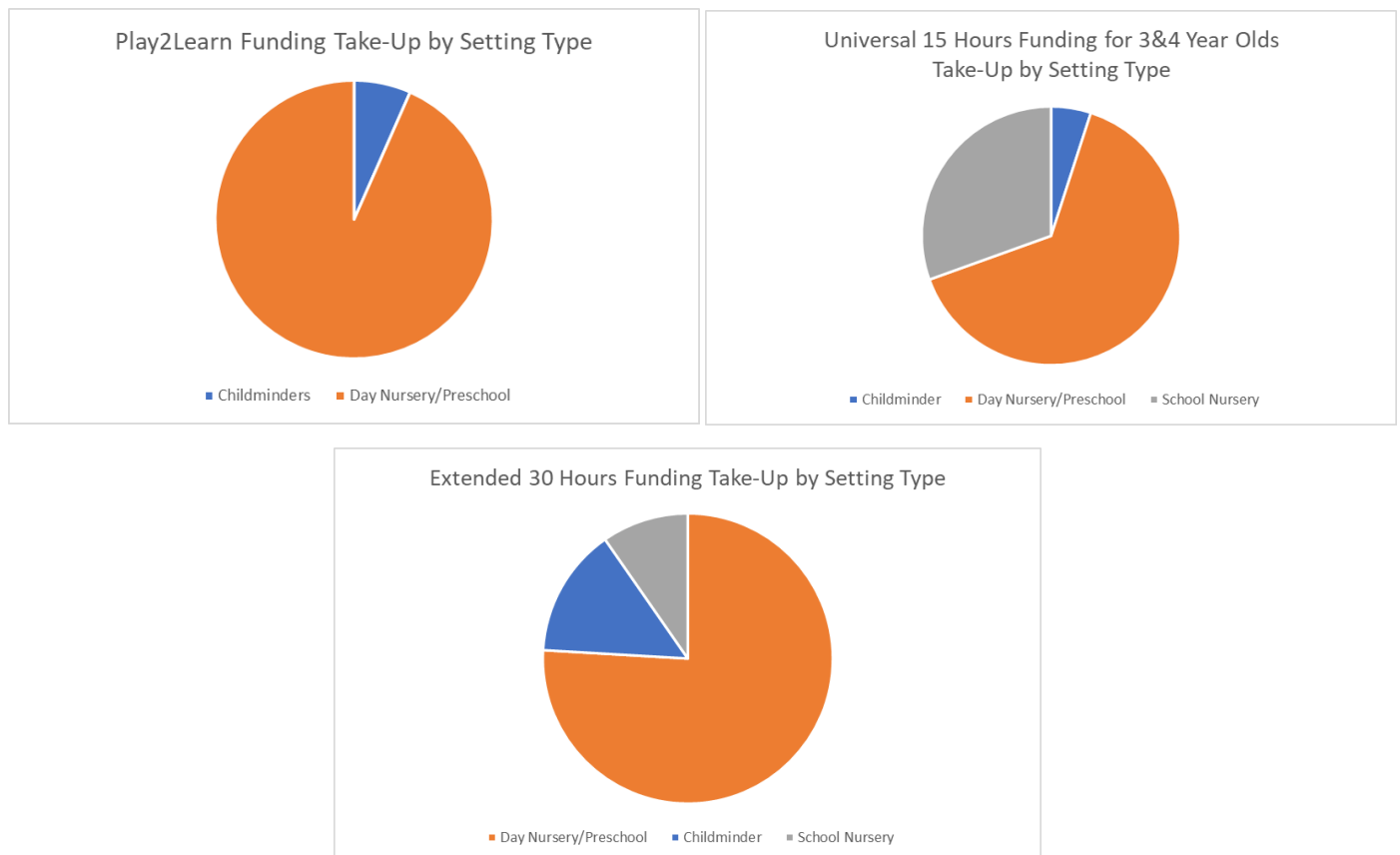
Bexley also has sufficient places for families wishing to access funded childcare places. Several more providers, both PVIs and Childminders have signed up to offer funded childcare in the past year; this has created more places available for children to take up their funded entitlement.

