

## **Early Years Education and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Update 2025**

## Introduction – Sufficiency Duty

The statutory guidance for Early Education and Childcare places a duty with Local Authorities to secure sufficient childcare places in its area. In order to do this Local Authorities **are required** by legislation to:

***Secure sufficient childcare places, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).***

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities **should** take into account what is reasonably practicable when assessing what sufficient childcare means in their area and:

- the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists.
- the state of the labour market.
- the quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise.
- encourage schools in their area to offer out of hours childcare from 8.00 am and 6.00 pm.
- encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market.

# Aims of the Early Years Education and Childcare Sufficiency Plan

This plan provides baseline data to assist Solihull Council in its duty to understand the early education and childcare market in the Borough, which can be used to provide support and facilitate changes in the childcare marketplace and to assist current/prospective providers to plan.

The aim of the report is:

- To present a summary of early education and childcare sufficiency in Solihull and a geographical breakdown by Ward.
- Consider the take up of extended early years entitlement.
- Identify gaps in provision and places, where possible by Ward or locality.
- Develop an early years and childcare action plan to address any identified sufficiency issues.

## Methodology

The Solihull Early Education and Childcare Sufficiency Plan has been developed through a mixed methods approach including:

- Desk research to establish a local context for the supply of childcare and early year's services, and the possible indicators of demand.
- The collation and analysis of data from the Solihull Family Information Service.
- An analysis of current Ofsted registered childcare provision.
- An assessment of the local delivery of universal and targeted early years' entitlements for children aged between 9 months and 4-year-olds; including the delivery of the extended early years entitlements.
- A survey of providers to understand how they are responding to the extended early years entitlements and any barriers to the expansion of places.

## What childcare is available?

Childcare can be offered in a number of ways and is offered by a range of providers, such as day nurseries, childminders and schools, to create a flexible childcare offer that meets the needs of working parents or those studying or training for employment.

The table below provides a summary of the range of providers offering places, number of places available and the notional level of vacancies in Solihull at January 2025.

### Number of providers - January 2025

Providers	Childminder	Day Nurseries	Holiday Scheme	Out of School	Pre-school	Wrap around	Total
Number of careschemes	101	55	54	65	16	38	329
Total number of Registered Places	587	3164	1173	1498	435	1111	7968
Current number of Vacant Places	169	567	254	82	15	67	1154
% of vacant places	29%	18%	22%	5%	3%	6%	14%
Number on waiting list	31	53	10	11	11	3	119

The data is based on the number of places a provider is registered with Ofsted to provide. This tends to be the maximum number of places that can be offered but does not necessarily reflect the actual places available as this will be influenced by staffing levels, child/adult ratios plus and child age range split. Providers have to be flexible with their business model and review it to reflect the demand for places at any time.

The headline data shows that overall, there is a sufficient number of childcare places in Solihull. However, parental demand for places is closely monitored through the Family Information Service so that any shortfall in places, for a particular type of provision, is identified early and therefore can be considered in terms of sufficiency.

Providers are supplying 7,968 childcare places in Solihull; this is a drop of 17% since January 2022. There has also been a drop of 12% in the number of providers over the same period. Day nurseries provide 40% of the childcare market in Solihull with Out of School (school wraparound places) contributing 19%, the second largest supply of places.

A breakdown of places and providers by individual ward can be found in Appendix A. The ward breakdown shows that Meriden, Olton and Blythe have seen the largest reduction in registered places since January 2022.

Neither Smith's Wood nor Dorridge and Hockley Heath wards have registered holiday playschemes, however some unregistered schemes may be available e.g., through the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF). Further work is required to understand if this is because there is not sufficient demand for a scheme or whether parents are accessing places in a neighbouring ward.

### **Out of Hours childcare**

Attached at Appendix B is a breakdown of places offered outside of normal childcare hours, before 7:30 and after 6:00 pm. The data shows that the availability of places outside of normal childcare hours is patchy across individual wards with only 3% of total places offered before 7:30am and 4% of places offered after 6:00 pm.

Further assessment of demand for out of hours care is required for the wards with little or no provision, to ascertain if the lack of provision is a gap in the childcare market or due to lack of demand from parents.

### **Cost**

It is difficult to compare costs between wards and providers because each provider will structure their costs differently and it is not always clear what is included in the headline cost. For example, session lengths could vary as could the length of a chargeable day if the operating hours of providers differ. It is also not always clear whether some consumables are included in the price quoted such as food, nappies etc.

As an indication based on data collected in January 2025, Chelmsley Wood Ward has the most expensive cost per week for a day nursery place at £296.55 per week for 2s or under 2s and Elmdon Ward has the cheapest rates at £204 per week for under 2s and £199 per week for over 2s.

For childminders Lyndon ward has the cheapest cost at £100 per week whereas the neighbouring Elmdon ward had the most expensive childminder cost at £250 per week.

As can be seen from the data there are significant differences in the cost quoted for childcare so it is important that parents make sure, when considering what childcare, they want to use, that they fully understand the pricing structure of each provider and this information should be readily available on a provider's website. This will be a statutory requirement from January 2026.

