



London Borough of Sutton

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

April 2015

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Executive Summary

The London Borough of Sutton has a duty to ensure there is adequate, accessible, available and affordable childcare in the borough. Childcare can provide many benefits, both to the local area and nationally. For example, childcare can bring economic benefits, as it enables parents to return to work, and also provides many young children with the access to early education and social skills to aid development.

The key findings and areas for consideration as a result of the London Borough of Sutton's 2014/15 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment are as follows:

Affordability

Over the last five years national research has shown that childcare costs have increased almost 32% and are becoming unaffordable for many households. In Sutton, the average cost per hour for a nursery or childminder is much higher than the national average, suggesting that childcare costs could be an issue for many households in the borough. With such high costs, it is unsurprising that the parental survey found that almost 60% of respondents disagreed that childcare was affordable.

Eligibility

Uptake of funded two year old places was uneven across the borough, some catchment areas were considerably below the borough average of 47%. The uptake shows that the Council needs to do more to engage and communicate with eligible residents, particularly in the areas of high deprivation, such as Tweeddale, and those where the eligible two year olds will be a very small group, such as Green Oak Cheam.

Analysis of the Free Entitlement Funding for three and four year olds revealed that uptake varied considerably by location, particularly between areas of high and low deprivation. For example, in the Amy Johnson catchment area only 76% of three and four year olds were using the funding. The variation in uptake by location highlights the need for the Council to ensure there is increased uptake of the funding in areas of deprivation.

Flexibility

Analysis of provider data has shown that there are a limited number of providers available at weekends and that the number of childcare places reduces significantly during the school holidays, particularly for 5-7 year olds.

The parental survey also found that there were a number of parents who were dissatisfied with the opening and closing times of childcare. The open-ended comments suggested that this dissatisfaction could be due to many parents experiencing problems with travel time and traffic when trying to pick up their children after a working day.

Quality

Nationally, people living in the most deprived areas of the country receive poorer quality childcare. Within Sutton, Tweeddale is the most deprived catchment area but has the highest percentage of providers that

have achieved good or outstanding (76%). However other catchment areas with relatively high levels of deprivation do not display similar results, with only 55% in Spencer and 35% in Amy Johnson.

Choice

The choice of childcare options varies across the borough, with a small number of catchment areas having comparatively limited access to childcare options. For example, in Beddington there were no holiday schemes, day nurseries or after school clubs.

Availability

Day nurseries had the highest number of children on the waiting list per provider, and childminders the least. Geographically, Shanklin had by far the greatest need for childcare places, with an average of 4.7 children on waiting list for each provider. By age, the number of vacancies was greatest in the 5-7 year olds but significantly lower in the under twos, with their being only 95 vacancies for childcare places being available (at the time of the survey).

With such high numbers of children on the waiting lists and low vacancy rates in the under twos, it suggests Sutton is following the increasing national trend, with 57% of Councils not having the childcare available to meet the needs of the parents.

Accessibility

The sufficiency assessment has shown that within Sutton there are currently 187 children with a disability / additional needs that are using childcare. The open-ended comments from the parental survey have shown that parents with children with disabilities and / or additional needs have experienced issues with finding the hours of childcare required, affording the childcare and finding childcare that can meet the needs of the child.

With such limited understanding of the needs of parents with children with disabilities, it is vital that the Council looks to explore the needs and experiences of this group in more detail. This will help to ensure there is *accessible*, *available* and *affordable* childcare for all children in the borough.

Information to parents

The parental questionnaire found there was limited awareness of the Family Information service, with 31% of parents stating they had not heard of the service. As the Family Information Service offers much needed information and advice and helps parents find suitable childcare, the Council could look to increase awareness and uptake of the service.

Introduction

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provides a review of childcare provision in the London Borough of Sutton. The aim of the assessment is to understand the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare within the borough.

Childcare is a necessity for many people with children. Childcare enables parents to return to work after having children and gives many children access to early learning and social skills before attending school.

For the purposes of this assessment, childcare covers the following provision:

- Day Nurseries
- Nursery Schools (Maintained FEF)
- Playgroups and pre-schools
- Childminders
- Breakfast and After School Clubs

A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has been carried out to meet the requirements set out in the Childcare Act 2006. The aim of the Childcare Act 2006 is to give local authorities a role in childcare provision and improving outcomes. The key aspects of the legislation for local authorities are:

- Improve outcomes for under 5's and reduce inequalities
- Secure sufficient childcare
- Provide information, advice and assistance

For the purpose of this assessment, childcare sufficiency is more than just making sure there is enough childcare, it is also about:

- Making sure that the childcare is available, accessible and affordable so that parents have the opportunity to use childcare in their areas;
- Making sure it is of good quality so that it benefits the children;
- Provides parents with a choice of childcare so they choose the childcare that meets their needs.

Sutton's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will be available for parents, childcare providers and any other interested parties.

Policy Context

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has been carried out to meet the requirements set out in the Childcare Act 2006. The Childcare Act 2006 was originally intended to assist in the implementation of the aims set out in the *Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for children*¹.

¹ Where next for childcare? Learning from the last ten years of childcare policy, Family and Childcare Trust, 2014

The Act placed duties upon local authorities in three main areas: improving outcomes for young children, securing sufficient childcare and providing information to parents. This was to help reflect local authorities' strategic role in planning, commissioning and delivering services for children and families.

The first duty placed on local authorities was to improve outcomes for young children. This involved improving the well-being of young children, including: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. It also requires childhood services to be provided in an integrated manner.

The second duty of the Act was for local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and those in training / education. As part of securing sufficient childcare, local authorities are required to assess demand and availability of childcare provision and support local childcare providers with information, advice and training.

The third duty required local authorities to set up and run a service for parents to provide information on services, facilities and publications which may benefit the parents and / or children.

Following the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance was introduced in 2008. This framework set standards for learning and development and care of children from birth to five years. This guidance was relevant to all registered early years providers and schools. As part of this, all providers were brought into the same regulatory framework, allowing Ofsted to inspect against the new framework.

In 2009 a review of the *Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for children* was conducted. This review highlighted that the free childcare (of 15 hours per week) should be extended and the possibility of a cap being placed on childcare costs explored. In the 2010 Spending Review it was announced that the Government would extend the free childcare to the most disadvantaged two year olds.

Methodology

For this childcare sufficiency assessment both primary and secondary quantitative data has been used. The key sources of data used are a parental questionnaire, childcare provider's questionnaire and data already held by the Council.

A detailed overview of the different data sources can be found in appendix one.

Profile of Sutton

With regards to early years provision in the borough, geographic analysis is based around the Children's Centres localities and the Children's Centres catchment areas. To enable high quality data analysis, the localities and catchment areas follow the boundaries of LSOAs. This means that each LSOA fits into one locality and catchment area only.

There are currently three Children's Centres localities within the borough: green, blue and red. There are 14 Children's Centres catchment areas in the borough; these are based on the location of the Children's Centres in the borough.

It should be noted that at the time of writing, the London Borough of Sutton was undertaking a consultation on the future of the Children’s Centres. This consultation is due to a severe reduction in the Council’s budget, with the grant provided by central government being reduced by £40 million in the next five years. As a result all directorates have to identify areas for saving, including the children’s, young people and learning and development directorate (CYPLD). The decision on the future service of the Children’s Centres is expected in summer 2015.

The following map shows the three localities (green, blue and red) and the 14 catchment areas:

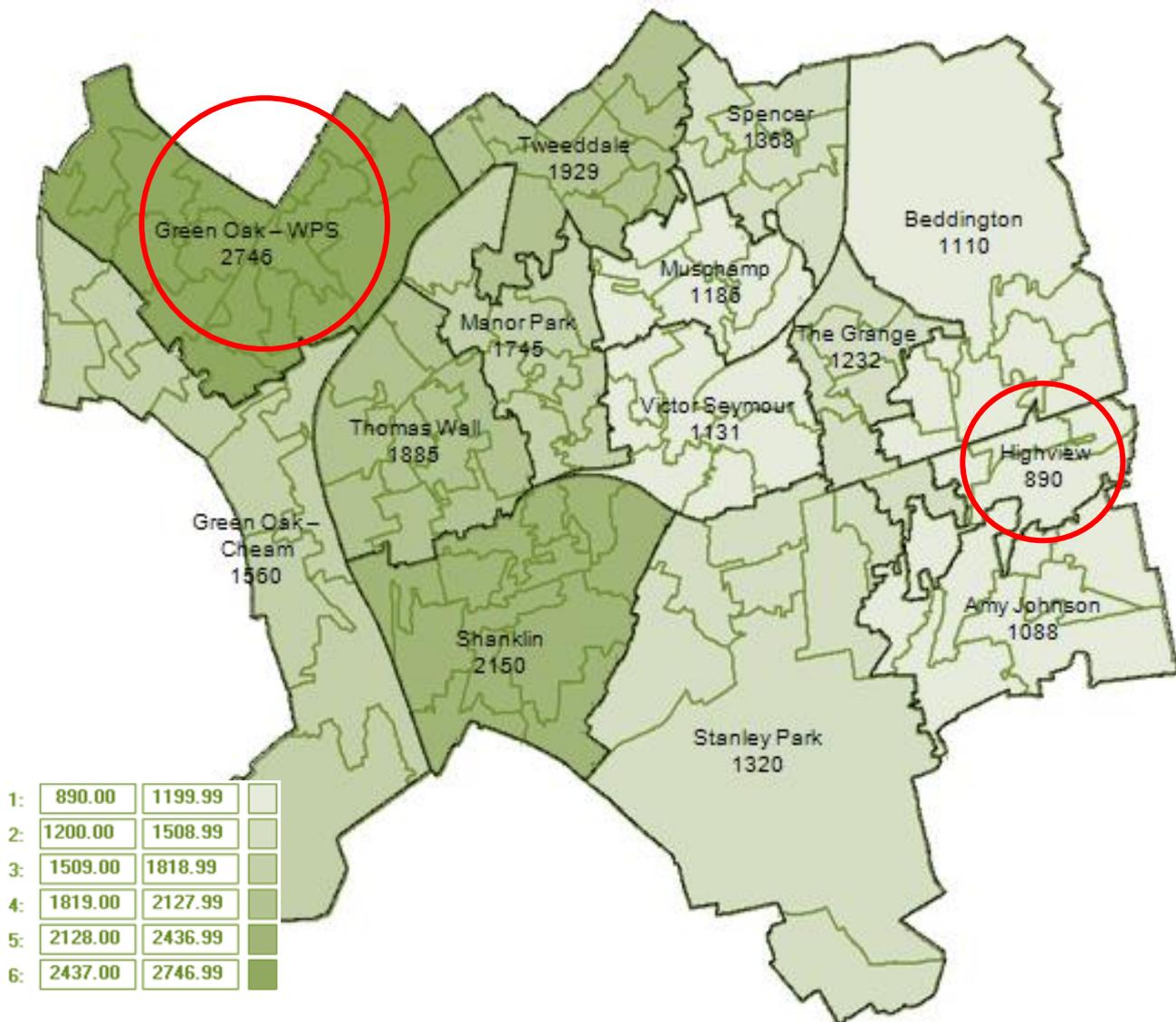


Population of Children

In the 2013 Mid Year Estimates Sutton had a population of 195,914 residents. Of these, 21,340 (11%) were aged 0-7 years and 13,701 (7%) were four years or under. The table below provides a full summary of the population of these age groups:

Age Group	Count	Percentage (of Sutton’s population)
All ages	195,914	N/A
Under 1 year	2,640	1.3%
1 year	2,924	1.5%
2 years	2,715	1.4%
3 years	2,744	1.4%
4 years	2,678	1.4%
5 - 7 years	7,642	3.9%

Geographically, Green Oak Worcester Park had the highest number of children aged 0-7 years (2,746) and Highview the least (890).



