

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019

'Securing sufficient childcare to enable parents to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and are delivered flexibly in a range of high-quality settings'.

August 2019



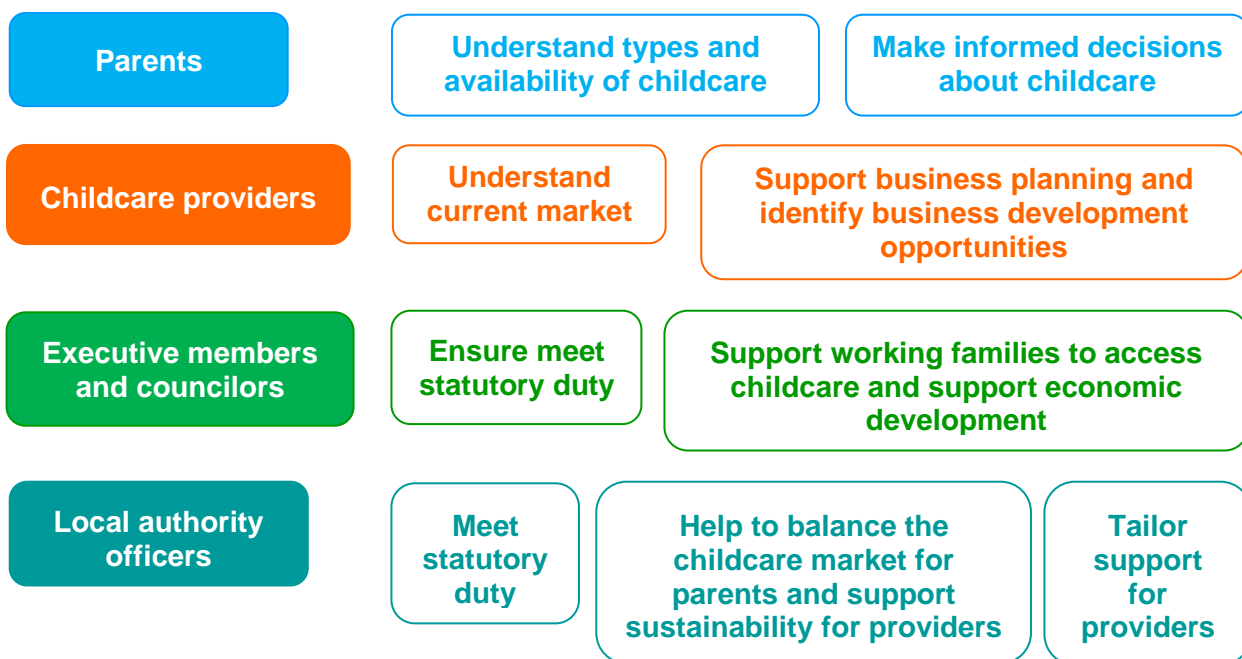
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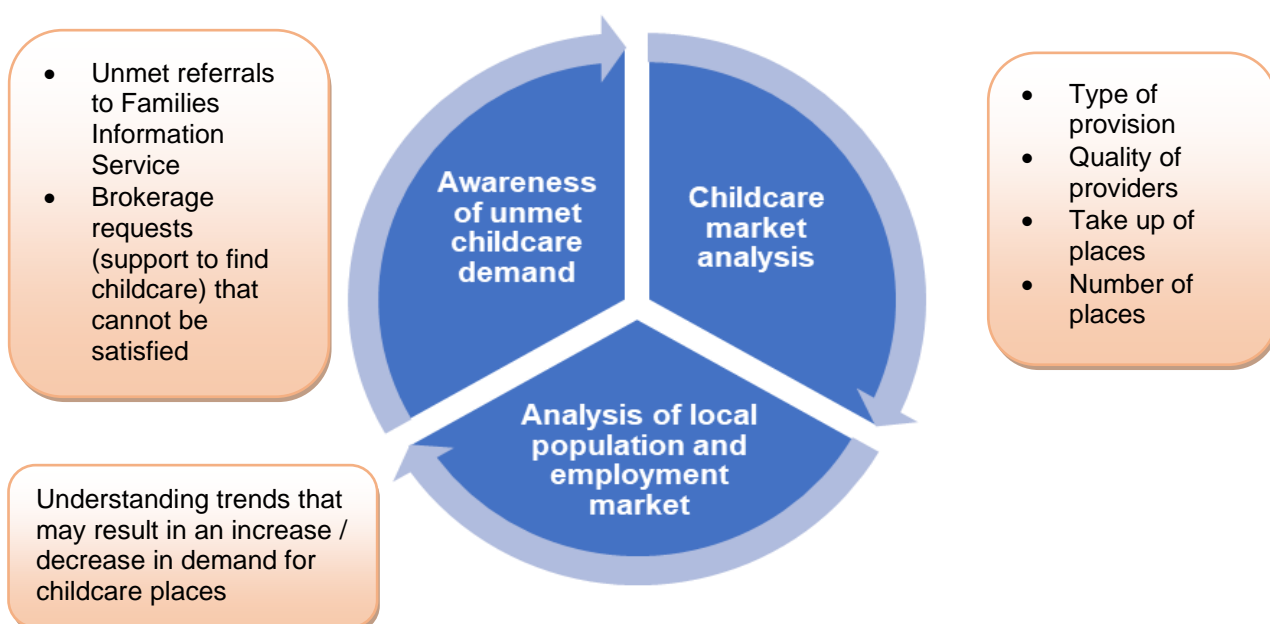
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019