Parents can access support with childcare costs through two Government schemes: -

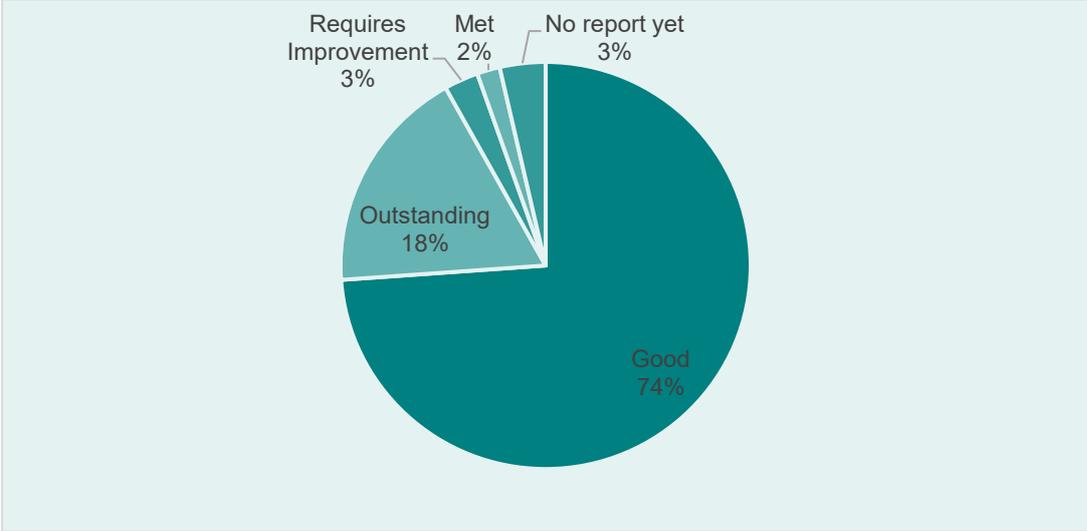
**Funded early years childcare entitlement** – through registered providers who offer funded childcare places for children from 9 months to 4 years mainly for eligible working parents and for those families who are eligible for additional support 2-year-old places.

**Tax free childcare** - can help with paying for care that is outside school hours, for example after school clubs or breakfast clubs. You must have a child aged 0-11 years old (or until 16 if they are disabled) You, and any partner, must be over 16 and each expect to earn (on average) at least £183 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage).

## Quality of early years provision

Alongside the sufficiency of childcare places, the quality of the places being offered is key to give parents the confidence to use the available early education places. The table below shows the Ofsted grading for early education registered provision including schools in Solihull at January 2025.

### Ofsted gradings for providers in Solihull



94% of all early years and childcare provision in Solihull is good or outstanding. 3% require improvement and 3% do not have an Ofsted grading as they have not yet had an inspection, or the inspection report has not yet been published. Childminders can also register with a [childminder agency](#)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework is mandatory for all schools that provide early years provision [0-5 years] and Ofsted-registered early years providers in England. The EYFS sets the standards that all early years

providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

Ofsted and Childminder Agencies are the sole benchmarks of quality for all free entitlements. Agencies, Ofsted and inspectorates of independent schools have regard to the EYFS in carrying out inspections and report on the quality and standards of provision.

Local authorities have a legal duty to provide information, advice and training on meeting the requirements of the EYFS, meeting the needs of children with SEND and on effective safeguarding and child protection for providers who are rated less than 'Good' by Ofsted or newly registered providers.

The Local Authority will support setting improvement and promote high standards through access to continuing professional development, in setting coaching and mentoring and targeted support to meet the needs of children with SEND. The level of support is proportionate to need and prioritizes settings who receive an Ofsted quality judgement which is less than good, or joint evaluation with the setting which suggests that this would be the outcome if there was an Ofsted inspection.

When considering any expansion of childcare places, the Council will seek to provide these additional places in good or outstanding providers. The Council can also temporarily remove early education providers from the Local Authority register of providers if safeguarding is judged as ineffective. This suspends their ability to receive funded early education children. This is set out in the LA provider agreement.

## Early Years Entitlements

For a number of years, early education providers have been delivering funded early education places: -

- **2-year-old entitlement – Additional Support** - Since September 2013, 2-year-old funding has been made available to the least advantaged 2-year-olds. 2 year olds are eligible for 15 hours of free early years' provision if the parent(s) are: in low income employment or in receipt of specific benefits including out of work benefits and low income support, where the child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, is Looked After by the local authority or is no longer Looked After as a result of an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangement Order.

Local authorities are provided with a list of potentially eligible children by the Department of Work and Pensions seven times a year and the Department for Education provides a mechanism for local authorities to verify whether children meet the eligibility criteria based on parental receipt of benefits, via the Eligibility Checking System (ECS).

- **All children aged 3 and 4 years old** are entitled to a universal offer of 15 hours each week the term after their third birthday (to a maximum of 570 hours per year).
- **3- and 4-year-olds - 30 hours childcare** - Since September 2017, 3- and 4-year-olds of working parents, who meet national criteria, can access an additional 15 hours each week, generally known as '30 hours free childcare'. This is an extended early years' entitlement which includes the 15 hours universal early years' entitlement and an additional 15 hours (per week up to a maximum of 38 weeks, or 570 hours stretched across more weeks of the year), totalling 1,140 hours. Eligibility for 30 hours childcare is based on both parents working in a couple household, or a single parent working in a lone-parent household, with minimum and maximum income thresholds applied. Parents apply to HMRC, and if eligible, are given a code which their chosen childcare provider validates with the local authority before a place is taken up.

Following the Spring Budget announcements in March 2023, starting from April 2024, existing funded childcare support for parents is being expanded in three phases.

**Early years entitlements and extended entitlements**

Age Group	September 2024 Entitlement	September 2025 Entitlement
9 months to 2 Years	15 hours working families	30 hours working families
2 Year Olds	15 hours working families 15 hours additional support	30 hours working families 15 hours additional support
3- and 4-year-olds	15 hours universal offer 30 hours working families	15 hours universal offer 30 hours working families

The new extended entitlements have required a full assessment of the current childcare market and assessment of the places required.