Source: Midyear estimates 2013

Ethnicity profile of children

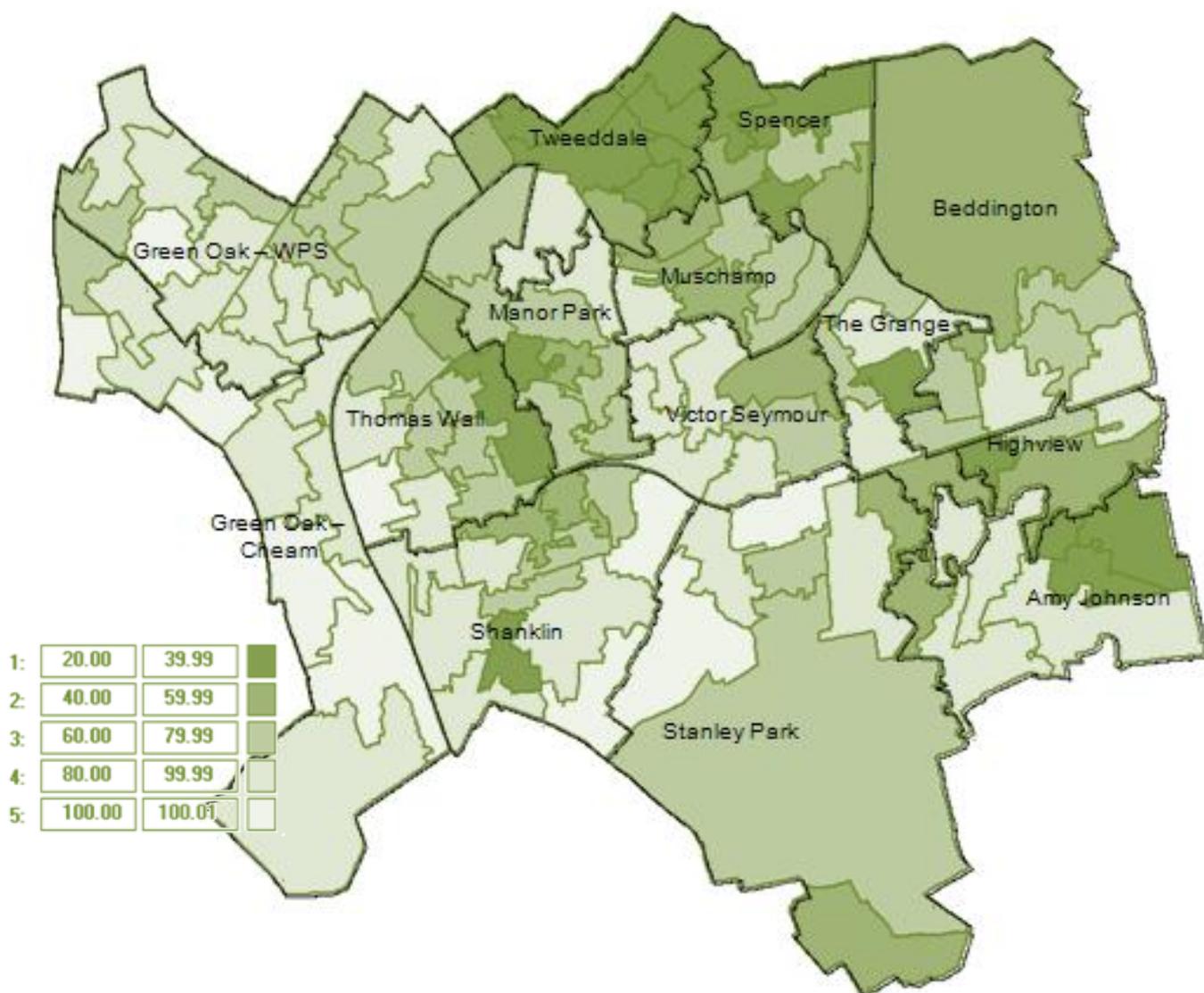
Analysis of the ethnicity of children (0-8 years) in Sutton shows that the largest population was White British (55%), followed by Asian or Asian British (14%) and mixed ethnic group (10%).

Geographically, the Shanklin catchment area had the highest percentage of BME (including non-White British) (60%) and Victor Seymour the lowest (33%).

Deprivation

A key data source that can be used to understand the poverty levels in the borough is the English Indices of Deprivation. This provides a relative measure of deprivation at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA). Areas are ranked from least deprived to most, on seven different dimensions of deprivation and an overall composite measure of multiple deprivations.

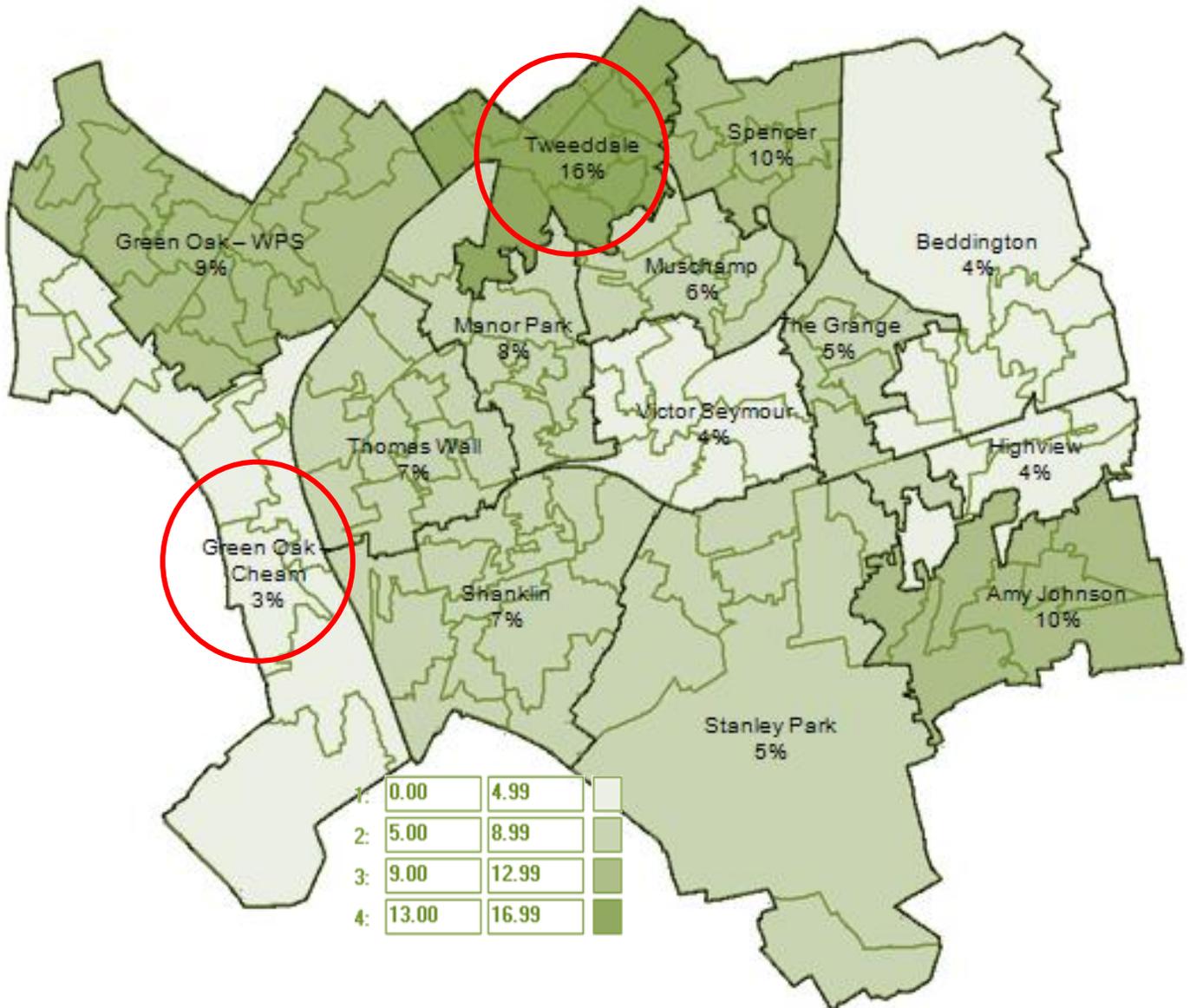
The index of multiple deprivation has identified that the borough of Sutton has 17 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are in the 30% most deprived in England. The following map shows the distribution of the levels of deprivation by LSOA in the borough:



Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010

This analysis reveals that Tweeddale, Spencer and Amy Johnson have the highest number of deprived LSOAs in the borough. The lowest number can be found in Green Oak Cheam.

Another tool that can be used to build up an understanding of deprivation is through identifying the number of workless households. Using data from the Department for Works and Pensions it was possible to identify that in 2013 there were 5,345 children aged 0-15 in workless households. The map below shows the distribution of these children across the borough:



Source: Department for Works and Pensions, 2013

Analysis of variations across the borough revealed stark differences, with 16% of children from workless households being from Tweeddale and only 3% in Green Oak Cheam.

Profile of Childcare in Sutton

The aim of this section is to provide a brief overview on the current childcare provision within the borough.

There are two key types of childcare options available to parents; registered childcare and unregistered childcare. For the purpose of this assessment these are defined as:

- Registered childcare includes childminders, nannies, nurseries, out of school care and playgroups and is defined as: where an individual, agency or service is paid by a parent or carer to look after their child, usually whilst the parent is at work.
- Unregistered childcare is informal childcare, such as friends and family.

This assessment will focus on registered childcare only.

Childcare Providers in Sutton

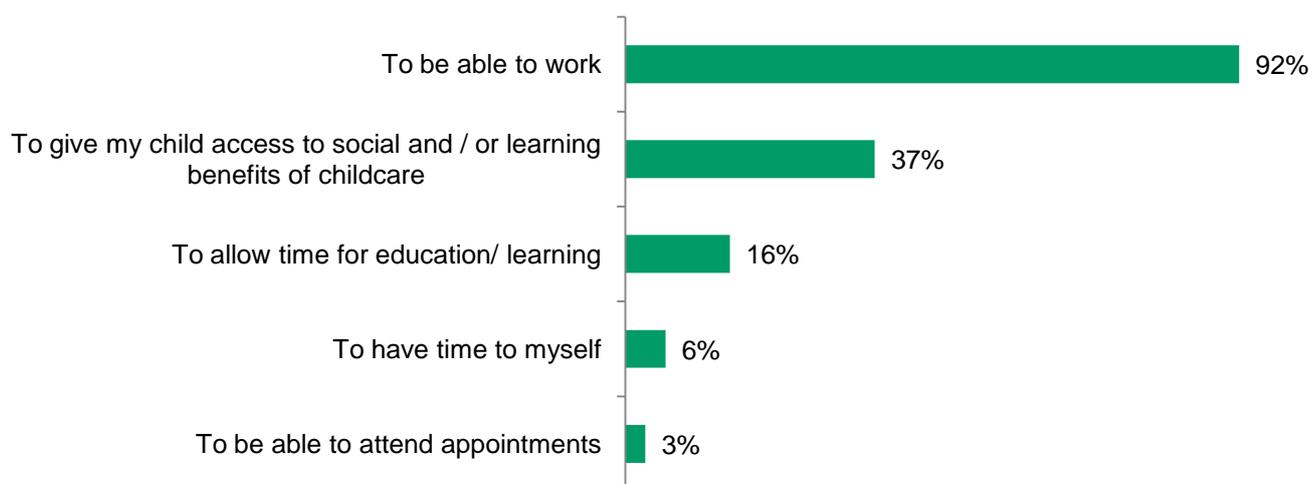
Within Sutton there are currently seven key forms of registered childcare providers available in the borough. These are:

Types of childcare available in Sutton, 2015		
Type of childcare	Definition of childcare	Further information on childcare
Day Nurseries	Day nurseries provide care in non-domestic premises. They are open all day and all year round.	They have to be registered and inspected by Ofsted. The number of children they can look after in each age group, at any one time, is limited in accordance with their Ofsted registration and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.
Nursery Schools (Maintained FEF)	The majority of infant schools in Sutton have nursery classes. There are also 2 nursery schools.	All nurseries are registered and inspected by Ofsted.
Playgroups and pre-schools	Pre-school/playgroups provide care in non-domestic premises for children aged 2-5 years. Care is usually sessional and they are open term time only.	They have to be registered and inspected by Ofsted. The number of children they can look after in each age group, at any one time is limited in accordance with their Ofsted registration and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

Types of childcare available in Sutton, 2015		
Type of childcare	Definition of childcare	Further information on childcare
Childminders	Childminders provide childcare within their own home. Some childminders employ an assistant and can take on more children. Childminders can offer full or part time care. Some are registered to do overnight and weekend care.	They only need to be registered if they are supplying childcare for children under the age of 8. They are limited to the number of children they can have at one time in accordance with their Ofsted registration and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.
Breakfast and After School Clubs	The majority of these are run within schools. Some are run by private companies on school sites and some on sites outside of schools. This only includes clubs which are on every day that deliver children to school and deliver childcare. They only offer childcare to children who are of school age and usually only those who are at the school that the club resides.	A breakfast or after school club run by the school is often covered by the schools Ofsted. If the club runs for less than 3 hours a day they do not need to be registered with Ofsted. Private clubs will be under the Ofsted registration of the registered owners/persons.
Holiday Schemes	Holiday schemes are run mainly by private companies, often using school sites. They operate solely within the school holidays.	They have to be registered with Ofsted for the care of children under the age of 8.

Why do parents use childcare?

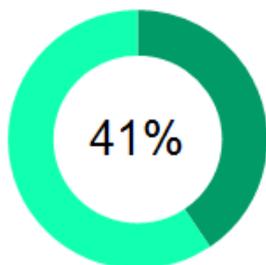
The 2014/15 parental childcare survey in Sutton identified that the key reason why respondents used childcare was to be able to work (91%) and to give the child (or children) access to educational and social benefits of childcare (37%).



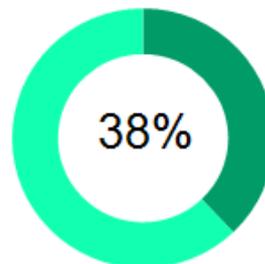
Base: 198 respondents (of those who use childcare only)

Why do parents not use childcare?

Of the parents who completed the questionnaire, but did not use childcare, the key reasons were because they could not afford childcare or they did not need childcare. A further 9% stated that they chose not to use it.