1. What is a childcare sufficiency assessment?

- 1.1 Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are required by legislation to; ‘Secure sufficient childcare, 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).’ This duty includes the need for local authorities to make sure that sufficient childcare is available for some two-year olds (those who meet the eligibility criteria), and all three- and four-year olds, in respect of their funded early education entitlement.
- 1.2 This assessment is a summary of the childcare position in Bolton and provides useful information for:



- 1.3 Childcare sufficiency is a judgement made by reviewing:

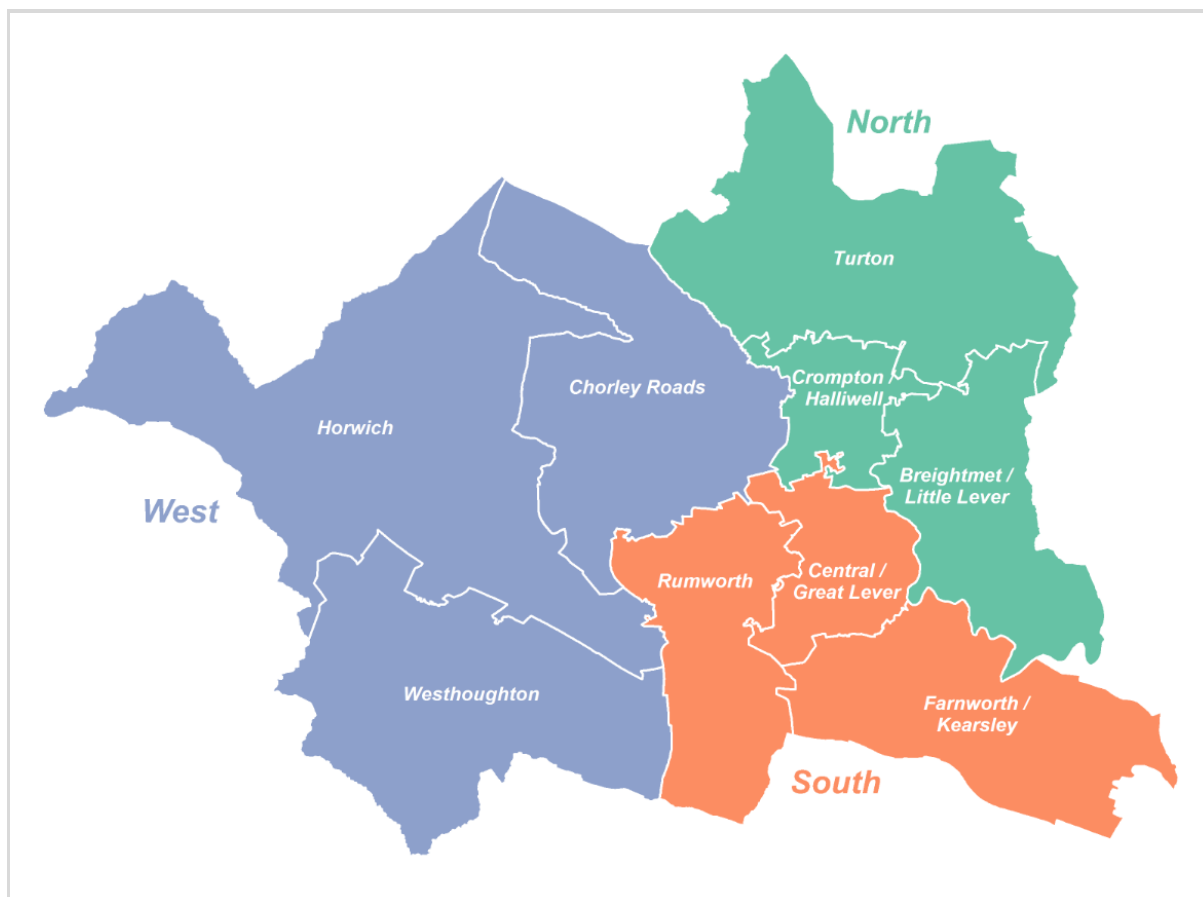


2. Areas of Bolton

2.1 Bolton Council and operational partners have recently adopted a new area based working model. This is:

- 1 borough
- 3 areas (north, south and west)
- 9 neighbourhoods

These are shown below.



2.2 With a variety of factors influencing where families seek childcare, demand is not always naturally aligned to specific area boundaries. However, it is important that we look at different areas of the Borough to help us understand whether there may be sufficiency issues in specific areas. This sufficiency assessment is therefore undertaken using the boundaries of the area based working model.