**Take up of funded childcare hours at Spring 2025**

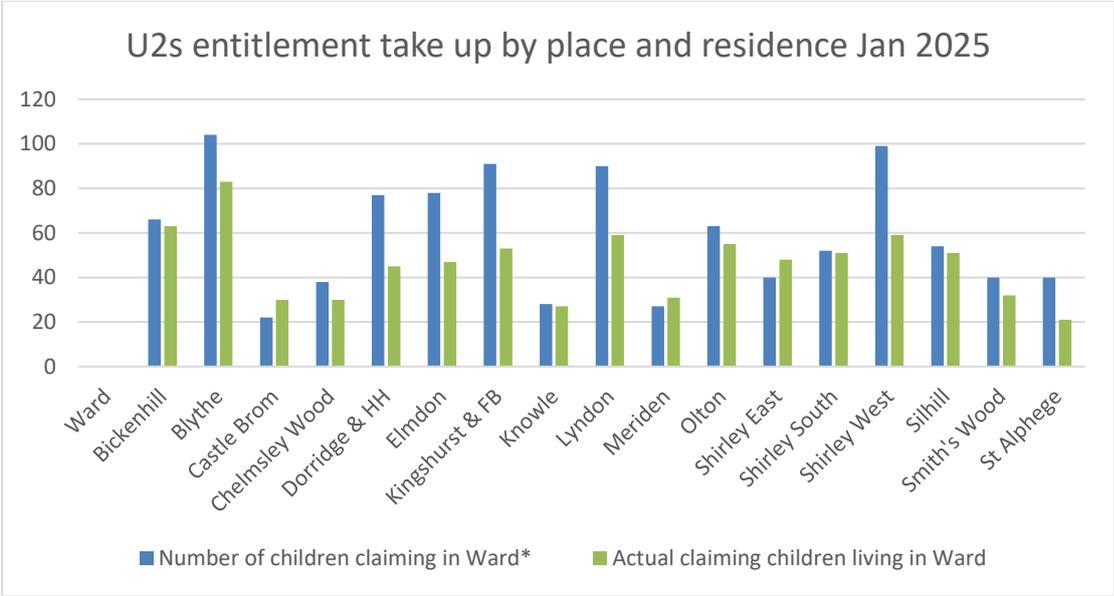
	9 to 23 months	2 year old working families	2 year old disadvantaged	3 year old universal offer	3 year old extended entitlement	4 year old universal	4 year old extended entitlement
Number of children	1039	1045	308	1373	923	50	6
Hours	15009	15046	4471	19781	12786	746	89
Average hours	14.45	14.40	14.52	14.41	13.85	14.92	14.83
(children in 2024 where available)			429	1470	1056	55	6
Difference			-121	-97	-133	-5	0

The data shows that a total of 4,744 funded places were offered in January 2025. These included over 2,000 places offered to under 2s and 2-year-olds through the rollout of the first two phases of the new extended early years entitlements. Although providers will be responding to the change in the market and demand for the new funded entitlement places, in the first two phases of the roll out the majority of working families would already have been paying for their childcare place but will have switched from a paid place to a funded place.

Where available the data has been compared to January 2024 to identify any changes in demand. As can be seen from the data the number of funded places has fallen in four age ranges. The key driver for the fall in demand will be the impact of the falling birth rate on the number of children requiring childcare places. However, the drop in the demand for funded places for 2-year-olds, under the additional support criteria, may also be due to some families choosing to apply under the working family criteria. If they are eligible under both 2-year-old schemes, this may particularly be the case in September 2025 when 2-year-olds will be eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare. There is no indication families seeking a funded additional

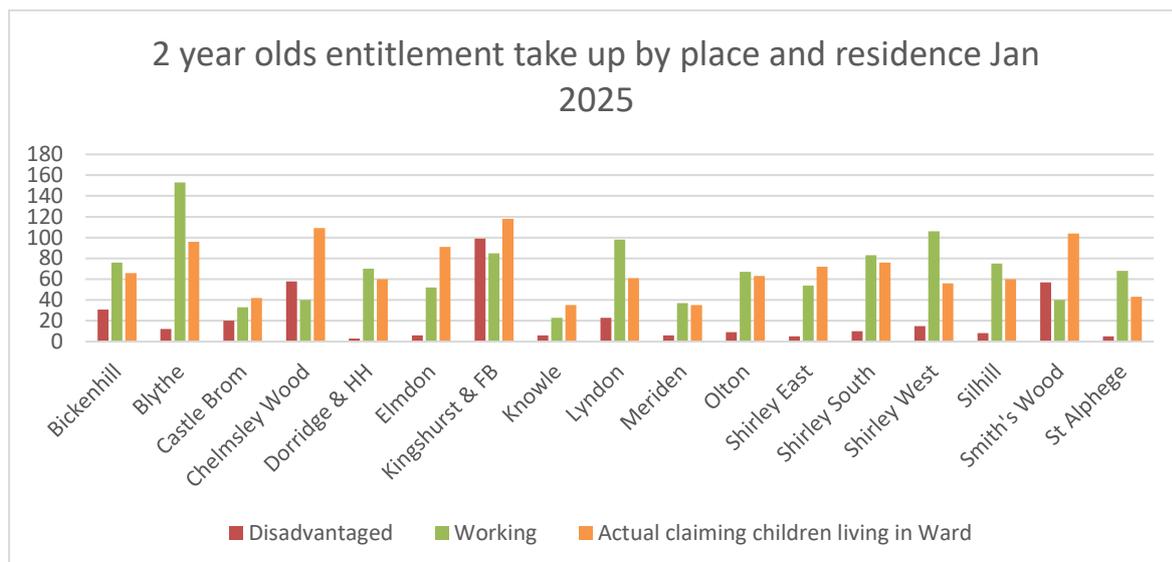
support place have been unable to access one because of the rollout of the funded working family places.