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 4888 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 records of this.

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 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.

Children receiving either the universal or extended hours for 3- & 4-year-olds 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 (roughly 75% of extended places) with schools and childminders having a fairly even take up.



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 405 childcare providers on the Early Years Register providing a total of 7,144 places. This is an increase of 175 places since our last assessment in 2021. We also have approximately 162 other providers, including out of school settings and childminders on other registers (CCR/VCR) who provide care for non-early years children.

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 39 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.

3.3.1 Holiday Activities and Food Programme

The HAF programme was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities for 2021/22 following an initial pilot programme run within 20 local authorities during the previous 2 years. The aim of the programme is to deliver healthy food and enriching activities during the school holidays to school aged children (5-16 years) who receive benefits-related free school meals with the programme offering valuable support to families on lower incomes, giving them the opportunity to access rewarding and enriching activities alongside healthy meals and food education over the school holidays.

Under the terms of the programme local authorities must make free places available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year covering the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays. Local authorities and their providers have flexibility about how they deliver this level of provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area. Within Bexley we currently have approximately 7,800 school pupils who receive 'non universal' free school meals and who, as such, are eligible for this programme.

On 27 October 2021, the government announced a further investment of over £200m per year over the next 3 financial years for the HAF programme with funding for each local authority confirmed on an annual basis.

The funding allocated to Bexley allows us to grant fund free places for approximately 25-30% of eligible children. Up to 15% of the funding can also be used to support non-eligible children who are considered vulnerable.

The programme is flexible and tailored for each holiday using a core team of approximately 25 Providers including private, voluntary and independent out of school settings, sports clubs, community groups and Local Authority teams. These settings operate across approximately 30 venues to provide places in the areas of the borough in greatest need.

3.4 Quality of Childcare

Ofsted inspection data shows that Bexley Early Years settings are providing a good standard of care. As of July 2022, 95.7% 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 and Bexley 20Qq) which supports our endeavours towards this goal.

3.4.1 Bexley 50Qq and 20Qq

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 young children in the borough. It is being delivered across Bexley's PVI settings and schools and is part of the offer under Bexley's Traded Services.

The Bexley 50Qq programme 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 the successful pilot of the programme, 50Qq was launched in April 2018. Since then, we have had over 25 providers engage with the 50Qq process. Nine 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 the Covid-19 pandemic. We have altered the delivery of 50Qq to take the pandemic into consideration and on occasion, we have completed sections virtually with 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. As the rates of infection have reduced, we have resumed face to face visits but will reintroduce virtual visits if numbers rise again.

20Qq - We recently completed a pilot Quality Assurance scheme with childminders in the Borough. This is an evaluation aid specifically designed for childminders to raise the quality and assess the provision, care and standards for the young children in child-minding settings. We have reviewed,

amended and reduced the questions used for PVI settings and schools so that they are more suitable and purposeful for childminders. As a result, the Quality Assurance scheme for childminders consists of 20 Quality Questions over the same five sections as the PVI and schools' scheme. There are a few supplementary questions for those childminders who work with an Assistant/s. 20Qq is now available for childminders to book via BSN.

3.4.2 Local Authority help and assistance

The London Borough of Bexley has 93 PVI settings, (nurseries and preschools) and several out of school providers with early years registrations. Each setting is allocated an Early Years Support Officer or Adviser who are the setting's 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 SENCOs 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 as regularly 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