3. Early education and childcare market

3.1 On the whole, Bolton has a balanced market of providers. Early education and childcare are delivered through:

- Childminders
- Full day care
- Maintained nursery schools and classes, including in some primary schools
- Pre-school playgroups
- Out of school care
- Holiday care
- Wrap around care

- 3.2 Most childcare providers offer places across age groups, subject to Ofsted regulations, and therefore are flexible to the needs of local families. Whilst it is recognised that families can access sessional activities, such as sports, to meet their childcare needs, this assessment focuses on Ofsted registered provision.
- 3.3 Ofsted registered providers are approached three times a year to update the information held by the local authority about their services. Providers who have access to the Council's Provider Portal are able to use the 'self-update' functionality to update their details on a daily basis on a voluntary basis. The Local Authority is undertaking work to make it easier for providers to update their vacancy and capacity information through the online portal. It is worth noting that the data used in this assessment:
- was taken at a single point, and that vacancy information changes frequently
 - is subject to providers frequently submitting vacancy and capacity information.
- 3.4 [Appendix A](#) shows all childcare providers operating across Bolton by provider type – it shows that a range of provision is spread across the borough, increasing accessibility and choices for families. [Appendix B](#) breaks down the estimates number of children (Office of National Statistics Mid-Year Estimate 2017) and the number of places for each neighbourhood area (Bolton Council, 2019). Key points to draw from these data sets are:
- The number of settings and places is based on data from providers
 - Bolton has a mix of childcare providers operating across the Borough, which supports parental choice when sourcing childcare. Between April 2018 and March 2019, 36 Ofsted registered providers closed in Bolton and 21 opened. It is important that this mix is maintained for choice, and also so an area is not dependent upon a single provider
 - Through delivering a flexible offer, providers offer early starts / late finishes and a different number of weeks through the year. It would not be possible to build this flexibility into an assessment
 - With the current estimates of places and children, there are enough spaces for eligible children to access their funded entitlement, and for families to pay for additional hours
 - Not all families entitled to early education hours take these as 15 hours per week, some choose to stretch these over a full year and create additional capacity on a weekly basis
 - Parent choices, such as the number of hours required and the location of provider, can affect both overall and locality sufficiency
 - Children may come into the borough to access childcare entitlements – these are not accounted for as at present the number of children coming into borough is balanced with those going out of borough
- 3.5 [Appendix C](#) shows the take up rates for the 2, 3 & 4yr olds across Bolton. This information is considered to gain an understanding of current levels of take up, and whether changes in demand for funded early education places could impact on place sufficiency. Key points identified are:
- Rising take up of two-year old funding has levelled out, but there remain 25-30% of children per term who have not accessed their entitlement
 - The large population increase of three and four-year old children in 2016 and 2017 has reduced in 2018 and 2019, and most children are accessing their funded place
 - The percentage of children taking up funded two-year old places varies each term. Summer term sees the biggest dip in two year old take up – this links to the flow of early education cohorts, that is where the maximum number of children are eligible

at any one time, and where the cohort of four year olds have not yet moved up to school. Further work is taking places with providers to understand whether there are any other factors that could pose longer term sufficiency issues

- 30 hours funding increased demand for 15 hour funded places. Most Bolton parents who apply go on to take up their place. The local authority does not have access to data to confirm the total number of families who are eligible, and therefore whether there could be more demand for places – in future years, a take up trend will be used to estimate possible demand
- The number of children eligible for all funding programmes varies over years, and within terms – this presents a challenge as it is not always possible for the early education and childcare market to be flexible to expand and reduce quickly enough to ensure business sustainability
- Children access childcare outside of the ward that they live – the distance families travel to access childcare varies across Bolton’s wards, with no recognisable trends this is difficult to factor into a sufficiency assessment, other than to recognise that places do not have to be delivered in the area a child lives to be accessible.

3.6 There has been one report of unmet childcare needs logged with the Families Information Service since the previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Council services have provided information and support for this family.

3.7 Childcare costs form part of the data that providers supply to the local authority. A summary of the latest data available can be found in the table below. Costs vary across providers offering options for families. The local authority has offered business planning support for early education and childcare sector in response to sustainability concerns resulting from increased financial requirements – minimum staff qualifications and rising minimum wage costs for example.

| Average early education & childcare cost (£'s) in Bolton | | | | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| | Childminder | Childminder | Full Day Care | Full Day Care / Holiday Club | After school |
| | (0 - 5 Years) | (5 - 11 Years) | (0 - 5 Years) | (5 - 11 Years) | (4 - 13 Years) |
| | Per day | Per day | Per day | Per day | Session |
| Average | 35 | 35 | 41 | 36 | 18 |
| Max | 50 | 40 | 48 | 47 | 26 |
| Min | 30 | 30 | 31 | 14 | 6 |

3.8 The local authority has anecdotally been told that a number of families choose to use informal childcare (extended family members) instead of Ofsted registered provision – both for early years and school aged childcare. The local authority does not have access to data to validate this. An assumption is made in this assessment that not every child will need a full-time early education or out of school club place.