I cannot afford childcare



I do not need childcare

Base: 111 respondents (those who do not use childcare only)

Satisfaction with Childcare in the borough

In the parental childcare survey 88% of childcare users were satisfied with the childcare they used and only 4% stated they were dissatisfied.

■ Very satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neither satisfied or dissatisfied ■ Dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied



Base: 201 respondents (of those who use childcare only)

Affordability

Parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and delivered flexibly in a range of high quality settings.

Every year the Family and Childcare Trust collect information on childcare costs and availability. This collection has shown that since 2010 the cost of childcare has increased 32%, while wages have remained largely the same, resulting in an increased burden of childcare costs on parents.² For many parents, childcare can now be the largest outgoing, including that of mortgage and rent.

Cost of childcare by providers for children under four

Analysis by the Family and Childcare Trust has identified that the cost of childcare varies across Britain, with London having the most expensive childcare.

Analysis of the data from childcare providers in Sutton has identified that the cost of a nursery and childminder is higher than the national average, but slightly less than the average for London. The table below summarises the national, regional and local cost of childcare:

Type of provider	Great Britain Average (per hour)	London Average (per hour)	Sutton Average (per hour)
Nursery	£4.39 - £4.62	£5.63 - £6.08	£5.49
Childminder	£4.12 - £4.16	£5.77 - £5.85	£5.10

These comparisons have shown that childcare within Sutton is considerably more expensive than the national average, for both nurseries and childminders. This suggests that within the borough there could be parents who struggle to afford childcare, particularly those on low-incomes. For some households, particularly those on minimum wage (£6.50 per hour for 21 years & over) there could be little incentive to work.

Within the borough the cost of childcare varies, with some catchment areas having to pay significantly more than others. The graph on the following page illustrates this variation:

² Childcare costs Survey 2014, Family and Childcare Trust, 2014



The analysis above has revealed that the cost of childcare varies across the catchment areas in the borough, for example in Amy Johnson, Green Oak Cheam and Manor Park the cost of the average day nursery is much more expensive than the borough average.

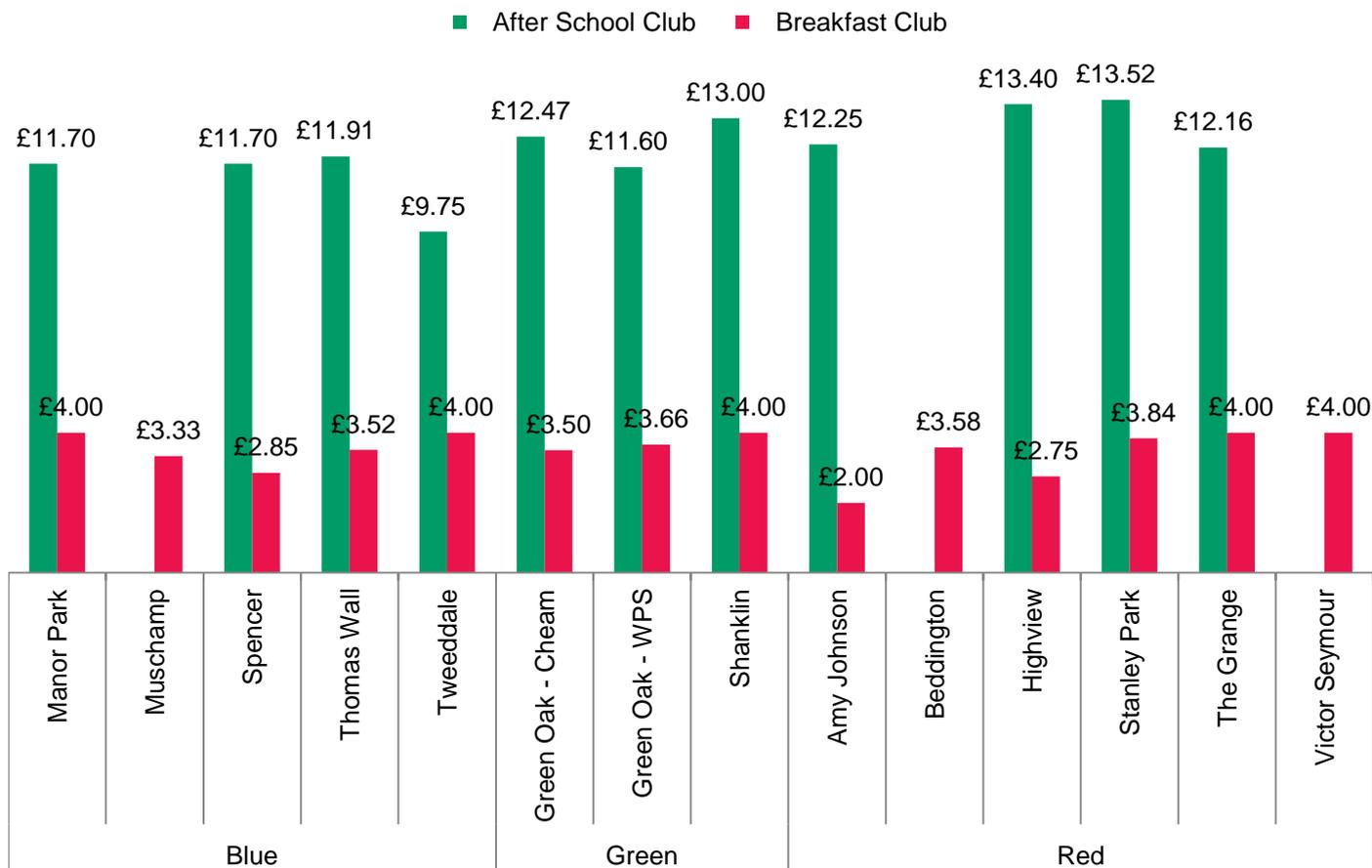
Cost of childcare by providers for children attending school

Within Sutton, parents pay on average £7.82 per session for breakfast and after school clubs. Many of the providers of breakfast and after school clubs only permit payment by session. A typical session would be:

- Breakfast club - 7 / 7.30 am - Until school starts
- After school club - Close of school - 6pm

Unfortunately it is not possible to compare to the findings from the Family and Childcare Trust as this is based on per hour; it is not possible to calculate the cost per hour for the providers in Sutton.

The graph on the following page shows that within Sutton the cost of breakfast and after school clubs varies geographically. Please note that not all areas have an after school club.



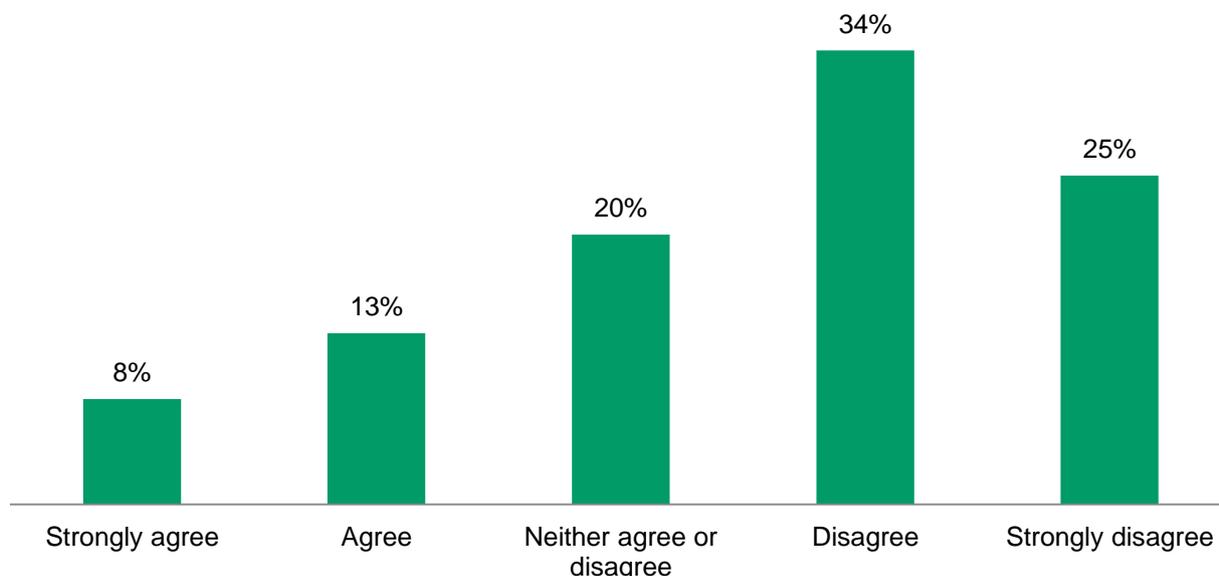
This analysis above has shown that the red locality has the most expensive after school clubs but the least expensive breakfast clubs. As this locality has the higher levels of deprivation it is important that this locality has access to affordable childcare.

Analysis revealed that on average respondents were spending £172.91 per week on childcare, for an average of 27 hours of childcare. This equates to roughly £6.40 on childcare per hour. However, as this includes respondents with more than one child and those children using breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday schemes, the price will be slightly inflated.

Analysis was conducted to look at the cost per hour, for one child aged four and under. This analysis revealed that parents with children four and under, on average spent £183.67 on childcare per week and used 30.3 hours, equating to roughly £4.63 per hour, per child.

Satisfaction with cost of childcare

This analysis below shows the results of the satisfaction with childcare costs from the parental childcare survey.



The analysis has shown satisfaction with the cost of childcare is low, with only 20% of parents agreeing that childcare is affordable. Almost two thirds of the respondents disagreed that childcare was affordable.

Many parents also took the time to share their comments regarding the cost childcare. Many of these comments demonstrated that parents were finding it difficult to afford childcare:

“Childcare in Sutton is good, but this comes at a high cost. To meet the needs of the child, at suitable days and time, is very expensive. There is very little help for working parents financially, apart from Childcare vouchers.”

“Childcare is the most expensive item in our monthly outgoings. Cannot fault quality of care we’ve used but can be extremely expensive and can be heavily oversubscribed so flexibility is limited.”

“Excellent childcare provisions in Sutton however fees for full time are far too high. Not the fault of the nursery but for under 3’s where parent’s earnings are above the threshold mean that one parent is working solely to pay fees.”

These comments show that within Sutton parents are spending a lot on childcare, with it being the biggest outgoing for many households. There were also comments showing that some households cannot afford to go back to work due to the high costs of childcare.

The high cost of childcare in the borough means that parents may not be able to return to work and there could be many households struggling to balance their household finances. These findings suggest that the borough would benefit from more affordable childcare.

Eligibility

All children who meet the prescribed criteria are able to take up high quality early education, regardless of their parents' ability to pay, benefitting their social, physical and mental development and helping to prepare them for school.

Local authorities are required to secure early education places, offering 570 hours a year for every child in the area aged three years and four years. The local authority is also required to secure early education places offering 570 hours a year for two year olds if:

- The family receive one or more of the following: income support, Job Seekers Allowance, Income related ESA, Support under VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, guaranteed element of State Pension Credit, Universal Credit, receive Working Tax Credits and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 per year, Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying to Working Tax Credit), Child Tax Credit (providing not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190).
- Have a current statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care plan
- They are entitled to Disability Living Allowance
- They are looked after by a local authorities
- They are no longer looked after by the local authority as a result of an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order which specifies with the child lives.

Parents can take up their free hours at a nursery, pre-school, Children's Centre or with a childminder.

Two year old funding

Based on the 2013 Midyear estimates, there are approximately 2,715 two year olds in the borough. Geographical analysis revealed that the greatest population was in Green Oak Worcester Park (357) and the lowest in Amy Johnson (111). However, not all these children will be eligible for the two year old funding.

Within Sutton there are currently 92 settings that are registered to provide two year old funding. As providers are not required to provide places for this cohort, this accounts for only 18% of the providers in Sutton.