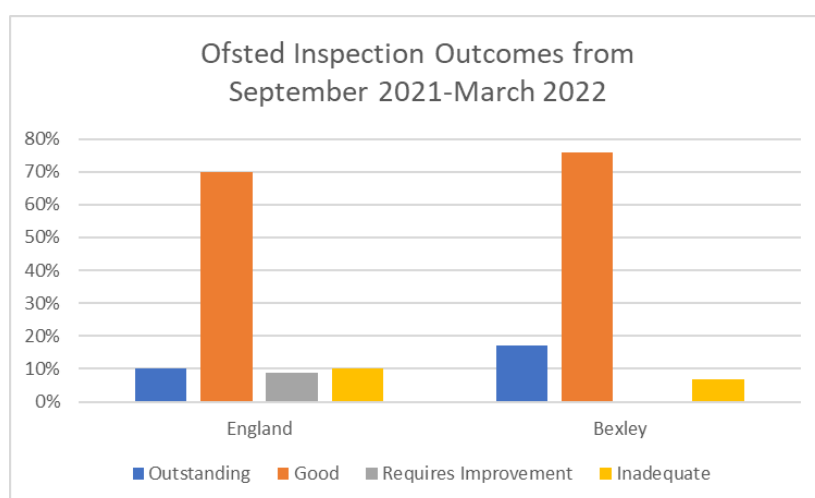
We have a robust system in place for ensuring children's transition to school is well supported. Support Officers and Advisers work directly with their allocated settings to identify any children who may need additional support during transition and encourage settings to share this information directly 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 have provided drop-in sessions for schools and providers to ask any questions about the EYFSP or discuss any particular issues. 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. Schools with nurseries have an overall inspection grade for the whole school and most also have a separate early year 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. The graph below shows the totally number of inspections of providers on the Early Years Register from September 2021 to March 2022 in England and in Bexley. The data shows that Bexley's inspections are largely in line with national trends and the majority of Bexley's settings are Good or Outstanding.

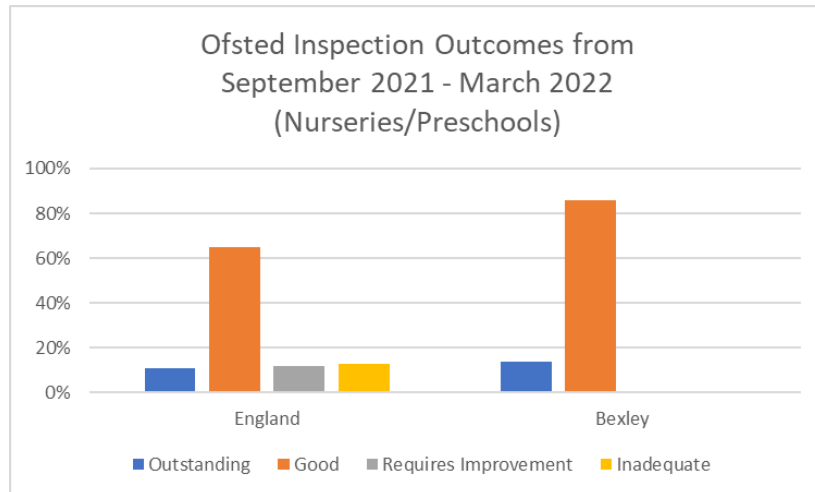


The graph shows a visual representation of the data discussed in the above paragraph.

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 England. As you can see Bexley did not have any nurseries or

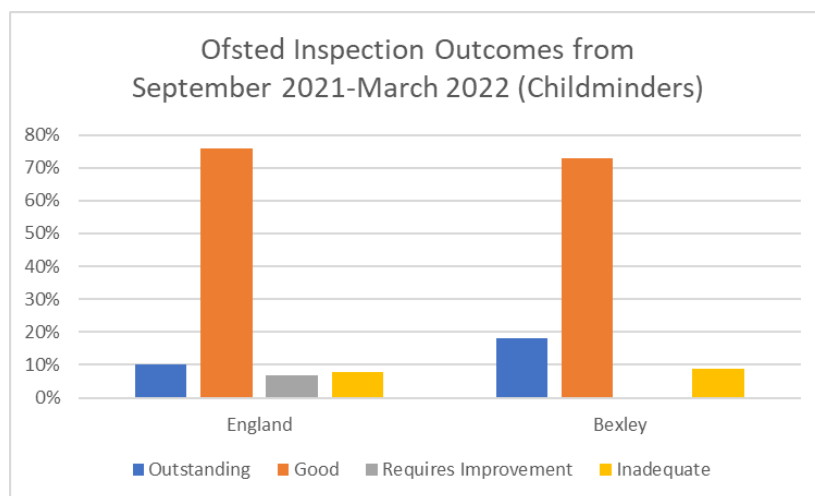
preschools rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate in September 2021-March 2022, and Bexley has a higher percentage of nurseries/preschools rated Good and Outstanding compared to England as a whole. In England, 11% of nurseries/preschools were rated Outstanding and 65% were rated Good. In Bexley, 14% of nurseries/preschools were rated Outstanding, and 86% were rated Good. This can be partly contributed to the support provided by the Early Years team, and the quality improvement programmes available in Bexley, such as 50Qq.