4. Analysis of local population and employment market

4.1 It is anticipated that Bolton’s population aged 16-64yrs will be the most likely to require childcare to enable them to access employment or training. National statistics collated by NOMIS is shared in [Appendix E](#). Overall employment rates have increased since 2012. Changes are less significant over the past couple of years suggesting that whilst

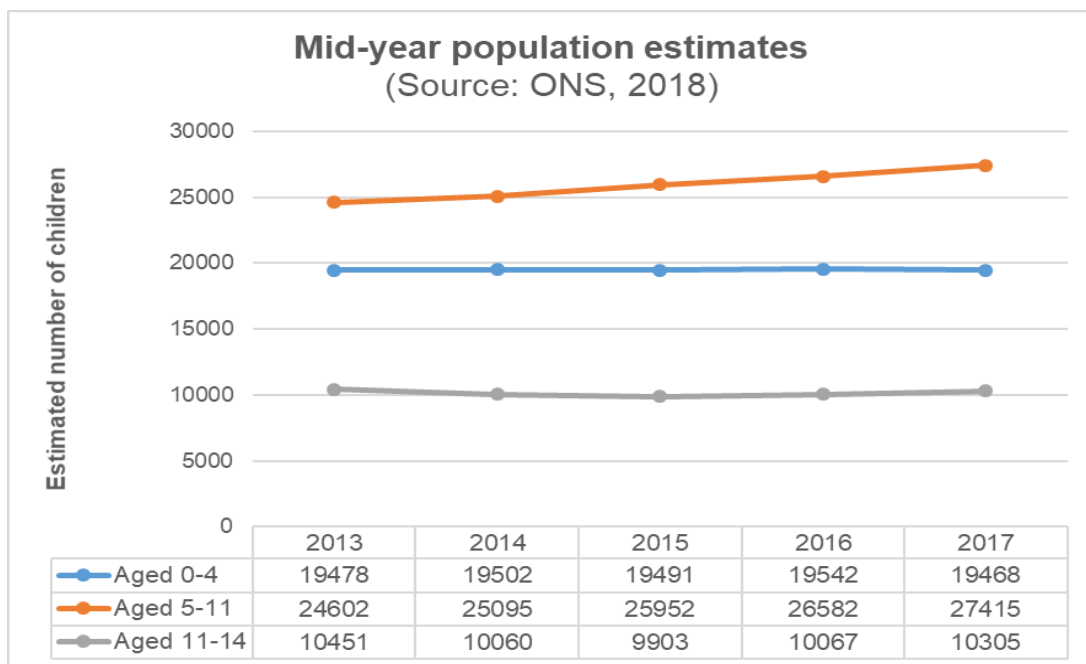
there may be variance in eligibility (and demand) for early education and childcare places, these will not be significant enough to require significant changes to the market.

4.2 Two-year old early education funding is a targeted offer primarily for families on no income / low income, alongside some non-economic factors. Most families accessing the funding meet eligibility criteria relating to economic factors. Bolton saw an increase in the overall number of families eligible for two-year old funding during an early implementation phase of Universal Credit. There has been a reduction in the number of households deemed (by the Department for Education, DfE) to be eligible for two-year old funding since a threshold was applied to the Universal Credit criteria. Termly lists from the DfE show a difference of 200-300 households from the highest peak to date. This may also relate to employment rates through this period.

4.3 Bolton's Economic Strategy, continues to encourage a number of large employers to the Borough. There has not been any identifiable impact on the childcare market.

4.4 Mid-year population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (2018) shows estimated changes to the population trends that are considered in this sufficiency assessment. Data identifies the following over the period 2013-2017:

- 0-4 years – has been stable
- 5-11 years – has seen an increase of 2813 children
- 11-14 – has seen a small reduction of -146 children



4.5 Rising numbers of children aged 5-11 can be for a variety of factors, including large residential developments, changes in birth rates and international new arrivals. It is not possible to account for some of these factors in terms of childcare sufficiency planning, so they are used as a guide only. Stability in the 0-4 age group would suggest little change in demand for early education and childcare places.

5. Support for families

- 5.1 The Family Information Service (FIS) offers a range of services to help families' access information, advice and guidance. These services are delivered:

The image contains three rounded rectangular boxes with a drop shadow effect. The first box is blue and titled 'Face to face', listing 'Start Well Children's Centres' and 'One Stop Shop'. The second box is yellow and titled 'Phone', listing the number '01204 332170' and '(Information & Communication team)'. The third box is orange and titled 'Email & online:', listing three email addresses: 'www.bolton.gov.uk', 'www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk', and 'families@bolton.gov.uk'. Below these is the text 'and promotion of the national website www.childcarechoices.org.uk'.

- 5.2 Through these services, families can ask specific questions relating to their entitlements and childcare needs. Bolton's Family Information Service offers a brokerage service to support parents to access childcare and short breaks where relevant.
- 5.3 The local authority has a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for all, where reasonably practical. To ensure that this happens, and also as part of the local authority's commitment to protect the most vulnerable, additional activities have taken place within the local early education and childcare market to ensure that more targeted groups are able to have their childcare needs met. Targeted groups, and a summary of additional activity are as follows:
- 5.3.1 Disabled children and young people
- Training and support for providers
 - Promotion of specialist support offered by specific providers identified in their service record on www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk
 - Promotion of early education and childcare opportunities through the [SEND Local Offer](#)
 - Brokerage Support to help families find a provider that meets the child's needs
- 5.3.2 Childcare from families in receipt of the childcare element of working tax credit or universal credit
- Information is provided for all families to help them understand childcare options
 - Families eligible for free childcare are supported to access their free place through Start Well Children's Centres, links between providers / Families Information Service and via phone / email
 - Parents are signposted to www.childcarechoices.gov.uk to access national information and calculators to support making childcare decisions
- 5.3.3 School aged children needing holiday care
- Online information hub www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk
 - Face to face support through Start Well Children's Centres
 - Dedicated call line with Information & Communication Team
- 5.3.4 Children whose parents work irregular hours
- Provider records on www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk state opening hours