The table below shows the provider by type and the number registered:

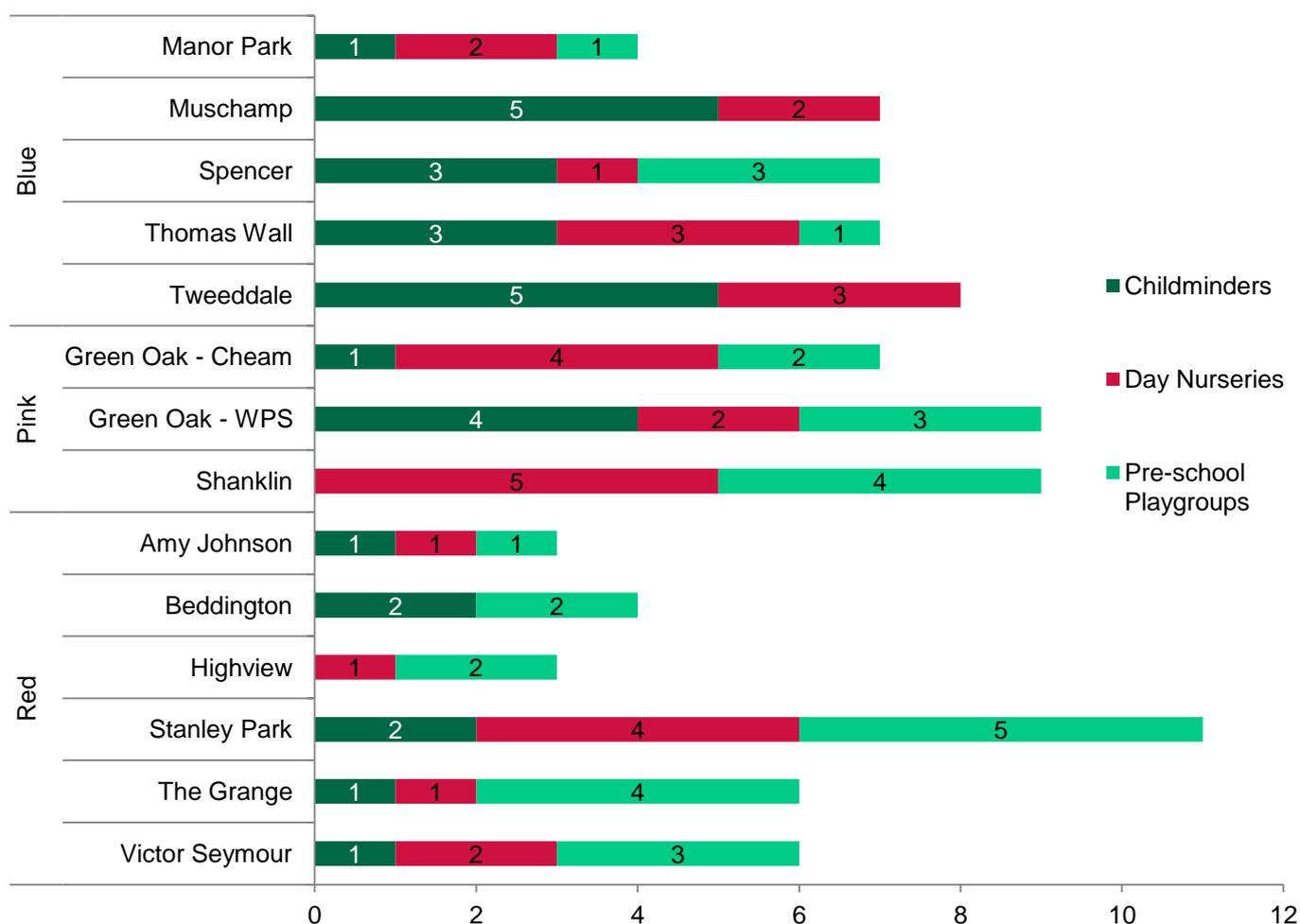
Type of provider	Number registered to provide two year old funding
Childminders	29
Day Nurseries	31
Pre-school / playgroups	31
Schools - infants, juniors and Primary	1

Number of funded two year old places by location of setting

As of spring 2015, there were 417 two year olds that were in places with providers in Sutton. Analysis of the providers showed that day nurseries had the highest number of places.

Type of provider	Number of funded two year olds places
Childminders	7
Day Nurseries	219
Pre-school / playgroups	182
Schools - infants, juniors and Primary	9

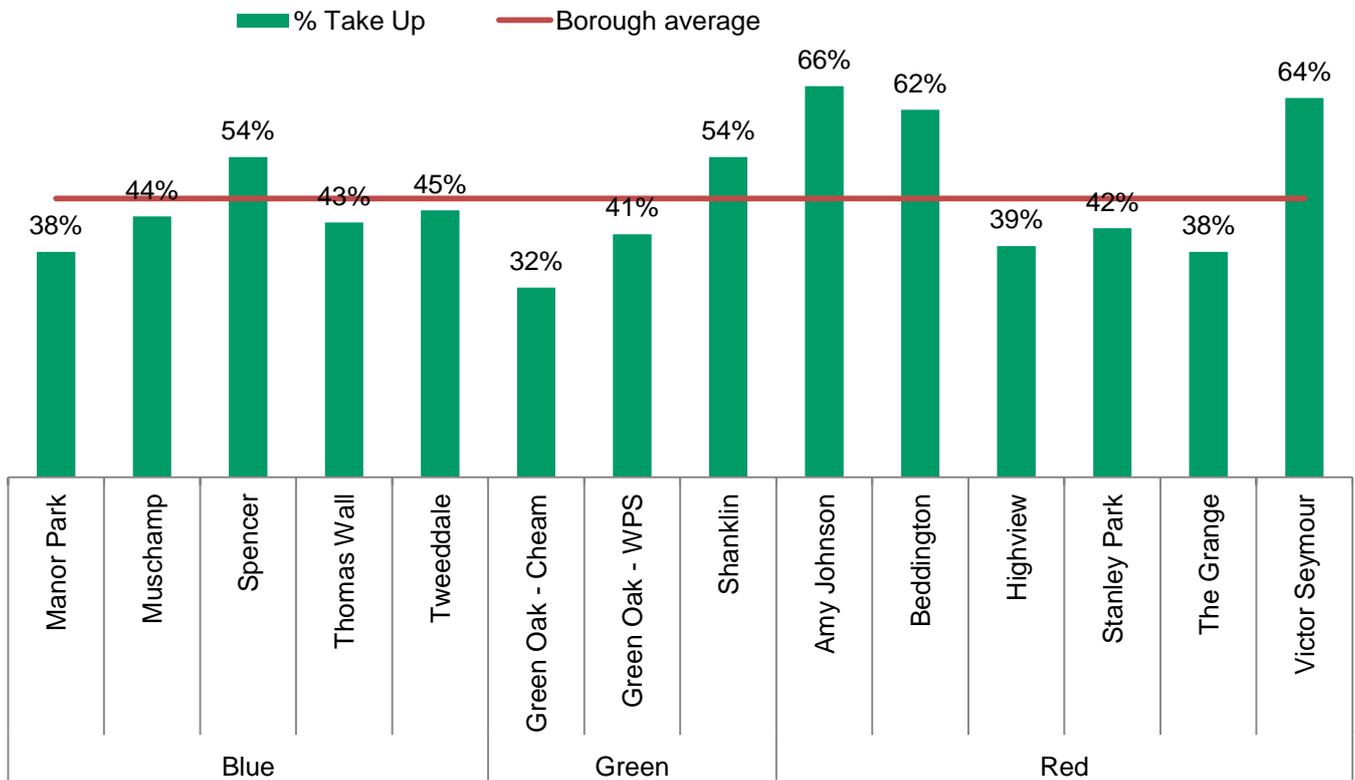
Analysis by catchment area found that Stanley Park had the highest number of providers that were registered to provide two year old funded places, and Highview and Amy Johnson the least.



Number of funded two year olds places by home location

As of spring 2015 there were 387 two year olds in Sutton in funded two year old childcare places in the borough. This equates to 47% of those who were eligible for the funding (819).

The following graph shows the results of the analysis on the take up of funded two year old places by home location by the Children's Centres in the borough.



Geographical analysis identified variations across the borough, with take up highest in Amy Johnson (66%) and lowest in Green Oak Cheam (32%).

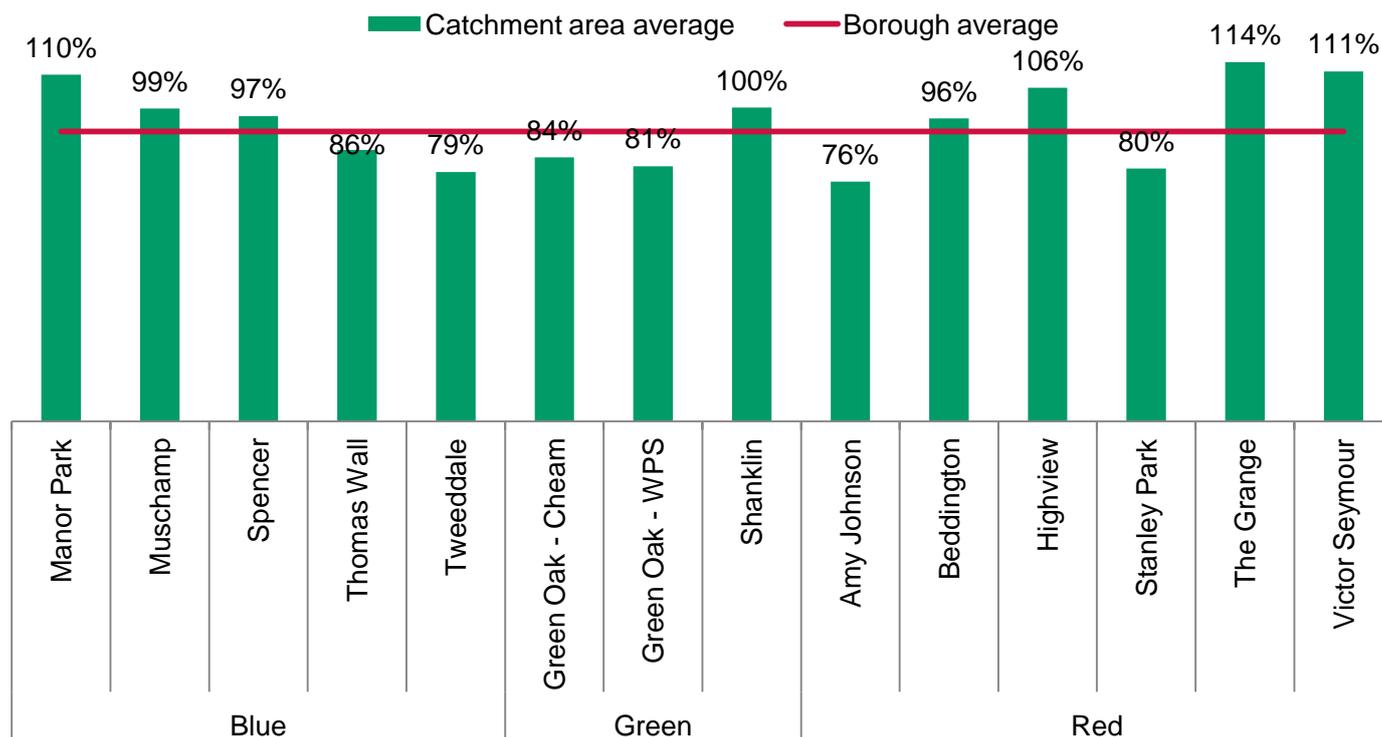
As Amy Johnson has relatively high levels of deprivation and high levels of take up, it shows that families are accessing the support available. However, as Tweeddale has the highest level of deprivation but relatively low levels of take up, it suggests that many families are not accessing the support available to them. Also, it is important to focus on those areas, such as Green Oak Cheam, where the eligible two year olds will be a very small group, to ensure they are not a marginalized group and can access the funding required.

Three and Four year old Free Entitlement Funding

Census 2011 figures shown there were 4,984 children aged three and four years in Sutton, with the greatest population in Green Oak Worcester Park (683) and lowest in Highview (223).

Based on Census 2011 figures, it is estimated that there is a 92% take up rate of the free entitlement funding for three and four year olds. This varied by age though, with it being much higher in the four year olds (100%) than the three year olds (85%). This variation is most likely to be linked to there being only one entry point for starting school (in September), so as a result many four year olds will be in school at this age.

The graph below shows the take up of three and four year old free entitlement funding by Children's Centre catchment area and localities.



Please note that some catchment areas have a take up rate of over 100%. This is most likely being due to the baseline figure being slightly incorrect, so the current population of the three and four year olds is greater than the 0-1 year old population at Census 2011.

Geographically, take up of the free entitlement funding varied, with it being greatest in The Grange catchment area and lowest in Amy Johnson.

The lowest levels of take up for the free entitlement funding are in Tweeddale and Amy Johnson. As these catchment areas are the areas with the highest level of deprivation, it is important that children take up the free childcare funding to help prepare children for school and increase the opportunities for parents to work and maximise household income.

Flexibility

Children are able to take up their full entitlement to early education at times that best support their learning and at the times which fit with the needs of the parent.