Across all age ranges, the average take-up of funded hours is below the full 15 hours that can be claimed.



The data shows the level of take up of the new early years extended entitlement for under 2s by Ward. The data compares the number of funded children taking up a place in a ward against the number of funded children resident in the ward. In most wards, the number of funded children taking up a place is higher than the number of claiming children resident in the ward. This reflects the migration of families between wards as well as the number of families resident outside of Solihull that choose to take up their childcare with providers in Solihull. In January 2025, 266 under 2s claiming a funded place in Solihull, lived outside of the area.

Castle Bromwich, Meriden and Shirley East all have a lower supply of places than funded children resident in the ward. This does not necessarily mean that there are insufficient places but may reflect migration patterns of working parents. For example, in an urban area such as Shirley, the supply of places in one ward will impact on the supply of places in a neighbouring ward.



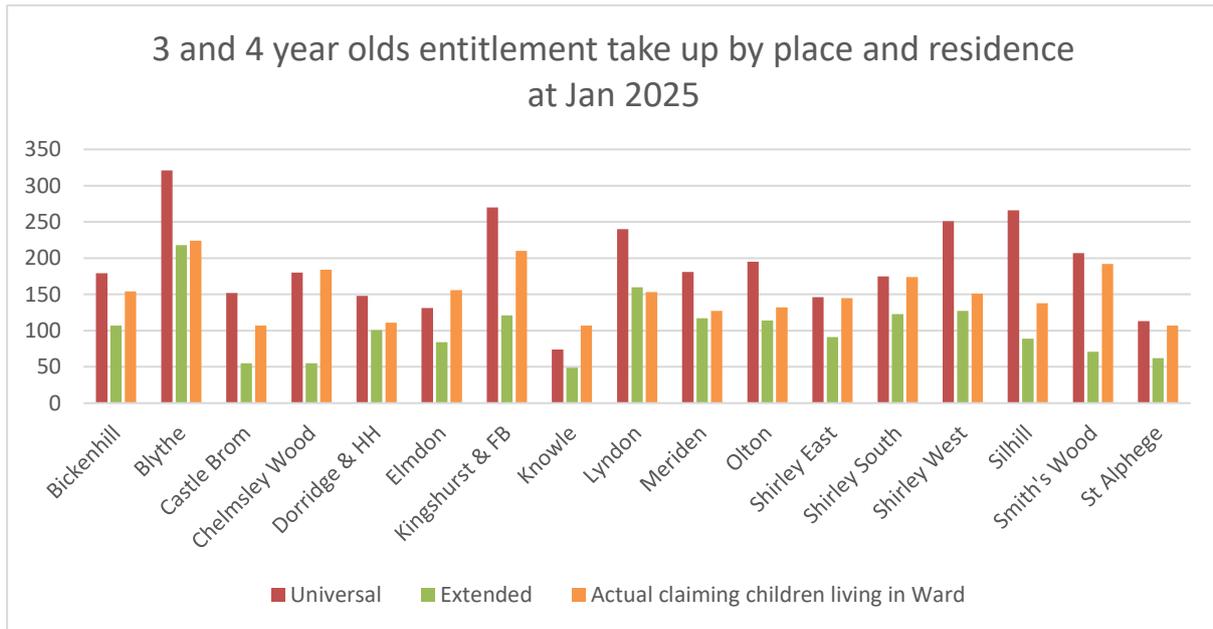
The data shows the number of places offered for 2-year-olds under both the new working families extended entitlement and the additional support scheme as well as the total number of eligible children resident in the ward under both schemes.

Consistent with previous years, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge and Smith's Wood have the largest numbers of children claiming through the additional support scheme and as with the under 2s data Blythe ward has the highest demand for places through the new working family's entitlement.

Five wards have a supply of places less than the number of claiming children resident in the Borough. As with the under 2s places this does not necessarily mean that there is an insufficiency of places but that parents are using childcare in neighbouring wards.

The Council are required to support families to apply for both schemes and then ensure providers claim for 15hrs under each separate scheme. When claiming a funded place under the additional support scheme the provider receives an additional 26p per hour, which can be used by the provider to support the child's place and will not be paid if the child is funded under the working family's eligibility.

In addition, this will ensure that the data is reported to DfE correctly for ongoing budget purposes and to ensure we are still meeting our take-up targets for 2yr olds under additional support criteria.

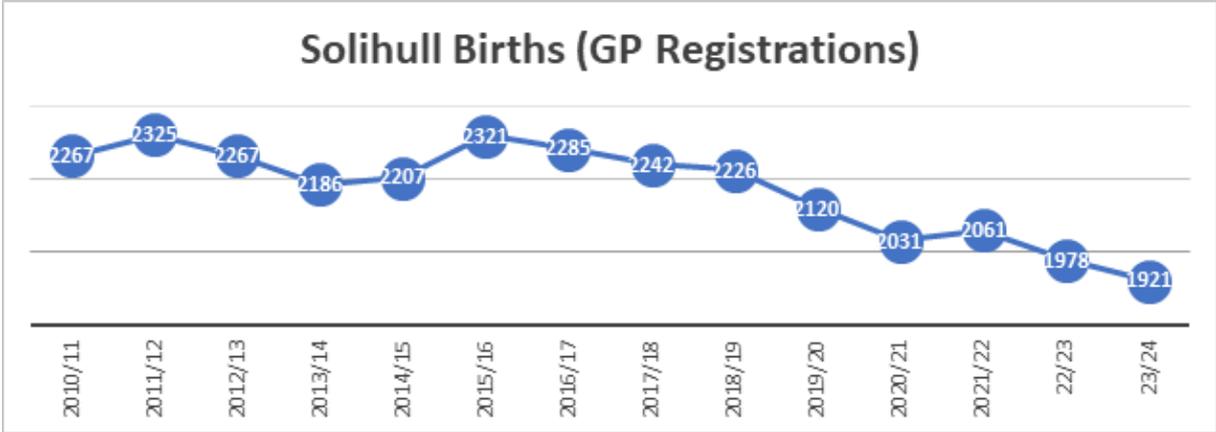


The data shows the take up of funded places for 3 and 4 years olds. The universal entitlement for 15 hours is available to all children. The extended entitlement is based on working family’s eligibility and the children eligible for this entitlement will also be claiming the universal entitlement so will show in the data for both entitlements.