- Brokerage support for families needing support to find suitable childcare
- 5.3.5 Children aged 2-4 years who may be eligible for funded early education programmes
- Information on www.bolton.gov.uk/fundedchildcare
 - Promotional activity including vinyl banners outside providers, social media campaigns, leaflets/posters in the community, presence at events
 - Partnership working with services supporting families to promote entitlements
 - Increasing the number of providers with access to carry out eligibility checks, where relevant, to make the process as easy as possible for parents
 - Strengthening the partnership arrangements with health visitors to provide targeted support for parents following their child's health visitor assessment
 - Specific working group established focusing on increasing take up of two-year old funding places – this includes marketing and embedding awareness of funded places into the practice of services working directly with targeted families.

6. Support for Bolton's early education and childcare providers

6.1 The support offered to childcare providers from Bolton Council is broken into the following functions:

- Pre-registration information and guidance / universal promotion:
 - Explaining the registration process to prospective providers
 - Delivery of pre-registration training for prospective childminders
- Universal promotion
 - Option for all Ofsted registered early education and childcare providers to promote their services, without charge, to parents
- Developing quality and sustainable provision
 - Universal support and challenge from Start Well specialists to assist all Ofsted registered early education and childcare providers – this includes information and advice, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), business development support, pre and post Ofsted guidance, training and development activity and opportunities to share best practice
 - Support for providers of funded early education places
 - Ofsted judgements vary throughout the year, and trigger additional support from the Start Well team as appropriate
- Continuing professional development (CPD)
 - Essential and mandatory training and Continual Professional Development (CPD) opportunities are offered to all settings registered with Ofsted in Bolton – this is delivered in different formats to suit provider's needs, including formal training, online training and work shadowing for example.
 - The CPD programme is developed as a result of demand from childcare providers across Bolton and also as a result of local and national policy changes

- As a result of service redesign, most CPD is now delivered to childcare providers on a fully traded basis

7. Summary and further actions

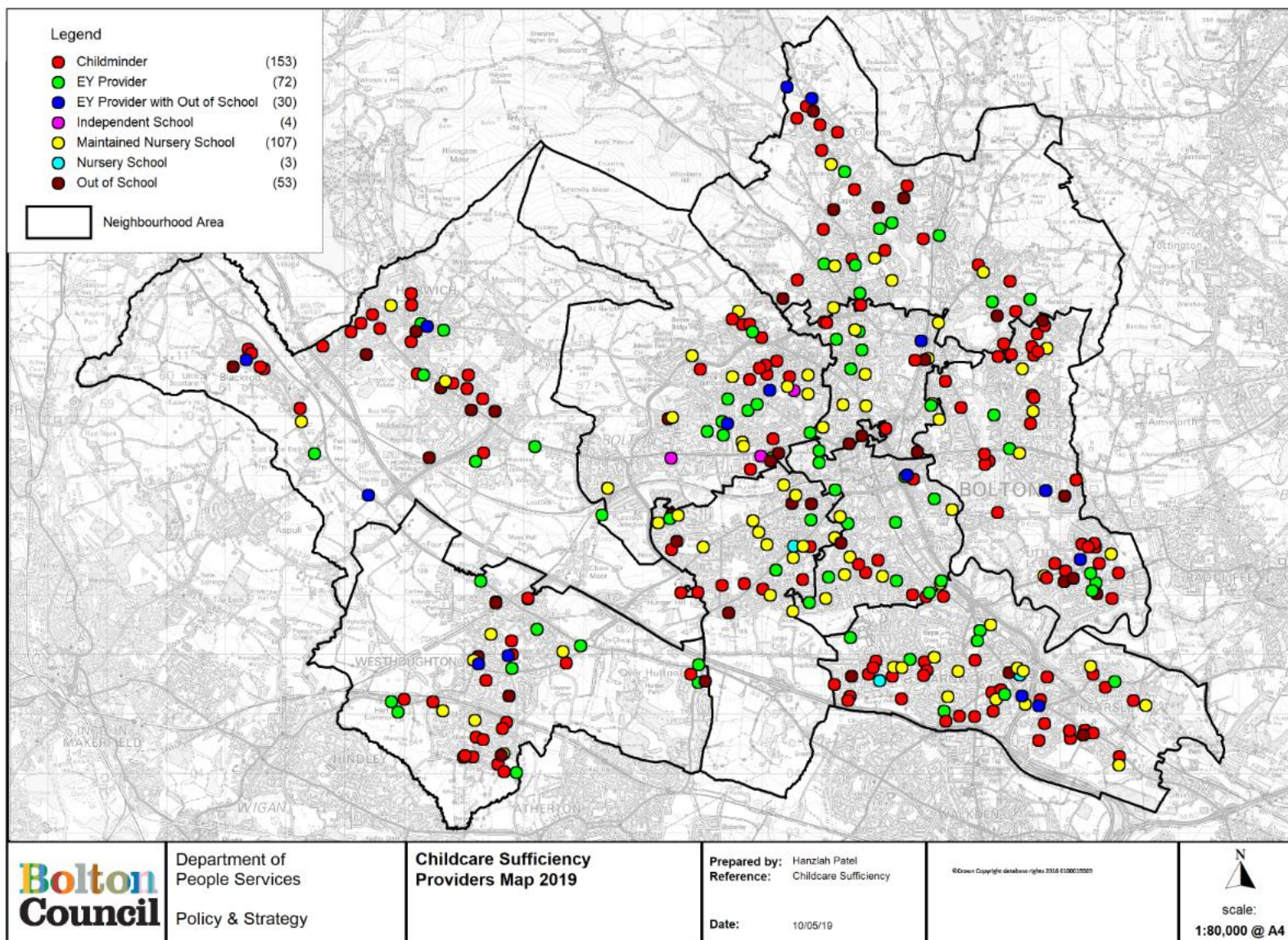
7.1 Using the available data, it is summarised that there are sufficient early education and childcare places in the Borough to meet the needs of Bolton families. However, it is acknowledged that:

- data for some providers has not been updated for some time
- further work needs to take place to understand why there are termly dips in funded early education take up rates, and whether this is as a result of sufficiency issues
- anecdotal information from providers suggests that some families are choosing to wait for places at certain settings – the local authority does not have any data or reports from parents to confirm this at this time.

7.2 Specific actions for the short and medium term are as follows:

| Short term (next term) | Medium term (next 12 months) |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start Well Partnership Officers undertaking targeted work with providers in areas of Bolton where anecdotal information is suggesting that parents are not taking up places until places become available at specific providers • Work with providers to increase data quality of vacancy and capacity information, enabling a more robust assessment, especially through increased usage of the self-update portal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to strengthen partnership arrangements with services working with families to embed two-year old funding promotion into existing contacts with families, improving sustainable promotion of entitlements • Explore data to map 30 hours take up trends • Continue to support early education and childcare providers to deliver sustainable, high quality childcare |

Appendix A: Borough wide childcare providers

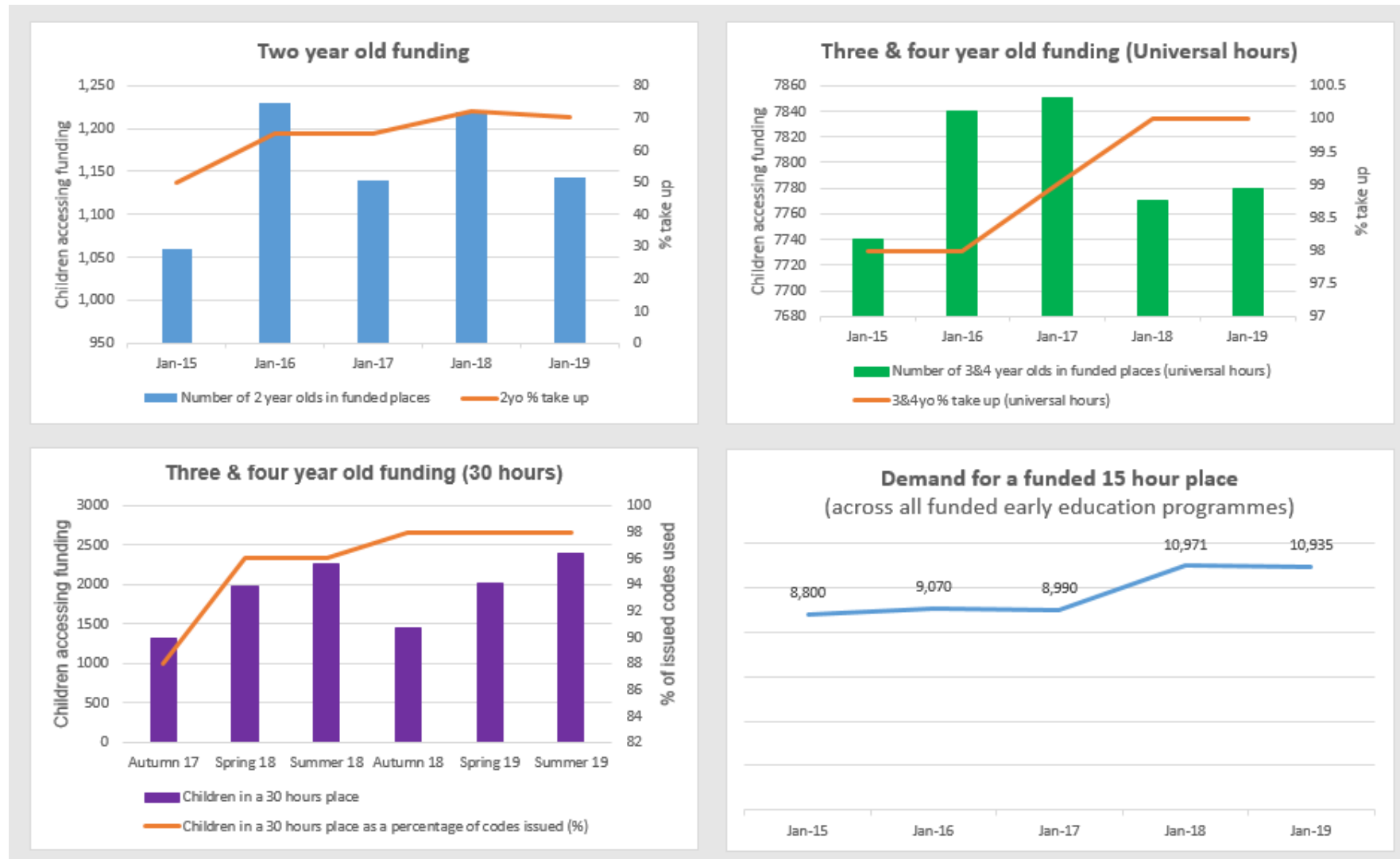


Appendix B: Children and places (Sources: Child data – ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2017 / Places – Bolton Council ONE System 2019)

