

FACTORS IMPACTING ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE PROVISION IN DEVON

POPULATION

With the population of children remaining relatively stable the demand for childcare will be constant.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRANSPORT

With the rural nature of Devon, there can be challenges to ensuring access to services. In rural areas, childcare options can be limited due to the low number of children in a concentrated area. If provision is available, often the only option is a limited, part-time service.

Responsibility for getting a child to childcare provision lies solely with the parent. Some day care providers, childminders and after school clubs will collect children from schools and early years providers to enable them to access childcare.

The Early Years and Childcare Service know that families who travel into urban areas to work often use full day care for children under five which is closer to their work than their home. This enables a cost saving to be made, as children can be dropped off and picked up without the need for the parents having to travel long distances.

Many children are taken to school by school transport. This limits the ability for school-aged children to attend out of school provision as school buses operate around the school day. Parents that need childcare at the end of the day may need to make other arrangements.

WEEKLY WAGES

Those parents with lower wages (North Devon, Torridge, Teignbridge and Exeter) may find it more difficult to meet the costs of childcare. This may mean that fewer parents pay for childcare and instead may choose to work more flexibly, one parent may stay at home (particularly where there are several young children) or they rely on family and friends to care for their children.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING HOURS

With a lower proportion of JSA claimants in Devon than the national average, there are likely to be more parents working, therefore more childcare may be required to enable them to work.

Data also suggests that more part-time childcare will be required, rather than full day care, due to parents working part-time. However this could also mean that there are fewer hours that parents need childcare and therefore 570 hours of flexibly funded childcare may be all that they require. Alternatively both parents may work part-time and juggle work and childcare between them, therefore not requiring any formal childcare.

With the seasonal nature of employment in Devon, there may be a higher demand for childcare during the summer months, therefore a higher demand for holiday provision and a greater demand for taking up the stretched offer for free early years education.

BUSINESSES

A higher level of employment in agriculture, fishing and tourism related industries often means working unsociable or inflexible hours, which may mean there are a higher proportion of parents requiring care for atypical hours or irregular hours. There is a large proportion of seasonal employment in Devon, especially on the coasts. Therefore demand for childcare may be higher during holiday times as parents may work long hours in jobs related to the tourist industry. Also, with a larger proportion of employment being in agriculture than the national average, a higher demand for childcare may be seen in rural areas, although traditionally we know that families rely on informal childcare during times of harvest or lambing.

With a number of commercial developments in and around Exeter there is likely to be a higher demand for childcare in and around the city, with parents choosing childcare closer to their work.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

With the increase in population generated from new housing developments, there will be a greater need for early years and childcare in those areas.

New schools will be required in areas where there will be an increased number of children, due to large housing developments, and this is set out in the Education Infrastructure Plan.

The Early Years and Childcare Service jointly plans with Strategic Planning Officers for Children's Services where new schools are being built and when schools are expanded. Applications for Section 106 and/or Community Infrastructure Levy are made where additional housing will cause there to be a lack of early years and childcare provision to meet the increased demand.

The Early Years and Childcare Service have devised a formula to calculate the estimated number of children requiring childcare from the number of houses to be built. This has been used to feed into the Education Infrastructure Plan 2013-31. New schools built as a result of these new housing developments will supply provision for two-, three- and four- year-old places (and in some places for children under two) and will accommodate out of school provision. The Early Years and Childcare Service will also need to stimulate the market to encourage childminders to set up in and around new housing developments to provide childcare. This is done by promoting childminding as a career in areas of need and holding short information sessions for groups of interested potential childminders. We will also support group-based childcare organisations to establish their businesses in these areas.

There are a number of smaller housing developments in Devon that will impact on the demand for childcare. Where there are smaller housing developments, existing local provision is expected to expand to meet the increased demand. We will also encourage new childminders to set up businesses or existing childminders to take on assistants so more children can be cared for.

As houses are built, the Early Years and Childcare Service will need to manage the childcare market in order to meet the increased demand for early years and childcare provision. These areas are discussed and monitored through the [Childcare Sufficiency Hot Spots Meetings](#).