Chelmsley Wood, Elmdon and Knowle wards all have higher numbers of resident children than the supply of funded places.

53% of 3- and 4-year-old childcare places are provided by schools with the remaining 47% provided by private, voluntary and independent providers, some of whom will be located on school sites.

# Forecast demand for funded early years places



The birth rate in Solihull has fallen by 17% since its peak in 2015/16 to just over 1900 children born in 2023/24. This is the equivalent of 400 less children. Nationally the birth rate has been falling since 2013. This is reducing the number of children in the early years and childcare market.

## Population by eligibility term and phase

	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026 estimate
Eligible U2s	2447	2757	1125	2401	2748
Eligible 2s	2104	2082	2021	1989	1952
Eligible 3 & 4s	2992	3509	2169	2868	3363
Total	7543	8348	5315	7258	8063

Unlike schools, who have a single point of admission in a year, funded childcare is provided in the term following that in which a child becomes eligible, for example the term following a child’s 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. The summer term eligible cohort is the largest childcare cohort in a year for two reasons. School intake is in the Autumn, so the Summer Term includes 5 terms of 3- and 4-year-olds and for the new extended entitlement for children under 2, eligibility covers 4 terms and in the summer term this includes two cohorts of children born in the Summer.

The impact of a falling birth rate can be seen in the eligible population data. All Spring 2026 cohorts are smaller than the equivalent Spring 2025 cohort. Overall, the childcare cohort reduces by just under 4% with the biggest drop in the 2-year-old population at 5%. This is population data so only a proportion of these children will be eligible for a funded place.

Although the full extended offer comes into force in September 2025 the real test on sufficiency will be Summer 2026 when cohorts peak in that year. The Summer 2026 data is provided as an estimate as the children that form part of this cohort are not yet born.

**Housing**

The Council’s approved Developer Contributions for Education Policy ensures that as housing development is approved in the Borough, it is assessed for its impact on sufficiency of early years places. In addition, the Council’s All-age sufficiency strategy states that all new primary schools will include provision for early years places. The pupil yield anticipated from new housing in Solihull, is based on the DfE pupil yield calculator, but may need to be reassessed as more data is available on the take up of the new extended entitlement. Early years pupil yield will need to be built into early years extended entitlements as and when housing developments are approved.

**DfE Forecasting Model**

As part of the roll out of the early years extended offer the DfE have produced a national forecasting model with a focus on demand for places required and childcare places provided, at each of its roll out milestones. With the latest data set issued in April 2025. The later versions of the model include a migration step which means that it includes families living outside of Solihull that are receiving childcare in Solihull which explains the increase in deficit hours in later versions of the data.

**Places needed and proportional increase in supply hours:** In Solihull we estimate that 320 places will need to be created by September 2025. This relates to a 13% increase in the estimated supply of childcare hours for two-year-olds and under.

**DfE Forecast of Places required for September 2025 new entitlements**

Date of Issue	Places Required		
	April 2024	September 2024	September 2025
Nov 2023	0 places	0 places	0 places
Feb 2024	0	0	64 (2%)
June 2024	0	0	64 (2%)
Oct 2024	0	10	254 (10%)
Dec 2024	0	61 (2%)	319 (13%)
April 2025	0	51 (2%)	320 (13%)

The April 2024 and September 2024 milestones have been met in Solihull without the need to add additional places. As with most local authorities, the first two milestones in the rollout have been met by families ‘switching’ from paid childcare to funded childcare.

The DfE data for September 2025 has been reassessed with a local context, as their calculation is based on national evidence linked to numbers of children in formal childcare and capacity data. The model has been adapted to use more local data and intelligence on capacity and demand which concludes with different place deficit numbers.

September 2025	Demand Places	Supply Places	Places
Solihull Children	1750	2696	946

Out of Borough Children	1148	946	-202
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**Sufficiency outcomes**

- 285 less eligible 0-4s in Solihull in September 2025 than in September 2024.
- Solihull calculation assumes an average of 26 hours per child in line with DfE assumptions but also accounts for 2-year-olds eligible under additional support criteria that will take on average 15 hours.
- Need to provide an additional 202 places based on latest estimates
- Two wards showing particular pressure on places for Solihull families, Castle Bromwich and Meriden.

**Early years childcare expansion grant**

To support place expansion the DfE has provided some capital funding available for providers who offer (or are looking to offer) provision that supports the roll out of this early years extended entitlement. It is aimed at all settings registered with Ofsted including schools that take 2+ year olds.

Solihull has received £325,000 of capital grant funding for this programme, which has been included in the Children's Services capital programme. The aim of the capital programme is to focus on projects that will increase the physical capacity of early years provision. In addition, it must ensure that places created are accessible to all children, including those with additional needs.

Providers of early years places, based in Solihull, have had the opportunity to complete an expression of interest to be considered for grant funding to support a project.

Funding cannot be used for routine maintenance or refurbishment of premises or for providers not offering early years entitlements. The funding is for capital purposes only and cannot be used for revenue expenditure of any kind such as training and staffing costs.

