



Childcare sufficiency assessment 2007-10



Summary



What is the childcare sufficiency assessment?



Blackburn with Darwen constantly strives to improve the life chances of children and their families. Through assessing and managing the childcare market the local authority can strive to ensure there is adequate childcare for all families to enable them to continue in work or to enter training or employment.

The childcare sufficiency assessment has been clearly identified to provide valuable data management information to support changes in the authority including shifts in population and economic regeneration / housing developments.

The childcare knowledge, support and commitments from partners is key to the success of sufficiency assessment is a key priority within the Children and Young People's Plan and links to many other ongoing corporate and departmental work streams.

A multi agency steering group has been formed to develop and monitor the assessment, composed of partners across Children's Services, including extended services, policy and performance, corporate policy, the children with disabilities team, children's centre integrated network and partners from other agencies including Jobcentre Plus.

Ensuring all children, young people and families have easy access to services within Blackburn and Darwen is of paramount importance to the Council.

An example of the borough's commitment is the new children and young people's service directory, www.urbwd.com which was launched during late 2007. The site's design, features and naming have been developed through close consultation with a range of local parents, children and young people.

As it can clearly be evidenced that many local families are utilising and engaging with the directory, it was felt that this may be a good platform by which to reach many families through consultation and by providing updates on the 2007/8 assessment and ongoing plans.

The commitment of the local authority and partners in preparing and utilising the wealth of information contained within the report is clearly evident. As a result it is expected that the 2007/10 report and annual refreshes will be essential tools for daily working practice, in the formulation of priorities and service delivery.

For copies of the full childcare sufficiency assessment please go to our website www.blackburn.gov.uk or www.urbwd.com



Key findings



<p>Blackburn with Darwen has sufficient childcare to meet current parental demand within local communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ Data analysis and parental consultation suggests there is currently sufficient childcare to meet parental demand within Blackburn with Darwen. Generally across the borough few trends can be evidenced against levels of childcare provision per 100 population and providers vacancy levels. This therefore does not seem to indicate a higher than average saturation or lack of childcare within any areas. Whilst there are some areas of the borough appearing to offer lower levels of childcare per child population; vacancy and occupancy levels do not indicate any need for additional provision within these areas during 2007-8 ↗ The lowest rates of provision can be evidenced within the registered childminding sector, with 5 places per 100 children population. However, vacancy rates within this sector during 2007 remain constant at approximately 20% borough wide. ↗ This may therefore indicate that whilst there does not appear to be an abundance of provision within this sector there does appear to be more than enough to meet <i>current</i> parental demand.
<p>Parents and carers are satisfied with the availability, type and quality of childcare offered within Blackburn with Darwen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ The majority of parents and carers were very satisfied with their current childcare arrangements, agreeing that the availability of childcare within Blackburn with Darwen is high. This was mirrored across those parents whose children have additional needs with 90% of parents or carers indicating that they were very happy with their current childcare and access to childcare. ↗ However, whilst there does not appear to be a short fall in childcare within the borough, 26% of respondents indicated that when accessing childcare they did not feel that there was '...a good choice of childcare in Blackburn with Darwen'.
<p>The cost of childcare within Blackburn with Darwen appears to be comparable to the price parents are able and prepared to pay, although take up of tax credits is lower than the national average.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ The average actual cost of childcare across the borough is highly comparable to the mean prepared spend within the borough at around £60.00 per week. ↗ Whilst almost 75% of parents / carers had a total household income of less than £30,001, the majority of respondents did not claim working tax credit. This was a key finding as over 80% of respondents joint incomes indicated they would be entitled to claim. ↗ The majority of parents felt childcare within the borough offered good value for money.
<p>The borough is actively supporting parents and carers to access training and employment, whilst also offering a range of childcare to support families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ Results of the wide range of consultation methods indicated the majority respondents were aged between 26 to 35 years. Of those most had one child living within their household. ↗ Almost 90% of respondents were within employment or training and the majority used childcare for social and learning benefits for their child and / or to work. ↗ A range of support packages are provided for parents and carers within the borough, with additional support for lone parents and those aged under 18. ↗ Through the multi-agency support offered a trend is developing that parents are accessing training and support to become work ready and are utilising varied forms of childcare as a result. This is particularly evident in former Sure Start local programme areas which have guided and influenced this approach borough wide. Through parental consultation it has been recognised that this is not a short term approach or quick fix and is supporting the long term development of communities.

Key priorities for 2008-09



	We will achieve this by:
To ensure provision continues to meet the needs of all parents and carers.	<p>Continuing the work between the children's information service and staff from a range of disciplines supporting children with disabilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ gain a better understanding of specific issues can be gained to ensure childcare continues to meet the needs of all of the borough's children including those with more complex health needs. ↗ ensuring all views are gathered effectively, both with regard to the childcare options available and services delivered through the children and young people's service directory.
To support more parents and carers to access working tax credits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ providing further information and support within communities through multi-agency partners with information to be offered through a range of outlets. ↗ offering one to one support to be offered to parents and carers, within their local community through the integrated children centre network. To be delivered in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, Customer Services and City Strategies / workroutes. ↗ consulting with families to establish reasons why they may not be accessing the tax credits.
To ensure accurate and robust data is available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ holding information in one central IT system. ↗ collecting comparable sets of information year on year, from national and local sources. ↗ improving the way in which data is broken down to allow year on year comparisons. ↗ gathering details of vacancies across Blackburn with Darwen's childcare sector each month to ensure we have an accurate picture of the childcare available at all times.
To consult with all key groups in the borough and provide feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ extending the children's voices pilot across the borough as an example of good practice. This will ensure that children under the age of five years will be able to actively offer their opinions alongside those of older children. ↗ increase the range of consultation with children and young people, through existing methods including www.urbwd.com , particularly focusing on 5-16 year olds. ↗ extending the children's centre consultation pilot across all centres to gain the views of a wider audience of parents and carers. ↗ discussing the findings of the consultation with the employers forum to provide information on parental needs, for example highlighting the evidence the positive impact more family friendly policies, (and the need to further promote these to prospective staff), may have, including those which would more specifically support families from minority ethnic communities.

Background

In 2004 the Government set out their vision for the future of children and young people.

Within the borough of Blackburn with Darwen the Council and partners believe that every child deserves to receive the best services to help them to succeed in life.

Corporately, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council clearly recognises the influence the childcare sufficiency assessment can have in supporting the reduction of poverty and reducing the number of workless households.

Blackburn with Darwen's approach has been strengthened by the partnerships which exist both within the children's services department, as part of the wider corporate agenda and throughout key partners working practice.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Children's services, early years excellence
floor 3A west wing, The Exchange
Ainsworth Street, Blackburn BB1 6AD
www.blackburn.gov.uk