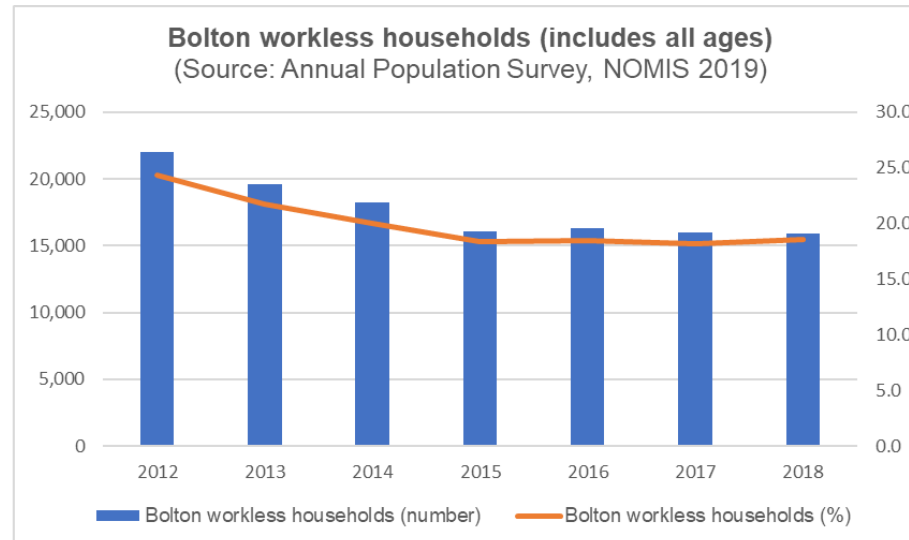
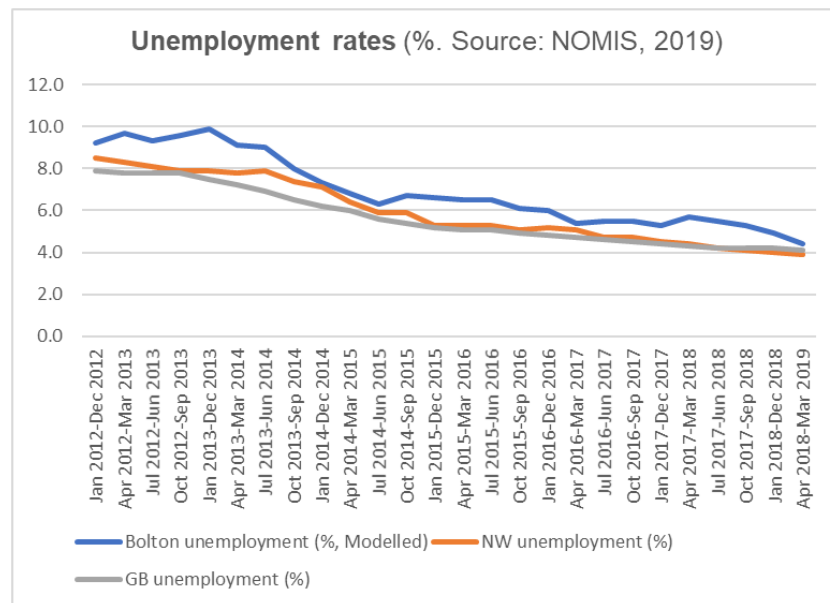
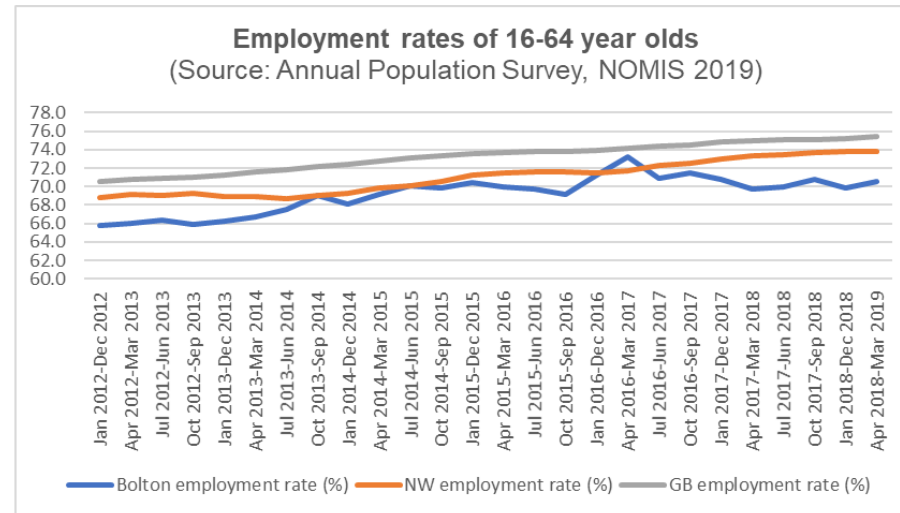
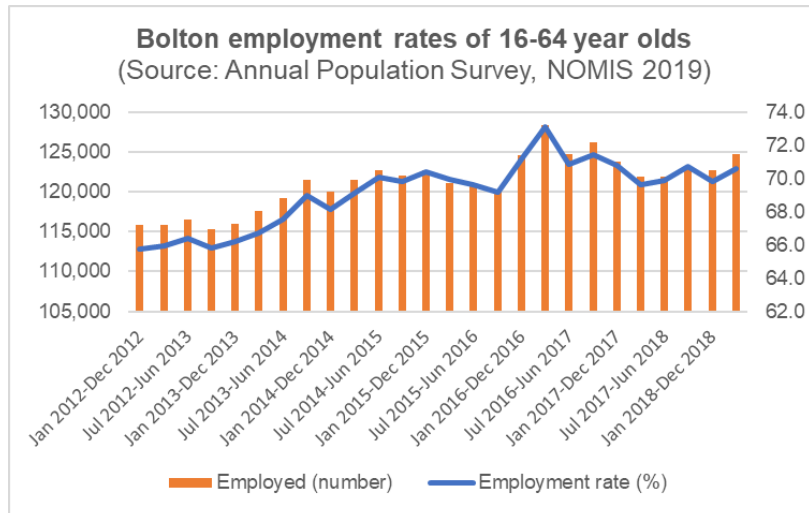
| | Children (ONS Mid Year Estimates) | | | | | Estimated maximum demand for early education places | Places (ONE, Bolton Council) | | | Number of settings (ONE, Bolton Council) | | | Distribution of settings | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--|--------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| | Under 2 | 2 | 3&4 | 5-10 | 11-14 | | Early years | Childminders | Out of School Club | Early years | Childminders | Out of School Club | Early years | Childminders | Out of School Club |
| North | 2262 | 1071 | 2286 | 7133 | 4295 | 1690 | 2026 | 171 | 385 | 58 | 49 | 25 | | | |
| Breightmet/Little Lever | 1003 | 496 | 1044 | 3367 | 1914 | 732 | 660 | 112 | 58 | 19 | 27 | 8 | 30% | 32% | 33% |
| Crompton/Halliwell | 649 | 285 | 575 | 1617 | 938 | 456 | 751 | 13 | 134 | 17 | 4 | 8 | | | |
| Turton | 610 | 290 | 667 | 2149 | 1443 | 503 | 615 | 46 | 193 | 22 | 18 | 9 | | | |
| South | 3293 | 1653 | 3256 | 9525 | 5508 | 2292 | 3003 | 294 | 730 | 70 | 50 | 21 | | | |
| Central/Great Lever | 885 | 453 | 805 | 2416 | 1352 | 604 | 909 | 28 | 12 | 18 | 7 | 4 | 36% | 33% | 28% |
| Farnworth/Kearsley | 1119 | 565 | 1118 | 3524 | 2053 | 783 | 1053 | 248 | 356 | 29 | 36 | 8 | | | |