With many parents simultaneously working and bringing up their children, it is important that childcare is flexible enough to ensure both are achievable. Research by the Family and Childcare Trust found parents that were not working 'typical hours' (Monday - Friday, 9-5) had developed a series of childcare strategies. These strategies included:

- Relying on informal childcare support from family and friends
- Shift parenting - where parents work at different times

- Using late opening nurseries
- Nannies with contracted hours (to work the times when childcare is needed)

These strategies are not open to all parents though, for example a lone parent would not be able to use shift parenting, a household on low-income would struggle to afford a nanny and someone living in an area with limited personal networks could struggle to rely on their informal childcare networks.³

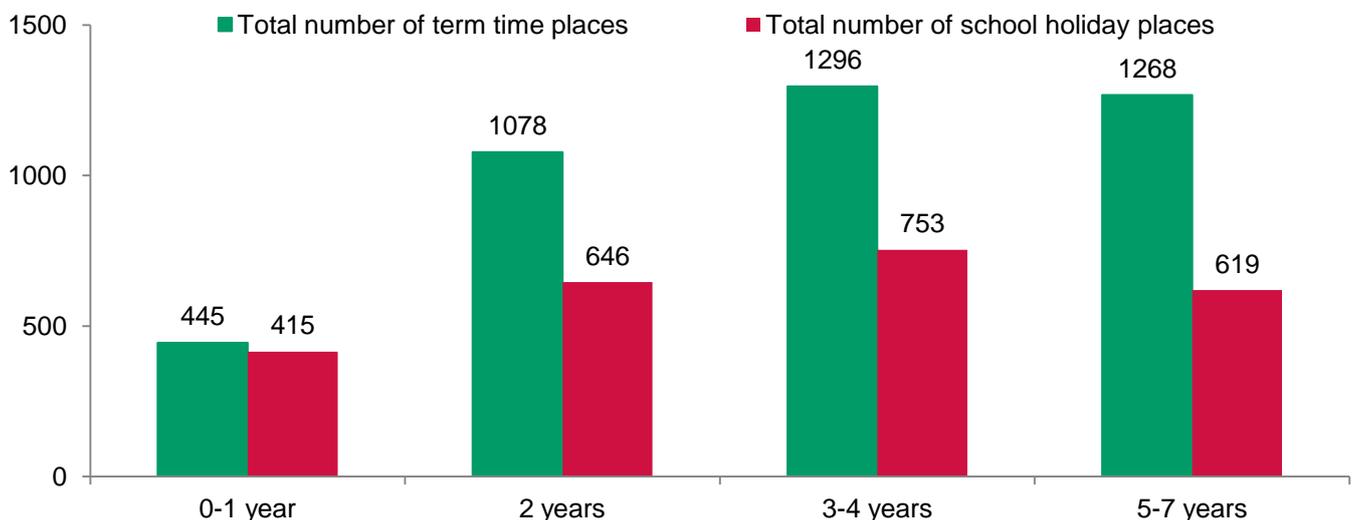
Unfortunately, it was not possible to confidently identify the opening times of the providers within Sutton; however, it has been possible to conduct analysis on weekend openings, term-time and holiday places. This data was collected through the survey with childcare providers. As a result, the data only reflects those who completed the survey and there is the risk that, as it does not reflect all providers, there could be instances of underreporting.

Weekend Providers

Within Sutton there are currently a number of providers that are registered to open on the weekend. For parents, this availability to access this childcare depends on the age of the child. For example, for children 0-1 years there are 10 childminders that are registered to open on the weekend, for those children two years and above there are 15 childminders.

School Holiday Providers

Analysis of the data shared by providers identified that within the borough there is a significant decrease in the number of places for childcare in the summer holidays, with the number of places by age also varying considerably.



As shown in the graph above, the number of school holiday places reduces across all age groups, but is most prominent in the providers for children aged 5-7 years, where the number of places halves. The 0-1 age group had the smallest decrease, with a 7% drop in the number of places available. The large drop in

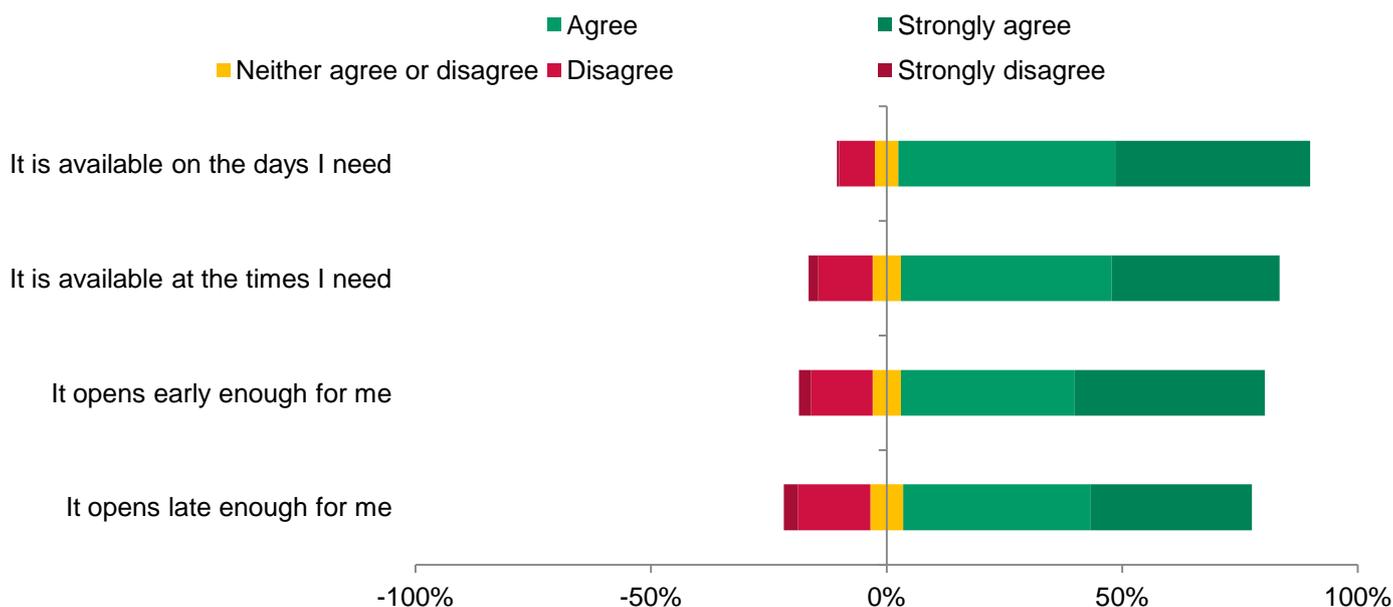
³ Childcare for Parents with Atypical Work Patterns: The need for flexibility, Daycare Trust, July 2012.

places for children aged 5-7 years is due to the number of holiday scheme places not compensating for the decrease in after school and breakfast club places.

When do parents use childcare?

Of the respondents who used childcare, 80% used childcare all year round and 20% used childcare in term-time only. Looking at the time of day for usage, 84% of respondents used childcare during the day, 38% after school and 31% before school.

Looking at satisfaction with childcare opening times, respondents demonstrated a reasonable level of satisfaction with the opening times of the providers.



The analysis has shown that parents appear to be slightly more satisfied with the days that childcare is available than the times it is available. With regards to the specific times, it appears that parents are less satisfied with the closing times of the childcare.

This was also evident in the further comments, where many parents took the opportunity to share their experiences of the closing time of childcare. For many of these parents, the closing time was seen to be too early for those parents finishing work at 5pm, especially when there was rush hour traffic and those travelling from central London:

“As a shift work I would like to put my child into breakfast club & after school club, these do not meet my childcare work needs. As they don't open early enough or stay open late enough. This make things very difficult for me with my work if hours in the NHS as a shift worker. Opening at 0745 hours and closing at 1800 hours is not a viable option for us as a family.”

“My children attend breakfast club which opens at 7.45, ideally it would be better for me to open at 7.30am to enable me to have enough time to get to work early.”

“The after school club is only open until 5.15 which is no use for anyone who finishes work at 5pm.”

Choice of providers

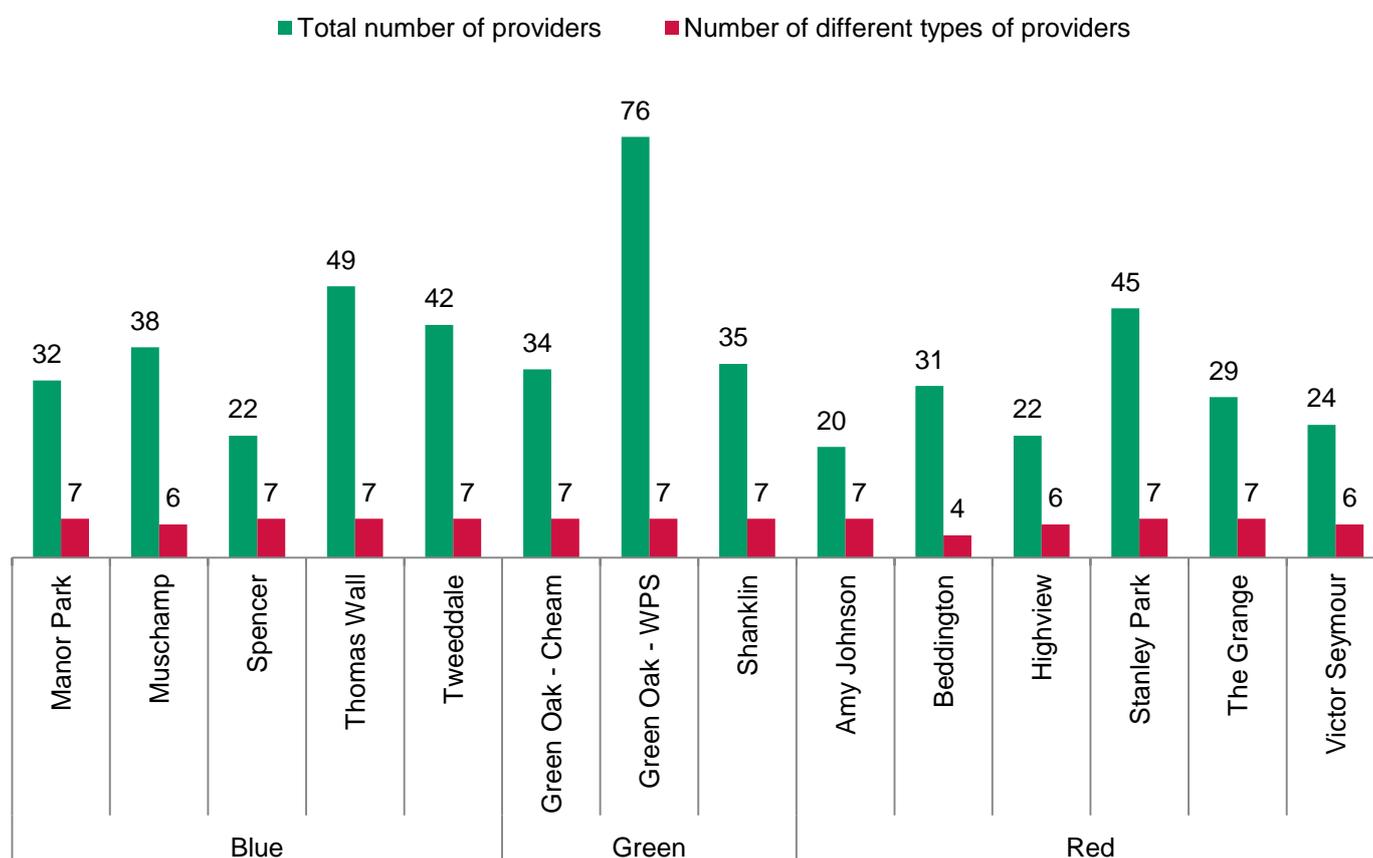
Parents have a choice of taking up their child's early education place in a variety of settings that meet the needs of the family.

It is important that within Sutton there is a wide choice of providers in the borough that can offer the childcare required by parents and children.

Number of providers in the borough

Within Sutton there are 499 providers of childcare. Many of these providers are childminders, accounting for 60% of all providers in the borough.

The distribution of the providers is uneven across the borough, with some areas having a greater choice than others. For example, in the catchment area of Beddington, there were only four types of providers; there were no holiday schemes, day nurseries and after school clubs.

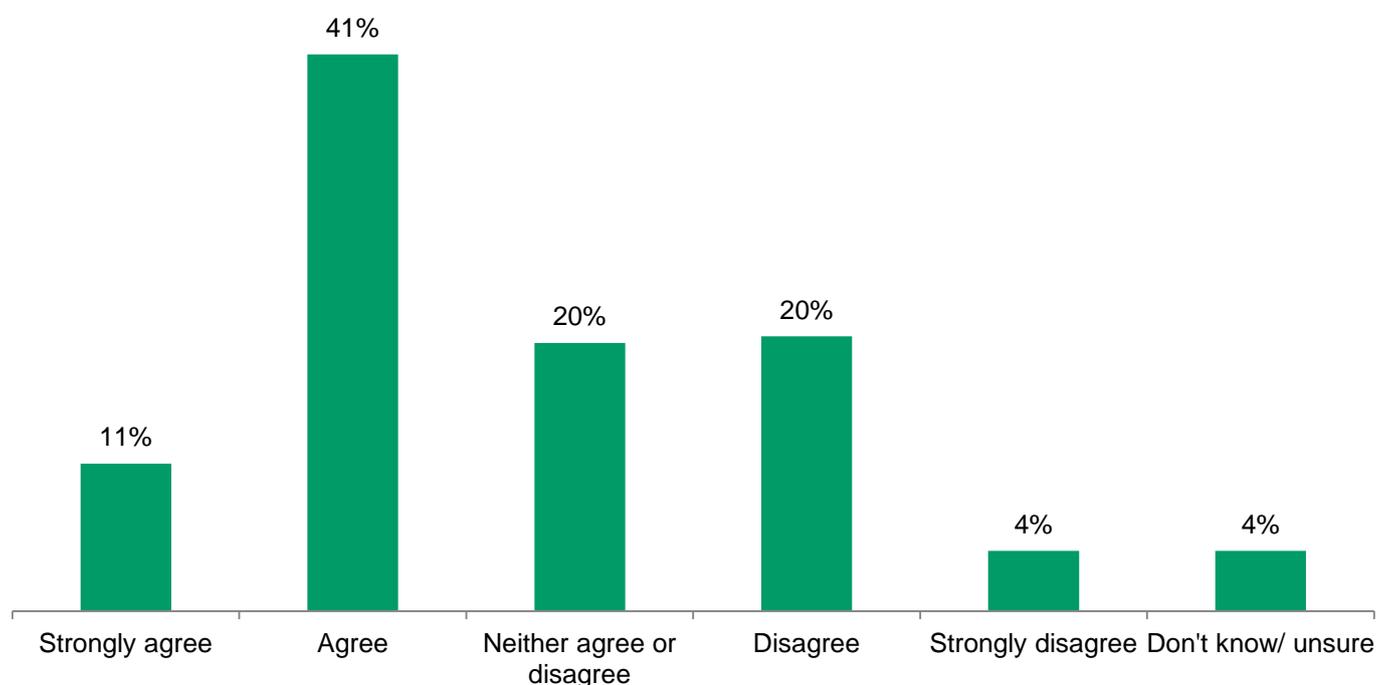


As shown in the chart above, Beddington only has five different types of providers, but still has 31 different childcare providers in the catchment area. Spencer has the lowest number of providers, but has the full range of providers in this area. Green Oak Worcester Park had the highest number of providers (76), but 77% of these were childminders.