Capital grant has been awarded to Tender Years nursery in Elmdon Ward and 10 additional under 2s places have been delivered.

### **Provider survey results**

As part of the early year's census in January 2025 a provider survey was also undertaken. The survey was completed by 147 providers, and its focus was to seek place capacity and numbers of children accessing funded places by age.

In addition to the numerical data collected providers were asked about their plans for September 2025 in response to the rollout of the extended entitlements,

#### ***Do you plan to make any of the following changes in 2025? (choose all that apply)***

- Alter the configuration of funded places (e.g., reducing one age group but increasing another).
- Extending the hours on offer
- Extending your wraparound places (places outside of core school hours)
- Increasing the number of places available by employing additional staff
- Offer more places for 9-month-olds

- Reducing the number of overall places
- Reducing the number of hours

56 (38%) of providers that responded to the survey indicated that they were considering increasing their offer of places/hours for September 2025. Of these 31 (55%) would look to do this through employing more staff. In addition, 5 providers were looking to increase their wraparound hours

8 providers (5%) were looking to reduce their place/hours offered in September 2025. Of the 8 providers, 6 were childminders.

### Early years extended entitlement and childcare places for children with SEND

Dingley's Promise is a charity and specialist nursery provider whose aims are to transform the early years for children with SEND. One of the aims of the Comic Relief project is to improve the sufficiency of childcare places for young children in the early years with SEND.

Solihull is one of ten Local Authorities who participated from Year 1 of the 5-year project. The Comic Relief project has been designed to support the duties and requirements of the Childcare Act for LAs to secure sufficient childcare. The duties specify that provision for children with SEND should be secured for children up to the age of 18.

There are complexities in relation to assessing the sufficiency of places for children with SEND. Separating perceived needs (demand), from actual needs is extremely difficult as is assessing perceived and actual supply. As part of the work with Dingley's Promise, the ten Local Authorities worked together to agree a process to assess supply and demand of early years provision for children with additional needs. This involved 'tracking back' to review the early years take up of entitlement for all children in Reception and Key Stage 1 with an EHCP.

Appendix C provides a detailed summary of the outcome of Dingley's Promise model for assessing supply and demand of early years provision for additional needs in Solihull in January 2023 and draws the following conclusions.

- 96.8% of children within the SEND cohort accessed **some** EEE hours, therefore suggesting that the LA is sufficient in early years SEND places.

- 95% received their early years entitlement, for some or all of the time, in a PVI or mainstream school setting suggesting that early years settings are inclusive in supporting children with additional needs.
- Although 92% of 2 YO accessed EEE places, only 59% accessed their full 3 terms, this rises to 77% for 2 terms, so a better understanding of why families are not accessing their full entitlement is required.
- 95% of the cohort claimed their full universal entitlement for - & 4-year-olds, suggesting that the LA is sufficient in its universal SEND offer.
- For working families eligible for 30 hours childcare 90% claimed their full 30 hours entitlement and 93% claimed the maximum number of terms. However, those families with children attending Merstone and Reynolds Cross Special Schools may be limited in the hours they can take as neither school can currently offer the 30-hour extended offer.

When considering the sufficiency of early years places, it is important to also consider accessibility. There may be an early years place available but is a child able to access it fully.

As a follow-on piece of work all of the children not accessing their full extended entitlement were identified. The children that were known to the Early Years Team were in receipt of targeted support which included the aim to increase their attendance hours where appropriate.

This data is being updated based on January 2025 to see if the take up of the extended early years entitlement for children with SEND has been maintained and if there has been any impact due to the roll out of the extended early years entitlement.,

## The National Wraparound Childcare Programme

The national wraparound childcare programme is part of the childcare reforms announced at the 2023 Spring Budget. The government's ambition is that by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm, so that parents can access employment and improve labour market participation. To support this ambition, the government announced that it will provide up to £289 million of start-up funding over two academic years to support local authorities and providers in England to introduce or expand childcare provision on either side of the school day, which parents of primary school-aged children will be able to pay to access.

This programme will only focus on primary school-aged children from reception to year 6, Monday to Friday during term time. The expectation is that all wraparound

provision is 8am-6pm, enabling parents to work a full day with travel time, unless data shows that local demand is for different hours, for example reflecting local labour market patterns, forecast demand for places

The Department for Education (DfE) expects all new or expanded wraparound childcare places to be available to parents by September 2025 at the latest. The funding period will run until April 2026, and the DfE expects that most schools will be able to deliver wraparound childcare that is self-financing and sustainable by September 2026.

Wraparound provision can be offered by schools and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers (including childminders and early years settings). Provision can be run on a school site or at another setting in the area. It should not require parents to pick their children up from school and drop them off at another location.

Solihull has received £245,500 in grant funding to support the revenue requirement of expanding wraparound places. This grant funding is intended to limit the risk for providers in creating additional wraparound places ahead of demand, so that parents can commit to work hours and know they can access a wraparound place.

As part of the grant requirement, Solihull has produced a delivery plan that will seek to deliver 138 additional wraparound places of which 108 have been created in 2024/25.

School	Places	Date
Tidbury Green Primary	40	September 2024
St Andrews Primary	30	January 2025
Cheswick Green Primary	8	January 2025
Bishop Wilson Primary	30	September 2025
Little Angels at Meriden Primary	23	April 2025

In addition, the grant has supported a training programme for providers, through the Early Years Team to support providers to ensure that their wraparound is inclusive for all pupils.

### **Breakfast clubs**

In September 2024 the DfE published information on the breakfast club early adopters scheme inviting schools to express interest in taking part in the Government's new breakfast club programme.