The graph above shows a visual representation of the data discussed in the paragraph above.

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 England. As you can see, inspection trends for Childminders in Bexley are in line with trends across England. In England between September 2021 and March 2022, 10% of childminders were rated Outstanding and 76% were rated Good. In Bexley, 18% were rated Outstanding, and 73% were rated Good.



This bar graph above shows a visual representation of the data discussed in the above paragraph.

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 majority of day nurseries and childminders offer services year-round, with a significant number opening before 8am and closing 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, preschools, and childminders in Bexley. The data shows 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	£6.58	N/A	£5.80
3- and 4-year-olds	£6.26	£5.65	£5.80

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 2022

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	£5.55	£4.98
Under 2s - Outer London	£6.96	£5.88
2s and over - UK	£5.35	£4.88
2s and over - Outer London	£6.27	£5.88

This table shows the average price per hour of day nurseries and childminders in the UK and Outer London. Overall, day nurseries and childminders in London are more expensive than the rest of the UK. Data from Coram Family and Childcare Survey 2022

Nationally, childcare costs have increased since the previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2021.

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	£11.65
London	£15.16
UK	£13.30

This table shows the average price per day of after school provision in the UK, London, and Bexley. The average price in Bexley (£11.65) is lower than London (£15.16) and the UK (£13.30).

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 Early Years settings (including schools, private nurseries,

preschools and childminders), on Bexley's website, and through our Children and Family Centre teams. We asked parents for information including:

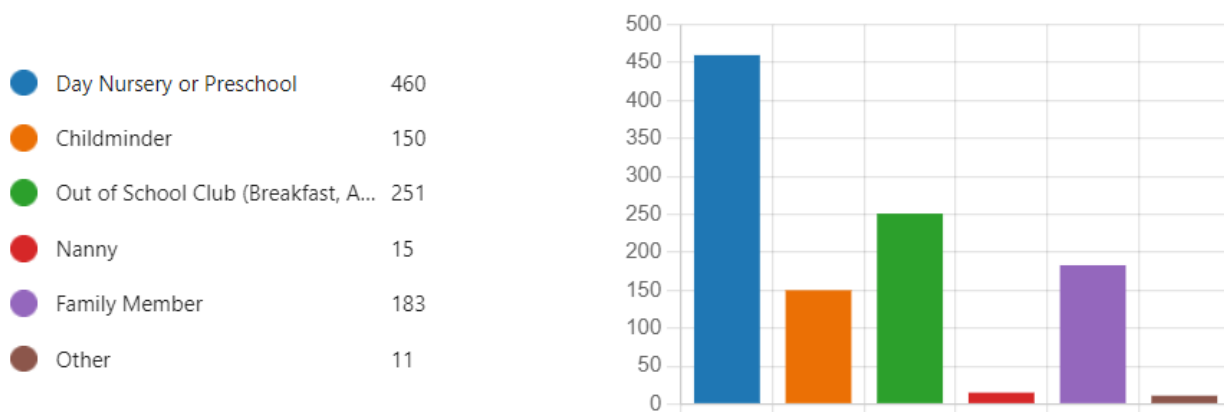
1. Do you currently use childcare? If no, please explain why.
2. What type of childcare do you use?
3. What were the biggest factors for you in choosing a childcare provider?
4. Are you accessing any early years funding for your child?
 - a. If yes, which funding scheme?
 - b. If no, why not?
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about childcare in Bexley?
- 6.