Parental perception of choice

Of the respondents to the question (n=200), day nursery was the most common type of childcare used (56%), followed by after school clubs (24%), childminders (22%) and breakfast clubs (20%).

Looking specifically at the satisfaction with the choice of childcare providers available, just over half of respondents strongly agreed or agreed there was a good choice of childcare in the borough.



Base: 204 respondents (those who use childcare only)

Although a relatively high percentage of respondents agreed there was a good choice of childcare providers, there were still a quarter of respondents who disagreed with this statement. This suggests that within the borough there are a number of parents who require a greater choice in providers.

Quality

All children are able to take up their entitlement to funded early education in a high quality setting.

High quality childcare is important for parents as it provides reassurance their child is placed in a secure environment, and that it facilitates, enables and promotes their learning and development.

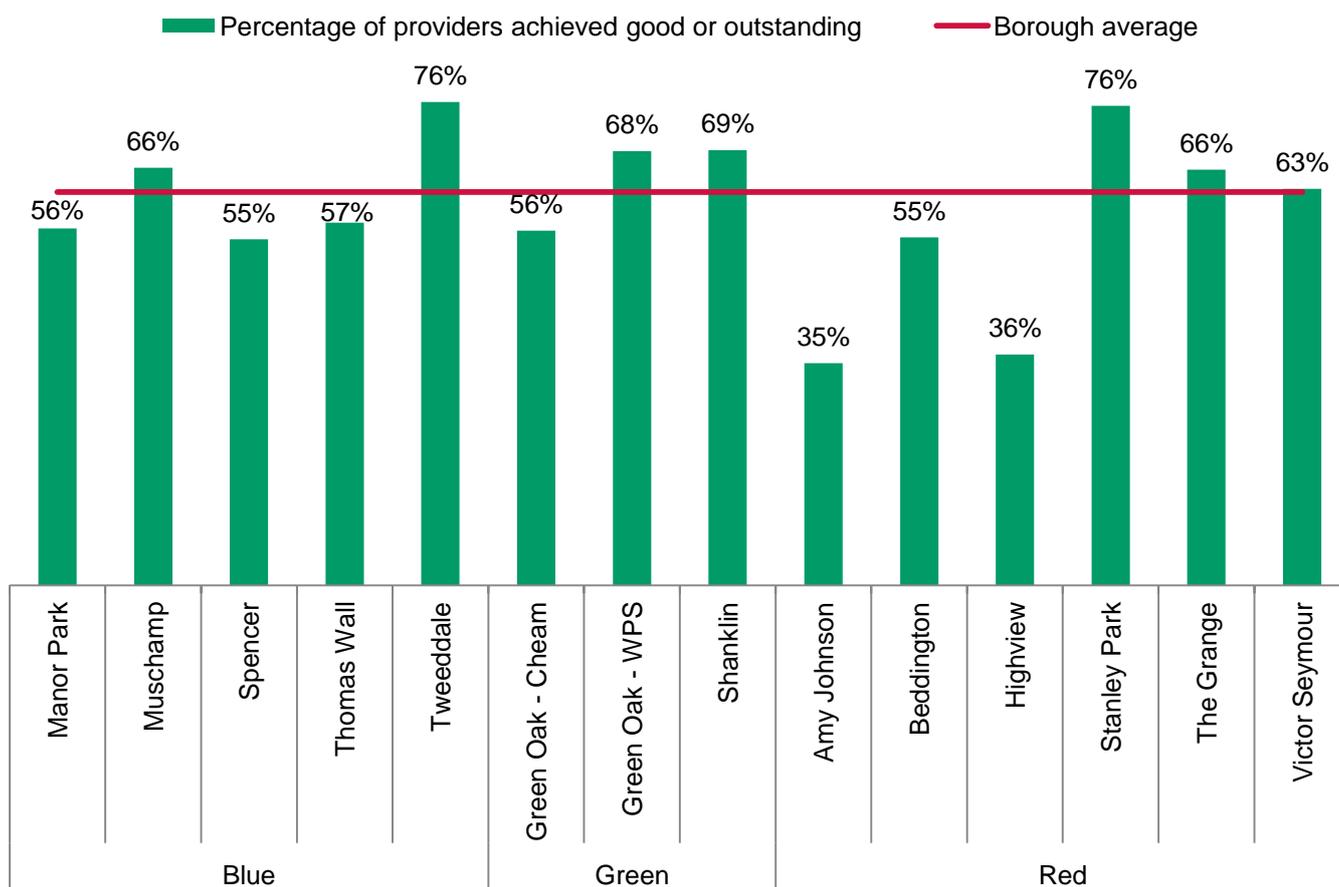
A key indicator for parents on the quality of a childcare provider is the rating provided by Ofsted inspections. After an Ofsted inspection, providers are graded on the following scale:

- Grade 1 - Outstanding
- Grade 2 - Good
- Grade 3 - Requires improvement
- Grade 4 - Inadequate

It is important to consider the quality of childcare available, as research has shown that the quality of childcare and deprivation are closely linked, with fewer childcare providers in deprived areas achieving good or outstanding grading (64%), compared to the national average of 79%.⁴

Quality of childcare in Sutton

At February 2015, 62% of the childcare providers in the borough had achieved good or outstanding Ofsted rating. Analysis by Children’s Centre catchments revealed large variations, with a high of 76% in Tweeddale and Stanley Park to a low of 35% in Amy Johnson.



Please note that Amy Johnson, Highview and Spencer all have fewer than 30 providers, meaning that the results may be slightly skewed in these catchment areas.

These findings suggest that Sutton does not fully follow the national trend, as Tweeddale, the most deprived catchment area, has the highest level of providers achieving good or outstanding. However, other catchment areas do not display similar results. For example, only 55% of providers in Spencer and 35% in Amy Johnson achieved good or outstanding.

⁴ Quality Childcare: Improving early years childcare, Policy Exchange, September 2013

Parental perception on quality

In the parental questionnaire there was no direct question regarding the quality of childcare, instead questions were asked around past issues experienced and security.

Previous issues experienced

Of the respondents to the questionnaire, 36% stated that in the last 12 months they or their partner had experienced issues with childcare, which had resulted in almost half of these respondents being unable to attend work.

The open-ended comments revealed the reasons why many people had experienced issues with childcare:

“Annual leave when Childminder on holiday.”

“The rule that a child has to be clear for 48 hours after having a temperature or other illnesses it has affected me a few times. even if the child had been fine the entire day and night before I could not bring my child in. I understand the reasons behind it though.”

Of the comments, sickness policies and childminder absences were the most commonly cited issues parents had experienced.

Security

In the parental childcare survey, 92% of respondents felt their children were safe in childcare. Only 2% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that their child was safe in childcare.

Availability

Parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and delivered flexibly in a range of high quality settings.

Due to high demand, securing childcare can be a challenge for many parents. To allow parents to return to work and for children to access early years education, it is very important that there is childcare available in the borough that parents are able to use.

In the 2015 Childcare Costs Survey just 43% of councils in England had enough childcare, compared to 54% in 2014. The Family and Childcare Trust believe that the increase in gaps of provision is due to the following three reasons:⁵

- As the economy has grown, the numbers and proportions of women in work has increased
- Local government market management has focussed on increasing the number of places for two year olds who qualify for free education; as a result, other aspects of the childcare market could have been neglected

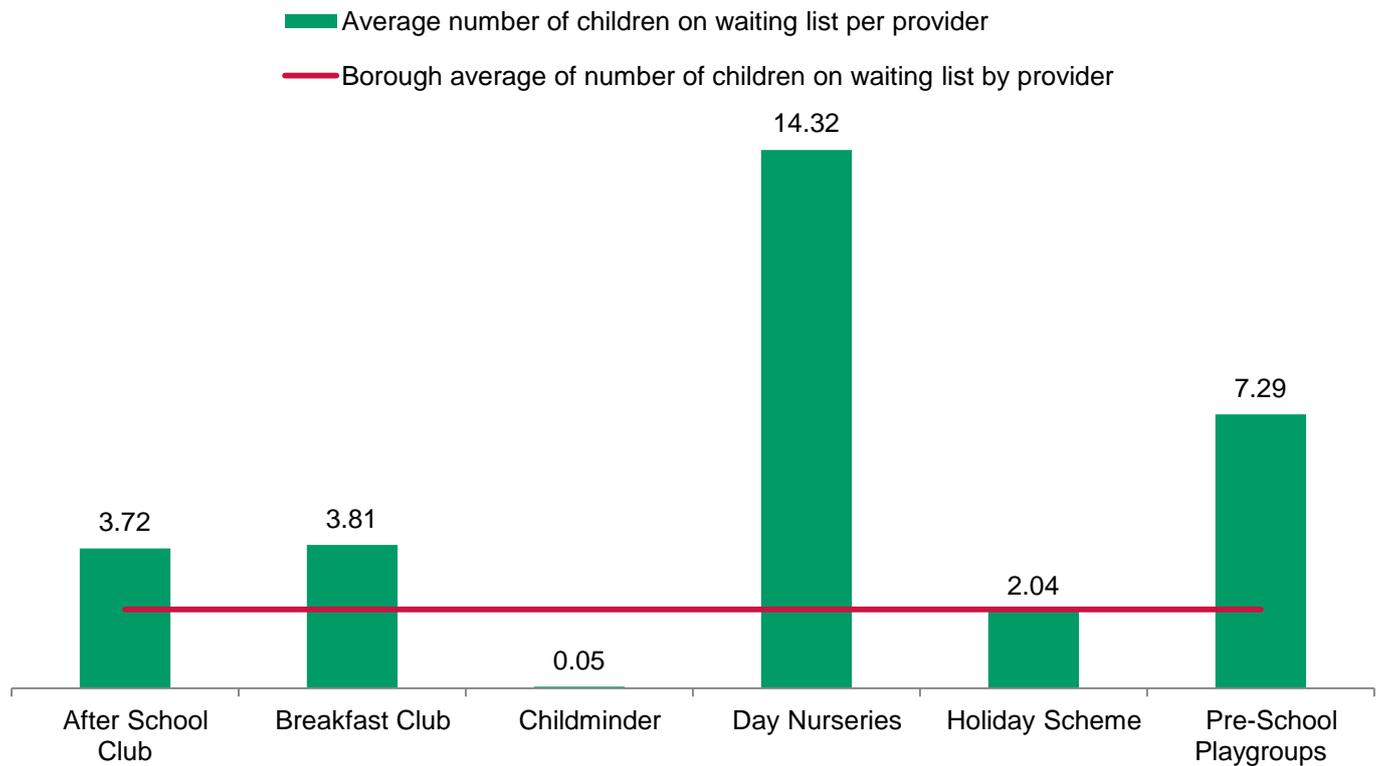
⁵ Childcare Costs Survey 2015, Family and Childcare Trust, 2015

- Two year old children receiving free early education may have displaced other groups from nursery provision, particularly in popular children’s centre nurseries.

Issues with availability can be seen locally by looking at vacancy rates and waiting lists.