The Early Adopters scheme for the breakfast club programme will trial breakfast clubs in up to 750 state-funded primary schools, including those beyond mainstream provision, starting from April 2025. As well as helping children thrive academically and socially, breakfast clubs give parents and carers more choices in childcare, and support families with the cost of living.

As part of the scheme breakfast clubs must run for a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the start of the school day, including the provision of healthy food, and be available to any pupil regardless of their background or financial circumstances. Early adopter schools will receive funding to support food, delivery and staffing costs, with further details of the funding package expected in January 2025, at which point participating schools will be confirmed.

Three schools have been selected in Solihull. They are Kingshurst Primary Academy, Kineton Green Primary Academy and Our Lady of the Wayside Catholic Academy. Although officers will support early adopter schools where appropriate the delivery of this scheme is through schools and the DfE.

### **School based nurseries**

In September 2024 the Government announced the first step of their plan to deliver 3,000 nurseries by upgrading spare spaces in primary schools, and long-term plan to make early years education and childcare more widely available, accessible, and high quality.

During autumn term 2024 state-funded primary schools were invited to bid for capital funding to create or expand on-site nurseries. As is currently the case, these nurseries can be school-run or delivered by schools partnering with private and voluntary early years providers on school sites.

Schools interested in bidding for this first funding round are urged to start discussions with their local authorities, governing organisations and wider stakeholders to

consider pupil place planning, local childcare sufficiency and next steps for setting up and running new or expanded nurseries.

The Department for Education (DfE) will use the first phase to take learnings for future years and better understand how they can best support underserved and poorer areas. Schools will be able to express interest for future phases of the programme to help assess demand in different parts of the country, and the DfE will engage with the sector on the most appropriate model to extend the programme across the country in its second phase.

Solihull does not have a school in the first phase of the school-based nursery programme. All Solihull primary schools have a nursery class attached to the school and are already providing early education places for 3- and 4-year-olds. 14 schools are also providing 2-year-old places.

### **S27 governor led community nursery provision**

A working group of community schools are considering the opportunities of moving towards a model of nursery provision under Section 27 community powers – as per the Education Act 2002. These powers allow schools to provide any charitable purpose (such as early education) for the benefit of families of pupils at the school, or families who live or work in the locality of the school.

For schools considering this model of provision, no additional Ofsted registration is required as this will continue through the school Ofsted regime. The children attending this provision are not usually registered as pupils but the funding regime for places remains the same. There will be no material change to the school's operation as the nursery will continue to be governed by the same governing body and led by the same head teacher.

The key benefits of a S27 nursery provision are: -

- More flexible offer for parents who are increasingly seeking more flexibility to support with work commitments.
- A staffing model and ratios that can respond more effectively to changes in demand for places and hours.
- At a time when the number of early years children is falling year on year, the staffing requirements of a S27 nursery will enable a school to organise its nursery provision in way that means it is more sustainable and should

therefore avoid as far as possible the closure of nursery classes due to falling rolls.

To create a S27 nursery provision schools will need to consult on a change to their age range from age 3 to age 4. The latest DfE guidance for making significant changes to maintained schools has been updated to amend the process for changing the age range of a school, for the purpose of adding, removing or changing nursery provision. A statutory process is no longer required, but schools are required to consult on the proposal and for community schools the decision on whether to approve the age range change lies with the Council, through the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Education. It is anticipated that consultation with parents will take place in Autumn Term 2025.

### **Holiday Activity and Food programme**

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme is a DfE funded programme designed to enable children who receive benefit related free school meals to take part in activities that they would not normally have access to and receive a healthy meal.

The aims of the HAF programme are to support children to eat healthily and be more active during the holidays, reduce isolation and support them to take part in engaging and enriching activities.

Full details of the HAF offer can be found [here](#)

## **Extended entitlement Sufficiency Actions for 2025/26**

One	Work with new nursery providers looking to open day nurse in Central Solihull potential to add places but not yet confirmed
Two	Work with day nursery looking to open new site in Meriden Ward and expand existing provision, may require capital grant funding following feasibility work.
Three	An expansion scheme has been agreed with Castle Bromwich Infant School to deliver an additional 15 places for 2-year-olds. Capital funding has been agreed to support the project.

Four	Feasibility work is underway to assess a scheme at Monkspath JI School for the delivery of additional 2-year-old places. May require capital grant funding.
Five	The provider survey identified the addition of 50 new places in private voluntary and independent providers in response to market demand.
Six	Review the DfE and local forecast data and model based on Autumn Term take up of places to review sufficiency of places for Summer 2026.
Seven	Update the assessment of the uptake of early years extended entitlements for pupils with additional needs at January 2025 and assess any impact of the rollout of the new extended entitlements.

## Childcare Sufficiency Actions 2025/26

One	Continue to work with schools and deliver the national wraparound programme
Two	Support Schools considering S27 governor-led community nursery provision to provide an open and transparent process and secure approval for any changes.
Three	Monitor the delivery of holiday play schemes to assess if demand for provision is being met, in particular in Smith's Wood and Dorridge and Hockley Heath wards.