This bar graph shows a visual representation of what types of childcare families who completed the survey use. 460 families use a day nursery or preschool, 150 use a childminder, 251 use an OOS club, 183 use a family member, 15 use a nanny and 11 use another type of childcare.

We received a large number of responses to our survey, over 1200 responses. Of those families, 66% said

3. What type of childcare do you use?

[More Details](#)



they currently use childcare. Of the families who do not use childcare, many shared that it was because their children are too old to need childcare, that they are not currently working so don't need childcare, or they feel the cost is too high.

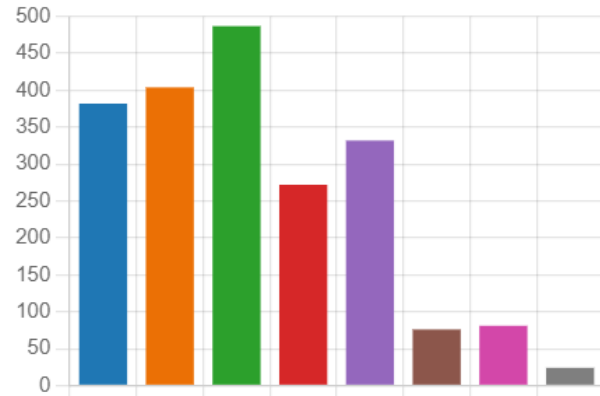
Families are accessing a wide range of childcare including day nurseries and preschools, childminders, and out of school clubs. A small percentage were using a nanny, and many were using family members.

Of the families who reported using childcare, 53% were accessing Early Years Funding. Of these, 28% were accessing the Universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds, 41% were accessing the Extended 30 Hour Entitlement, 5% were accessing the Play2Learn Funding and 24% were accessing Tax Free Childcare. Families also reported a wide range of factors they considered when choosing a setting for their child, with Quality, Cost and Distance being the three largest considerations.

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

[More Details](#)

Distance	382
Cost	404
Quality	487
Availability	272
Hours	332
Child's specific needs	76
Type of childcare	81
Other	24



This bar graph shows the biggest factors for parents in choosing a childcare provider. The most important factor for 487 parents was quality, followed by 404 parents saying cost was the biggest factor, and 382 saying distance was the biggest factor.

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

[More Details](#)

Yes	415
No	373



6. If yes, which funding scheme?

[More Details](#)

Play2Learn (2 year old funding)	19
Universal 15 hours for 3 and 4 y...	117
Extended 30 hours for 3 and 4 y...	171
Tax-Free Childcare	98
Other	8



These pie charts show the percentage of parents who responded to our survey who are using early years funding. 415 parents said yes, 373 said no. Of the yes responses, 171 are using the extended 30 hours, 117 the universal 15 hours, 19 using the Play2Learn offer and 98 using Tax Free Childcare.

As part of their survey response, parents left a wide range of comments about the general childcare offer in Bexley. In the context of the current cost of living crisis, many parents noted that the cost of childcare has also risen. Providers are able to set their own prices and many have increased in the current climate. It was

also evident that many parents were seeking more flexible childcare arrangements in line with the change in working patterns after the Covid-19 Pandemic. In terms of quality, where specific settings were mentioned, the feedback was positive.

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.

4. Children with SEND in Bexley

Local authorities and settings should promote equality and inclusion for all children Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. 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. By working in this way, providers ensure their inclusive practice benefits each child in the setting and creates 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.