Provider waiting lists

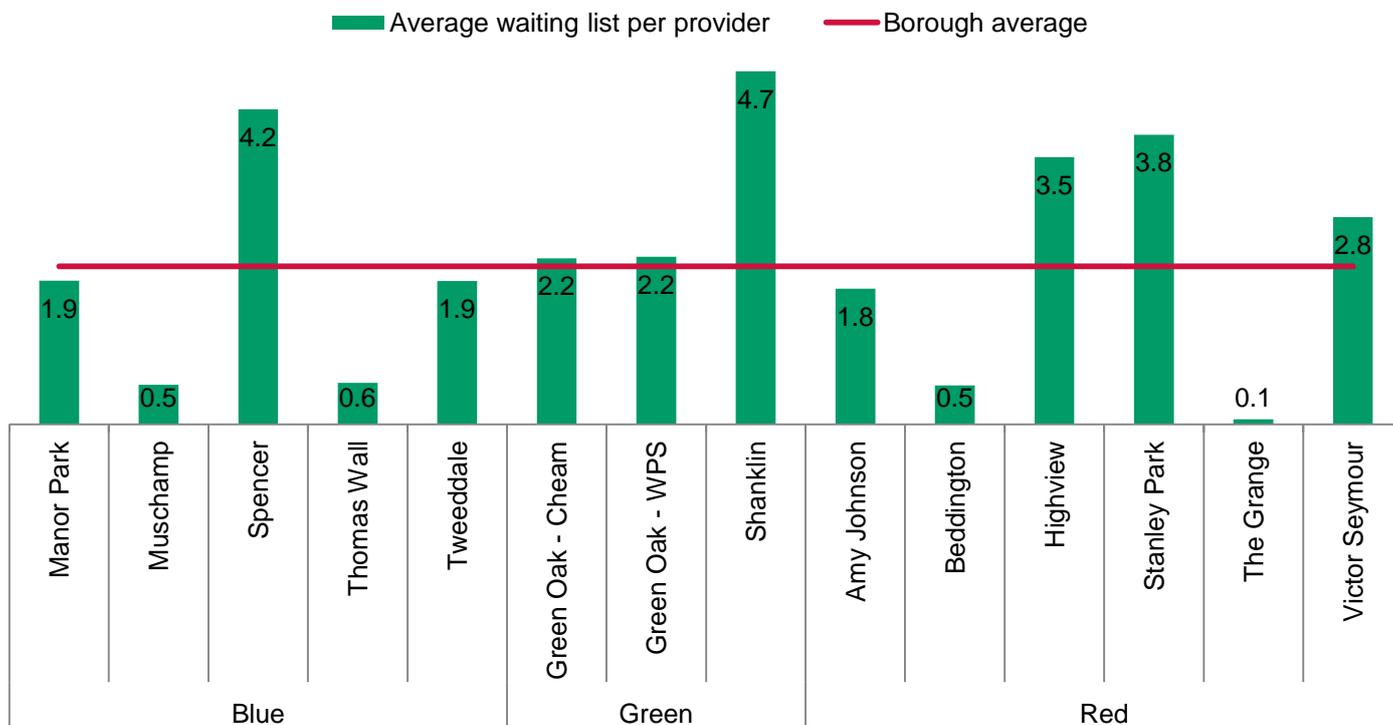
The graph below shows the number of children on the waiting list per type of provider. The waiting list data has been gathered from the survey completed by providers. As a result, these figures should not be seen as definitive. There will be underreporting, as not all childcare providers participated in the survey. The figures should also not be seen as definitive as parents can add their child/children on to multiple waiting lists.



Day nurseries had the highest number of children on their waiting list (487), followed by pre-school / playgroups (255). By the number of providers, day nurseries had the highest number of children on their waiting lists.

This finding suggests parents would benefit from more day nurseries and pre-school / playgroup places. There is less need for childminders.

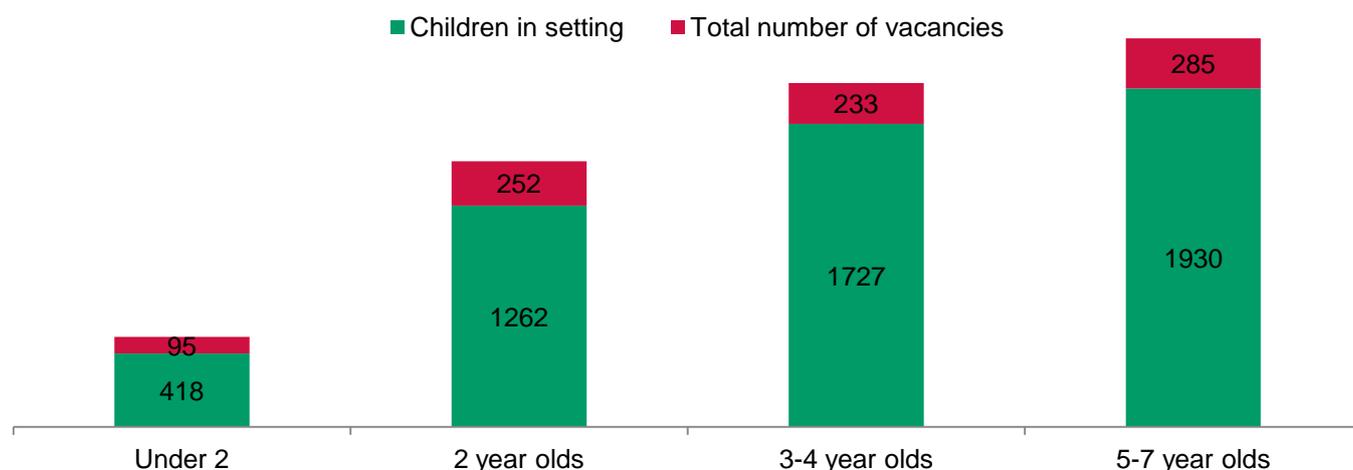
Analysis of the number of children on the waiting list by provider by Children’s Centre Catchment areas is shown in the following graph:



The analysis has shown that there is a geographical variation in the demand for childcare places by Children Centre catchment area in the borough. For example, Shanklin had the highest, with 4.7 children on the waiting list of each provider, and was lowest in The Grange, with only 0.1 children on the waiting list per provider. This highlights the need for increased number of childcare places in particular areas of the borough, such as Shanklin, Spencer, Stanley Park and Highview.

Provider vacancies

Using data from the provider survey it is possible to identify the number of children the providers care for and the number of vacancies by provider type and age.



This analysis revealed that the under two year old age group had the smallest number of children currently in a setting and also the smallest number of vacancies.

Parent's childcare enquiries

Another resource that is available to help understand availability and parental demand is through the enquiries to the Family Information Service (FIS).

In 2013/14, the Family Information Service received a number enquiries regarding childcare availability, with childminders being the most popular enquiry (640 enquiries) and breakfast clubs the least popular enquiry (22).

This data, although a useful insight, only highlights the enquiries of the parents accessing the Family Information Service. There will be many people that are able to access information on the internet, so will be likely to find information themselves.

Parent's perceptions of availability

In the parental questionnaire there was no direct question regarding availability of childcare, however many of the respondents took the opportunity to share their opinions on availability in the open-ended questions.

The analysis of these open-ended questions found that many parents in the borough had experienced issues with securing a childcare place:

"I am struggling to get childcare for baby I'm on waiting lists at two nurseries at the moment."

"I was unable to find after school care for my 2 older children. Their school does not offer an after school club, a local nursery had no after school places and there are few childminders. I had to alter my working hours to finish in time for school pick-up. I was happy with the provision of pre-school care for my youngest child."

"Uncertainty over the availability of childcare places was a potential issue which could have resulted in having to alter working hours - a place was found in the end and the issue resolved."

These open-ended comments show that parents may experience difficulties in securing the childcare they need. This suggests that the borough needs to ensure there are adequate support mechanisms in place to support parents with finding the right childcare.

Accessibility

Parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and delivered flexibly in a range of high quality settings.

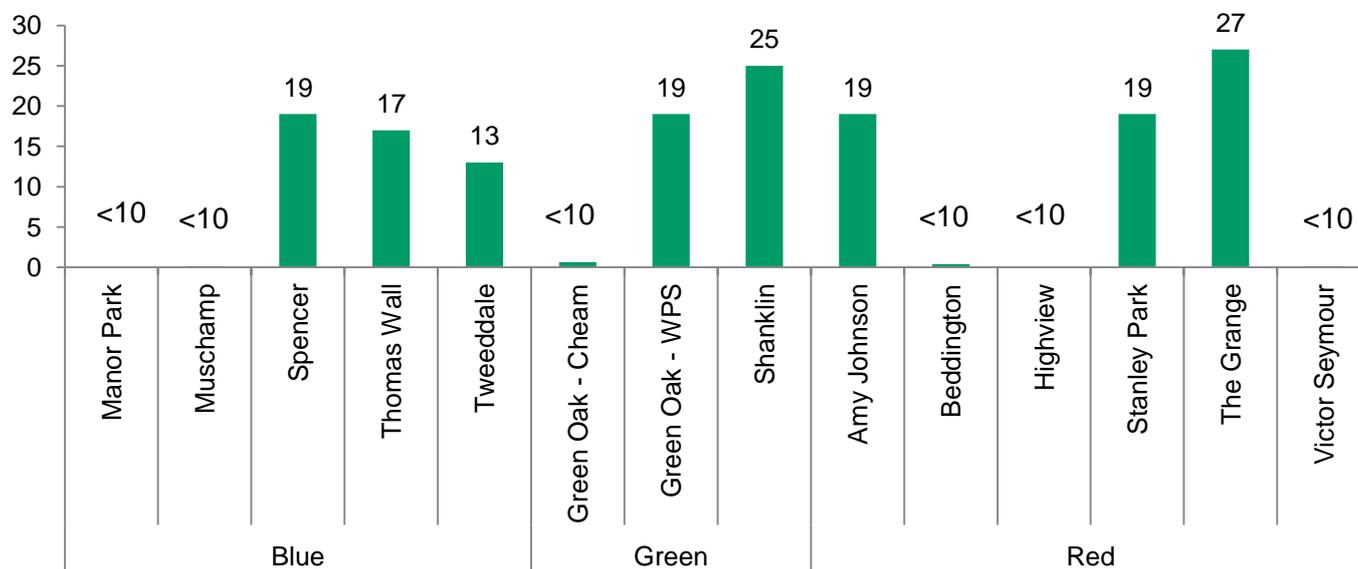
Under the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities have a duty to ensure there is adequate childcare to meet the needs of parents, which means there has to be childcare in the borough that can meet the needs of parents with children with a disability and / or additional needs.

The additional care needs of the child and the limited childcare providers that can meet the needs of the child mean that finding the right childcare can be very difficult.

Number of children with disabilities and/or additional needs in childcare

The provider survey identified that there were 187 children in childcare that had a disability and / or additional needs. There were significantly more children with disabilities and / or additional needs in the older age groups: less than five children aged 0-1 years and 73 aged 5-7 years.

By location there was a large variation, as shown in the following graph:



Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify the number of children with disability and / or additional needs by catchment area, so it is not possible to see if there are any areas with a particularly low take up. However, we could assume that due to the difficulties parents' experience, there will be a number of children who are not able to find the childcare they require.

Parental perception's of childcare for children with disabilities and / or additional needs.

In the parental childcare survey, 15 (5%) of the respondents were parents with children with disabilities and / or additional needs. These parents had children between the ages of 3 - 7 years only. Of the 15 parents, only five were using childcare for their children.

Due to the small number of parents it is not possible to conduct any statistical analysis; however, the open-ended comments can be used to give some insight into the experiences of parents finding childcare for their children with disabilities and / or additional needs.

The comments revealed that parents with children with disabilities and / or additional needs had experienced issues of either finding the hours of childcare needed, affording childcare or finding childcare that can meet the needs of the child.

Issues experienced	Example quotes
Hours of childcare required	<i>"While we have a good relationship with our current carers for our daughter the number of hours is not enough. We are fearful of the council's budget cuts and have been under pressure in the past from the council to try to cut our care hours...What we don't want is for the hours to be cut further and in fact our daughter's consultant has recommended more hours but the problem is that this is not possible for the council to offer."</i>
Affording childcare	<i>"Mainstream childcare maybe available, but having a child with additional needs but not severe enough to get Local Authority help means a bigger financial burden for longer. Because they aren't at par with their counterparts whose childcare costs and care needs diminish with age."</i>
Meeting the needs of the child	<i>"...mainstream childcare aren't well equipped to take care of such children or cost the child higher than the non additional needs children. So one is forced to stay home and look after the child which fosters dependency." "..she (childminder) misrepresented her knowledge of autism, not able to support special diet or after school activities."</i>

The national research and the parental survey open-ended comments illustrate that within Sutton additional support is required for parents with children with disability and / or additional needs to find suitable childcare.

Information to parents

Parents are provided with comprehensive information about their child's entitlement to an early education place and childcare options in their areas so that they are easily able to take it up.

Under the Childcare Care Act 2006 local authorities have a duty to set up and run a service for parents to provide information on services, facilities and publications which may benefit the parents and / or children. In the London Borough of Sutton this duty is fulfilled through the Sutton Family Information Service.