| Rumworth | 1289 | 635 | 1333 | 3585 | 2103 | 905 | 1041 | 18 | 362 | 23 | 7 | 9 | | | |
| West | 2211 | 1161 | 2275 | 7026 | 4233 | 1703 | 2394 | 178 | 525 | 65 | 54 | 29 | | | |
| Chorley Roads | 1043 | 559 | 997 | 3042 | 1821 | 721 | 1039 | 40 | 78 | 27 | 14 | 9 | 34% | 35% | 39% |
| Horwich | 573 | 314 | 701 | 2097 | 1253 | 524 | 774 | 56 | 178 | 19 | 20 | 12 | | | |
| Westhoughton | 595 | 288 | 577 | 1887 | 1159 | 457 | 581 | 82 | 269 | 19 | 20 | 8 | | | |
| Grand Total | 7766 | 3885 | 7817 | 23684 | 14036 | 5685 | 7423 | 643 | 1640 | 193 | 153 | 75 | | | |

Appendix C: Childcare take up for early education entitlements

- Two, three and four-year-old funding can be broken down to neighbourhood level as child level data is available
- 30 hours funding cannot be broken down in to neighbourhoods as the local authority does not have access to data identifying households who meet the criteria for the funding - the information provided is therefore the summary data published by the Department for Education, showing numbers of children accessing the funding, and the percentage of codes issued that are validated to access the funding



Appendix D: Economic profile data for Bolton population (NOMIS, 2019)



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