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). 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 2021-31st March 2022 the Educational Psychology Service received 118 referrals. Of these, 79% of children had speech, language and communication (SLCN) needs as a primary concern, 15% had complex developmental needs, 2% had physical needs, 2% had hearing impairment, 1% had social emotional or mental health (SEMH) needs, and 1% had complex medical needs. These percentages show an increase in the referrals for SCLN and a slight decrease in referrals for SEMH Needs. This may point to better identification of primary needs for children with SCLN that may present as SEMH Needs initially. The data continues to highlight the need for SCLN support and provision, particularly support in regards to complex language, social communication, and interaction needs.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is a fund to support children in Early Years Settings who are claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA). In the 2021-2022 Academic Year, there have been 28 DAF payments to settings, equalling a total of £36,480. This is largely in line with the data from the previous year. Additionally, there have been 104 Speech and Language Supplement payments totalling £154,530 and 96 settings have received Early Years Pupil Premium payments, totalling £101,284.

As of July 2022, 44 children have had an EHCP finalised in the 2021-2022 academic year. The primary area of need for the largest group of children is Autism Spectrum Disorder (41%). 34% of children with EHCPs in the past academic year have Speech, Language and Communication Needs.

Below is a table that shows the number of preschool children that have had an Educational Health Care Plan finalised, as well as the different diagnosed need types. As you can see, the total number of EHCPs finalised increased from 2018-2020 and then remained mostly steady from 2021-2022. The full impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic is still being assessed and it is unclear how the numbers of EHCPs will be impacted over the next few years. There are also additional factors affecting EHCPs, including financial considerations.

Diagnosed need types of preschool children with EHCP in place	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Speech, Language and Communications Needs	26	29	12	15
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	4	6	16	18
Other Difficulty/Disability	5	3	5	3
Hearing Impairment	0	0	0	2
Severe Learning Difficulty	2	2	6	3
Visual Impairment	0	0	0	0
Moderate Learning Difficulty	0	1	3	2
Physical Disability	1	0	3	1
Total	38	41	45	44

The table above shows the numbers of preschool children with EHCPs in place by academic year and by primary need. In 2021-2022 there were 44 total EHCPs finalised. The primary needs for that year are as follows – Autism Spectrum Disorder 18, SLCN 15, HI 2, SLD 3, MLD 2, PD 1, and other difficulty or disability 3. Figures correct as of [August 2022](#).

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.

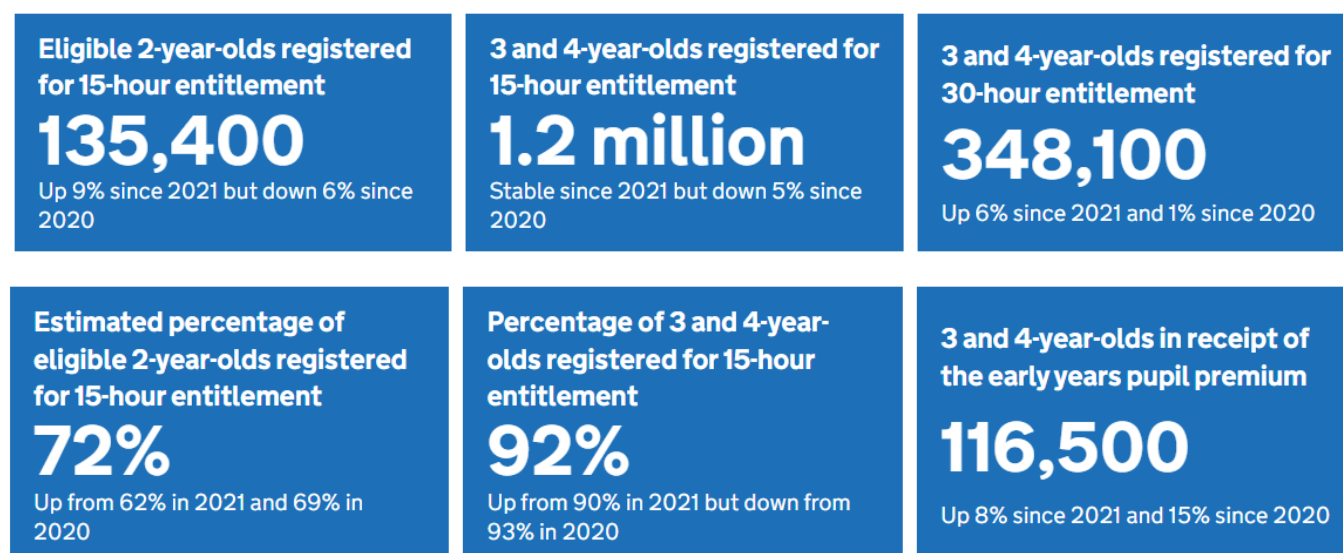
Children aged 3 and 4 where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, could be eligible to receive an additional 15 hours per week (30 Hour entitlement).