## Appendix A

Registered Places at January 2025 by Ward							
Ward	Childminder	Day Nurseries	Holiday Scheme	Out of School	Pre-school	Wrap around	Total
Bickenhill	30	225	104	104	24	40	527
Blythe	39	217	49	104	66	74	549
Castle Bromwich	54	24	48	48	0	48	222
Chelmsley Wood	24	172	102	42	0	42	382
Dorridge and Hockley Heath	42	146	0	68	92	40	388
Elmdon	15	169	24	24	0	24	256
Kingshurst and Fordbridge	24	308	106	316	0	236	990
Knowle	48	51	72	50	30	50	301
Lyndon	33	255	32	64	30	48	462
Meriden	25	101	61	75	21	54	337
Olton	12	223	72	32	0	32	371
Shirley East	45	188	114	114	0	114	575
Shirley South	57	230	128	81	69	120	685
Shirley West	45	355	76	154	0	63	693
Silhill	21	176	140	126	37	96	596
Smith's Wood	46	192	0	16	40	0	294
St Alphege	27	132	45	80	26	30	340
<b>Total Places</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>3164</b>	<b>1173</b>	<b>1498</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>1111</b>	<b>7,968</b>
<b>% of places</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>	

## Appendix B

### Summary of out-of-hours places offered by ward

	Number of Places	
	Before 7.30am	After 6pm
Bickenhill	71	6
Blythe	5	5
Castle Bromwich	30	6
Chelmsley Wood	100	110
Dorridge and Hockley Heath	0	6
Elmdon	0	6
Kingshurst and Fordbridge	6	0
Knowle	0	6
Lyndon	6	80
Meriden	0	0
Olton	0	90
Shirley East	0	0
Shirley South	0	6
Shirley West	6	20
Silhill	37	0
Smith's Wood	6	0
St Alphege	0	0
Total	267	341
Percentage of total places	3%	4%



## Appendix C

### Assessment of Early Education Entitlement take up by children with SEND based on Jan 2023 SEN2 data (to be reviewed at Jan 2025 SEN2)

#### 1. Cohort

The Jan 2023 SEN2 return was used to identify children in Years R to Y2 resident in Solihull with an EHCP.

Reception	88
Year 1	95
Year 2	92
Total Cohort Size	275

Of the 275 pupils with an EHCP 36 were identified as not having taken any early education entitlement (EEE) hours. Of the 36, 22 moved in after the EY phase and 6 may have received their EEE hours at a provision outside of Solihull so no record of funding is held. Therefore, of the 275 cohort, 247 are identified as eligible for EEE hours in Solihull.

Of the 247 eligible cohort 239 (96.8%) received **some** EEE hours. 8 children (3.2%) appear to have received no EEE hours. Further work will be required to identify why these pupils did not access any EEE hours and whether that is parental preference, or sufficiency issues.

106 (43%) were eligible for and claimed Disability Access Funding (DAF) and 73 (30%) were eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium.

192 (78%) accessed inclusion funding split as follows: -

Level 1	Level 1 & 2	Level 2	Level 2 EHCP	Total
8	3	150	31	192

## 2. Provision

Of the 239 pupils that claimed EEE hours 198 (83%) received their hours in a private, voluntary or independent (PVI) setting or a mainstream school. 11 (5%) received their hours in Merstone or Reynolds Cross Special Schools and 30 (12%) received some hours in mainstream/PVI setting and then in Merstone or Reynolds Cross. In the majority of cases, the child moved from mainstream/PVI to special school but in a very small number of cases there was either shared hours or a move from special school to mainstream/PVI setting.

## 3. 2-Year-Old funded hours

135 (55%) of the cohort were eligible for funded 2YO hours.

Economic	81 (60%)
LAC	7 (5%)
High Level SEN	47 (35%)

Of the 135 eligible for funded 2YO hours 80 (59%) claimed the full 3 terms, 24 (18%) claimed 2 terms of funding and 20 (15%) claimed 1 term of funding. 11 (8%) were considered and approved for 2YO but did not claim the hours. We will need to understand whether this is due to parental preference, sufficiency or other reasons. It is important to note that this data is based on hours claimed not on hours attended.

## 4. 3- and 4-year-old funded hours

Of the 247 cohort, 234 (95%) claimed their full universal 15 hours. 3 claimed between 10 and 15 hours, 1 claimed under 10 hours. 9 claimed zero hours.

83 (34%) of cohort were eligible for 30 hours EEE for working families. 75 (90%) claimed the full 30 hours entitlement. 2 claimed over 20 hours and 4 claimed only 15 hours.

The number of eligible terms that can be claimed are dependent on a child's age. Autumn born children are normally eligible for 5 terms of 30 hours childcare; Spring born children are normally eligible for 4 terms and Summer born children are normally eligible for 3 terms of 30 hours childcare. The table below shows the breakdown of terms claimed by term of birth.

Term of Birth	1 term claimed	2 terms claimed	3 terms claimed	4 terms claimed	5 or more terms claimed	Total
Autumn	0	2	2	1	27	32
Spring	0	0	1	13	1	15
Summer	0	0	32	0	4	36

77 (93%) of children claiming 30 hours of EEE for working families claimed the maximum number of terms. It is important to note that this refers to hours claimed not hours attended at the setting. The Local Authority would not normally be aware if a child is not attending for the full entitlement hours unless they are being supported through Council support services, in which case an increase in hours would always be encouraged.

## Conclusions

- 96.8% of children within the SEND cohort accessed **some** EEE hours, therefore suggesting that the LA is sufficient in early years SEND places.
- 95% received their early years entitlement, for some or all of the time, in a PVI or mainstream school setting suggesting that early years settings are inclusive in supporting children with additional needs.
- Although 92% of 2 YO accessed EEE places, only 59% accessed their full 3 terms, this rises to 77% for 2 terms, so a better understanding of why families are not accessing their full entitlement is required.
- 95% of the cohort claimed their full universal entitlement for 3 & 4-year-olds, suggesting that the LA is sufficient in its universal SEND offer.
- For working families eligible for 30 hours childcare 90% claimed their full 30 hours entitlement and 93% claimed the maximum number of terms. However, those families with children attending Merstone and Reynolds Cross Special Schools may be limited in the hours they can take as neither school can currently offer the 30-hour extended offer.