The Sutton Family Information Service (FIS) provides free information and advice on all services for families with children and young people aged 0-19 years (or 25 years if the young person has an additional need). The Family Information Service currently provides information on:

- Parent and family support services
- Benefits and financial support
- Childcare including play, holiday schemes and funding
- Support with accessing childcare, if experiencing difficulties in finding childcare (childcare brokerage)
- Children with additional needs and disabilities
- Support to access work and/or training opportunities

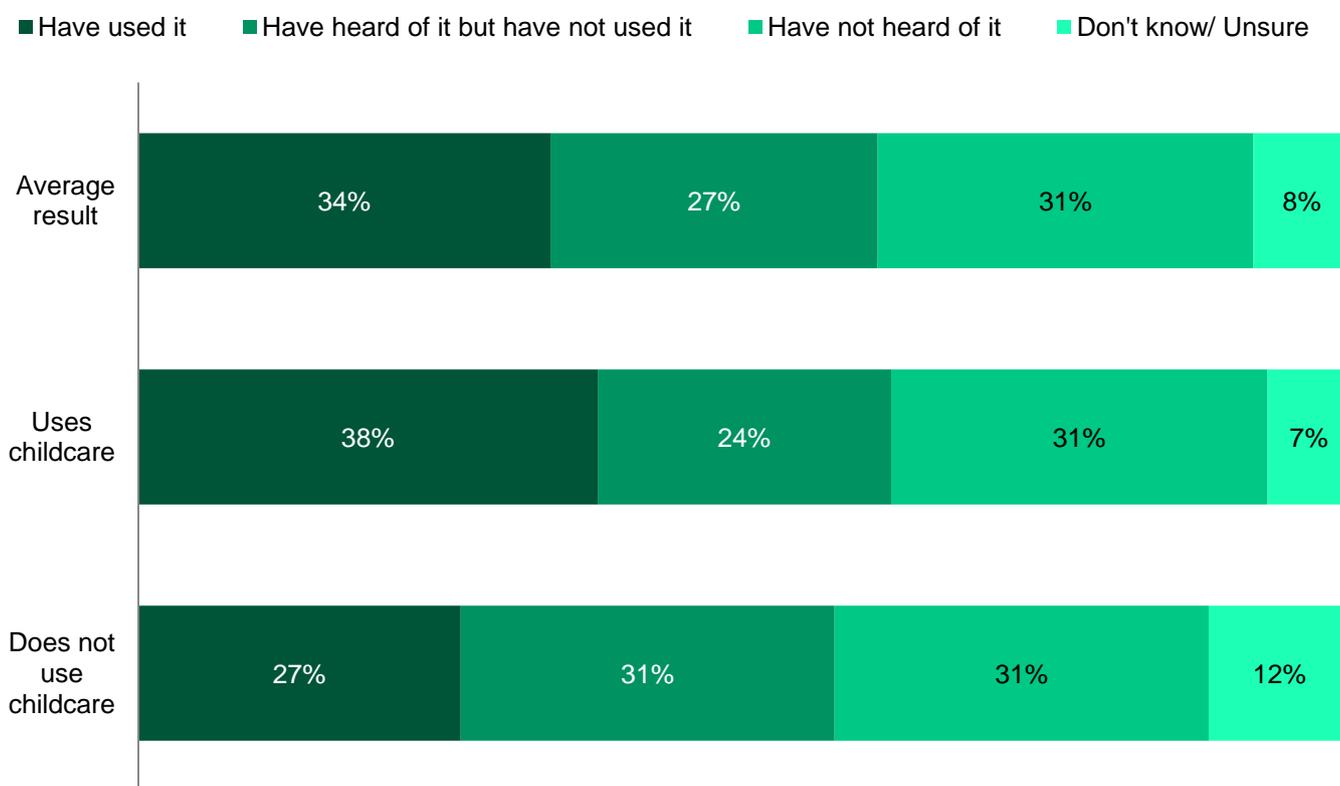
Parents can access the service by attending open sessions (no appointments necessary), phone or email. The service also has a dedicated website which parents can search for childcare providers.

Parental Awareness of childcare Services

In the parental childcare questionnaire, all respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their use and awareness of childcare services and the entitlement funding.

The questionnaire found that 34% of respondents had used the Family Information Service, 27% had heard of it but not used it and 31% had not heard of the service.

Looking more closely at this data, it is possible to identify that there is a slightly higher percentage of parents that use childcare have used the Family Information Service. These findings are best illustrated in the following graph:



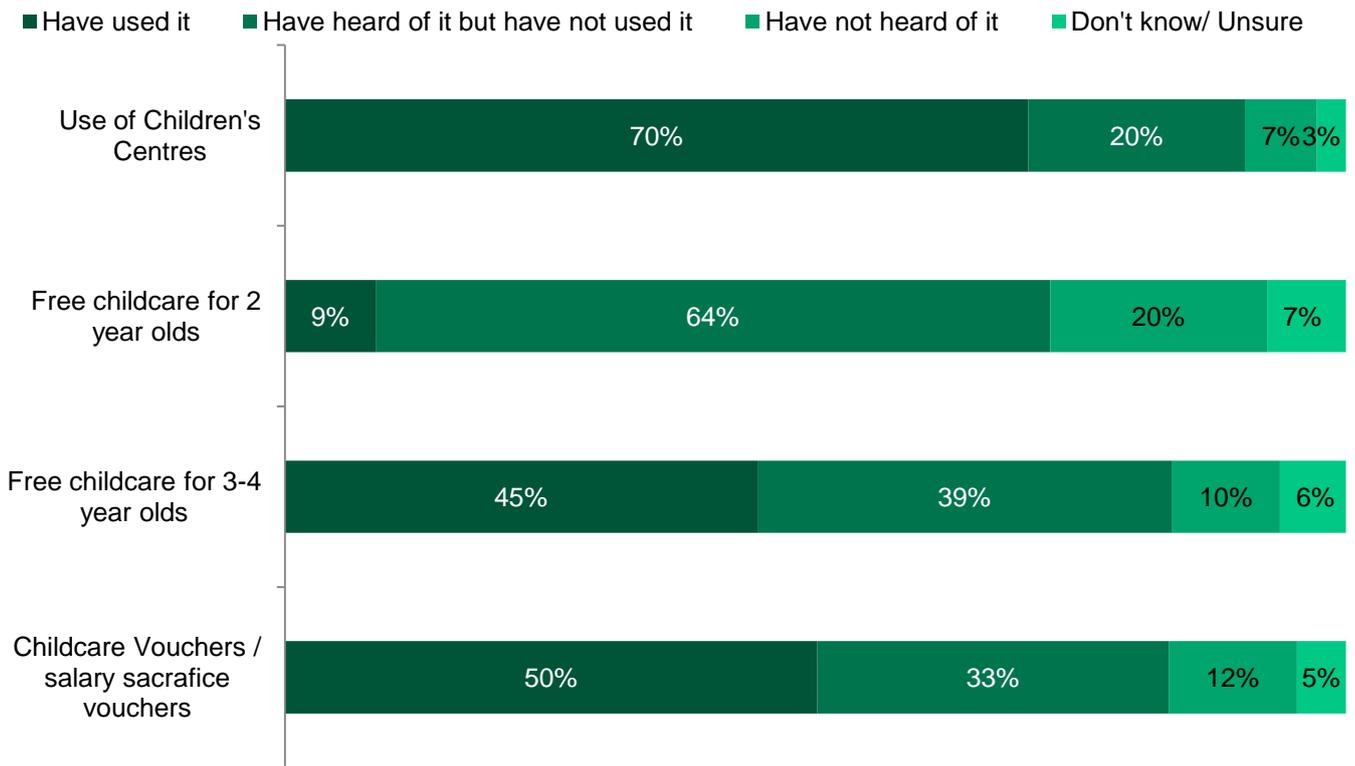
To help improve the quality of service provided by the Family Information Service, the Family and Childcare Trust suggest the following:⁶

- Local authorities should look to improve the quality of online information available for parents
- Use social media to reach more families
- Develop an outreach strategy to engage more parents
- Use health visitors and peer-to-peer schemes, such as Parent Champions, to disseminate information. This will be important to help reach the most disadvantaged families

⁶ The work of Family Information Services in England 2013/14, Family and Childcare Trust, 2014

- Draw on best practice in marketing and advertising to ensure that information and outreach reaches the most vulnerable of families
- Where Family Information Services have been merged into a call centre, a second-tier service to deal with complex enquiries, up-to-date information and undertake outreach should be retained.

The childcare parental questionnaire also looked at awareness of the Children’s Centres, free entitlement funding and childcare vouchers. The analysis revealed awareness was greatest for the Children’s Centres, and the lowest level of awareness was for the free childcare for two year olds.



Further analysis was conducted into the responses to the free childcare for two year olds by household income. The analysis revealed that a quarter of respondents who had an income below £26,000 had not heard of the free childcare for two year olds, and with only 22% stating that they used the entitlement. This finding could suggest that there are some eligible parents who are not accessing the support available.

Appendix One: Methodology

Parental Questionnaire

Between 15 November 2014 and 11 January 2015, parents with children under the age of 8 years were invited to take part in a questionnaire about their use and satisfaction with childcare in the borough.

Parents were able to take part in the questionnaire online (through the Council's Consultation Hub) or request a paper version. To engage residents in the questionnaire, the following methods were used to increase awareness of the questionnaire:

- A press release was sent out by the Communications Team (in December)
- A series of tweets and messages were sent out through social media (Facebook and Twitter)
- Paper questionnaires were distributed through the Resource Centre (and story time in libraries)
- Local schools were requested to distribute information and the link through their communication tools
- Local childcare providers were requested to distribute the questionnaire to their service users
- Children's Centres were requested to distribute the questionnaire to the users of their service

In total 317 parents took part in the questionnaire. The results from the questionnaire are included throughout the document. The demographics of the respondents can be found in appendix one.

At Census 2011, there were 25,325 families in Sutton with dependent children in Sutton. Unfortunately, it was not possible to identify the number of families with children under the age of 8; however, it was possible to identify that there were 18,072 families with children aged 11 and under. Using this figure, it is possible to ascertain, that with the 317 respondents to the questionnaire, based on the population of 18,072, there is a 95% confidence that the true result, had we asked all parents (with children seven years and under), would be between +/-5.46.

In most research the margin of error is ideally under 5%. In this case, we would have needed a representative sample size of 400 to reach an error margin of just under 5%. This survey was also self selecting, as it was on the Consultation Hub website and could have attracted residents who have an interest in this topic.

As a result it means that results from the questionnaire should be used with caution and should not be seen to be a true reflection of the whole population.

All questions were optional. This means that the number of respondents who completed each question varies. Where the base varies from the total number of respondents this has been shown next to the results.

Provider Questionnaire

To conduct this sufficiency assessment, childcare providers in the borough were contacted to find out information on the service they provide such as the number of places they have, the current number of vacancies and cost of service.

Initially, providers were sent a form to complete, but to increase the response rate providers were also contacted via telephone.

In total, 223 providers completed the providers form or responded via telephone. The findings from this form can be found throughout the report.

With only 223 providers participating in the questionnaire, based on our population of 499 providers in the borough, we can be 95% confident that the true result, had all providers take part, would be between +/- 4.89.

The table below shows the number of providers that participated in the questionnaire by the type of provider and Children's Centre locality:

Type of provider	Blue Locality	Pink Locality	Red Locality	Total number of participating providers
After School Club	4	5	8	17
Breakfast Club	2	2	5	9
Childminder	49	45	39	139
Day Nurseries	10	6	8	24
Holiday Scheme	2	1	6	9
Pre-School Playgroups	5	6	14	25

Secondary Data

As the Council holds a wealth of data regarding the population of Sutton, information on providers, uptake of childcare and childcare entitlements, it was possible to use this information to help build up an understanding of the childcare in the borough.

Example sources include:

- Census 2011
- Benefit data published by the Department of Works and Pensions
- Family and Childcare Trust

Secondary data sources were used in the assessment:

- As the data was already available it allowed quick access
- It was more cost and time effective than trying to gather the data ourselves
- The sample sizes provided high levels of validity and were greater than what could have been reproduced.

Appendix Two: Demographics of survey respondents

Demographics		Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	276	90%
	Female	32	10%
Age	21-24	8	3%
	25-34	126	41%
	35-44	158	51%
	45-54	13	4%
	55-64	3	1%
	65+	0	0%
Ethnicity	White or White British	232	76%
	Asian or Asian British	22	7%
	Black or Black British	16	5%
	Chinese	4	1%
	Mixed ethnic group	8	2%
	Other ethnic group	7	2%
	Prefer not to say	17	6%
Disability	Yes	8	3%
	No	299	94%
Providing unpaid care	Yes	18	6%
	no	285	94%
Household composition	Couple with dependent child / children	260	85%
	Lone parent with dependent child / children	36	12%
	Other	9	3%
Employment status (You)	Working full-time	166	56%
	Working part-time (16 hours or under)	48	16%
	Working under 8 hours a week	7	2%
	Unemployed	32	11%
	Full-time carer	10	3%
	Retired	1	0%
	Other	35	12%
Employment status	Working full-time	226	89%

Demographics		Count	Percentage
(Partner)	Working part-time (16 hours or under)	7	3%
	Working under 8 hours a week	2	1%
	Full-time carer	4	2%
	Unemployed	5	2%
	Retired	1	0%
	Permanently disabled / long-term sick	1	0%
	Other	8	3%
Household Income (above, same or below £26,000)	Above	205	67%
	The same	11	4%
	Below	58	19%
	Prefer not to say	30	10%

Location of respondents by catchment area

As shown in the map below, the respondents have tended to come from central areas of the borough. The periphery catchment areas have particularly low response rates, especially Green Oak Worcester Park, Highview and Amy Johnson.