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 photo above shows the percentage of 2-year-old children registered to receive funding in the UK is 72%, up from 69% in 2020 and 62% in 2021. The percentage of 3- and 4-year-old children registered for universal hours is 92%, up from 90% in 2021 but down from 93% in 2020. The number of 3- and 4-year-olds registered for the extended hours was 348100, up 6% since from 2021 and 1% since 2020. There are 1.2 million 3- and 4-year-olds registered for the 15 hours entitlement, which is stable since 2021, and 135400 eligible 2-year-olds registered for the 15-hour entitlement, which is up 9% since 2021 but down 6% since 2020. There are also approximately 116500 3- and 4-year-olds in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium, which is up 8% since 2021 and 15% since 2020.

The statistics across the UK for funded childcare are below:

- Across both the 15-hour and 30-hour entitlements, the fall in the numbers registered in 2021 and the subsequent rises in 2022 likely reflects the impact of COVID-19 uncertainty on providers and parents followed by some reversal as the uncertainty eased.
- However, the increases in the numbers registered for the 15-hour entitlements in 2022 have not offset the falls in 2021.
- The rises in the take-up rates for the 15-hour entitlements in 2022 have been driven not only by increases in the numbers registered, but also by decreases in the relevant populations (particularly for eligible 2-year-olds).
- In 2022, both the number of 3 and 4-year-olds registered for the 30-hour entitlement and those in receipt of the early years pupil premium (EYPP) were the highest on record.

Data from: [Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting Year 2022 – 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 criterion, 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 take-up percentages for the Play2Learn funding in Bexley are broadly in line with the national percentages, with a downward trend in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

	Spring	Summer	Autumn
2018	64%	63%	67%
2019	65%	59%	71%
2020	62%	52%	56%
2021	58%	58%	72%
2022	72%	70.5%	N/A

The table above shows the take up percentages of Play2Learn places in Bexley. In the autumn term in 2021 take up was 72%, 72% in the spring term of 2022 and in the summer of 2022 the take up dropped slightly to 70.5%

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	3025
2022	3867	4407	N/A

The table above shows the number of 15-hour places taken up in Bexley. In the autumn term in 2021 there were 3025 places taken, dropping to 3867 in spring 2022. In summer 2022 the number was 4407 (Figures correct as of July 2022).

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, PVIs and childminders as well virtually meeting with settings if requested. Childminders in particular have been keen to engage. This has worked well to engage providers and currently the majority of our providers offer the extended 30 hours.

Take up of extended hours places

	Spring	Summer	Autumn
2018	1130	1113	945
2019	1267	1471	1226
2020	1356	1597	1023
2021	1379	1667	1093
2022	1527	1814	N/A

The table above shows the number of extended 30-hour places taken up in Bexley. In the autumn term in 2021 there were 1093 places taken, rising to 1527 in spring 2021 and 1814 in the summer of 2022. (Figures correct as of July 2022).

5.4 Assessment of Impact of Funding Provision

While we have previously seen the 30 hours funding impact places available for Play2Learn funding, this has not been the case over the previous year. A larger number of school nurseries are offering the 30 hours funding, which provides parents greater choice in where to use their funded hours. Overall, Bexley has sufficient childcare places for all eligible families to take up their full funding entitlement.