Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report

Autumn 2026

Version 1

(November 2026)

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

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Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

1. Executive Summary

This Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report provides an overview of the childcare market in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council as of Autumn 2026. The report assesses the availability and sufficiency of childcare places, uptake of Early Years Entitlements (EYE), support for children with additional needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and developments in school aged childcare provision.

There are approximately 6,159 children aged 0–4 years living in B&NES, a decrease of around 140 children compared to 2025, reflecting national trends in declining birth rates. Despite this reduction, demand for funded childcare remains strong, with 4,068 children accessing some form of Early Years Entitlement during Autumn 2026.

B&NES continues to benefit from a diverse, high-quality early years sector. There are approximately 200 Ofsted-registered childcare providers, with 163 settings currently offering funded childcare places. Inspection outcomes remain strong, with most providers rated Good or Outstanding. Together, these providers offer approximately 4,111 registered places, equating to an estimated 5,281 childcare spaces when part-time attendance patterns are considered. However, this figure represents theoretical capacity across the local authority and should not be interpreted as an equivalent number of immediately available places. Demand varies by age group, area, and type of provision, meaning that sufficiency pressures can still arise within individual communities despite overall capacity appearing adequate.

Take-up of the expanded childcare entitlements remains high across all age groups. Around 1,884 three- and four-year-olds, 1,174 two-year-olds, and 1,010 children under two are accessing funded childcare. Support for disadvantaged children and those with additional needs also remains a priority, with children benefiting from Early Years Pupil Premium, SEND funding, Disability Access Funding, and specialist provision.

The report finds that childcare sufficiency varies significantly across B&NES. While overall provision is broadly sufficient, there are notable differences between wards. Some areas, including Kingsmead, Odd Down and Radstock, experience lower levels of local provision, while others, such as Saltford, Keynsham East and Moorlands, have surplus capacity. This highlights that the main challenge is the uneven distribution of childcare places rather than an overall shortage of provision. Consequently, some families may find it more difficult to secure childcare that is conveniently located and meets their individual requirements. Ongoing monitoring of demographic change and planned housing growth will therefore be important to ensure that childcare provision remains accessible and responsive to local demand.

Recent Department for Education programmes have provided investment into the sector, and this has continued to strengthen childcare capacity. Through capital funding programmes, 285 additional early years places have been created, exceeding original targets. Further expansion is anticipated through the Department for Education's School-Based Nursery Programme, with additional projects progressing across the authority.

School aged childcare has also grown substantially. The National Wraparound Childcare Programme has supported the creation or expansion of more than 1,000 places, increasing access to before- and after-school childcare. Alongside this, participation in the Free Breakfast Club Programme and Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme has expanded, providing additional support to children and families across B&NES.

Overall, B&NES continues to support a strong and high-quality childcare market that has responded positively to the expansion of childcare entitlements. While ongoing work is needed to address localised sufficiency challenges and support future demand arising from housing growth and demographic change, the evidence suggests that the council is well placed to meet the childcare needs of children and families across the area.

2. Introduction

This Autumn 2026 update of the Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report considers the current early years landscape across B&NES. It will also review the number of children residing in the local authority area, the availability of places within Early Years providers and the overall supply and demand for childcare across the sector. The most recent data has been used to reflect the rollout of the Early Years Entitlement (EYE) expansion for children aged 9-months to 4-years, including information on which settings are offering places under the EYE scheme.

In addition, this report presents data and information on the School Aged Childcare (SAC) projects that are currently continuing within B&NES.

When reviewing this report, it should be noted that the data may not always reflect the current occupancy of early years places and spaces. At the point of publication, the data may be up to six months out of date. It therefore provides a snapshot in time and does not take account of additional factors that may increase demand or reduce providers' capacity to accommodate children. These factors include working patterns, parental choice, and children attending settings across different wards

and/or neighbouring local authority areas. This report also excludes places and spaces used by families who are privately fee-paying.

Within this report, the term "places" refers to the number of Ofsted-registered childcare places within a setting, in line with statutory staff-to-child ratios. The term "spaces" refers to the total number of individual children accessing those registered places, rather than the number of available places within a setting.

For example, if one child attends a setting for two days per week and another child attends the same setting for three days per week, this would represent one registered place but two occupied spaces in total.

Determining early years places can be complex, as many children attend a range of sessions or divide their time across multiple providers. The picture is also fast-moving, with levels of demand fluctuating throughout the year.

3. Number of children aged 0 – 4 years-old within B&NES

The county of B&NES is classed as being 'urban with significant rural areas[1]'. Although the district includes the major urban centre of Bath, over 90% of B&NES consists of rural towns, villages and hamlets. According to ONS data between 26% to 49% of the population reside in rural areas. At the time of writing this report, there were approximately 6,159 children aged 0 – 4-years-old living across 33 wards within B&NES. The number of children per age group breaks down into the following:

Age of child:	
0–12-months-olds	1,332
1-year-olds	1,456
2-year-olds	1,564
3-year-olds	1,604
4-year-olds	203*

*The number of 4-year-olds quoted above does not include those 4-year-old children who are of school age and in primary education. There is a total of 1,793 4-year-old children living within B&NES.

It is also worth noting that this overall figure has decreased by approximately 140 children compared with the number of children residing in B&NES in September 2025. This coincides with the falling birthrates across the nation[2]. This means that

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification
[2] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/

there will be fewer children in B&NES accessing their Early Years Entitlement in September 2026.

Appendix A presents a breakdown of the number of children residing in each ward across B&NES who are eligible for a place in an Early Years setting. Analysis of this data indicates that the wards with the highest populations of children aged 0–4 are Keynsham South, Combe Down, Radstock, Paulton and Westfield, collectively accounting for approximately 1,522 children.

In contrast, the wards with the lowest numbers of children within this age group are Oldfield Park, Moorlands, High Littleton, Timsbury and Mendip, which together have an estimated population of around 447 children aged 0–4.

The notable disparity between these figures may be attributed to a range of factors, including the prevalence of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) associated with student populations, variations in local employment opportunities, and the characteristics of more rural areas, which typically have lower housing density and consequently smaller child populations.

3.1 Local Housing Plan

B&NES is currently consulting on its Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19), which sets out how future housing, employment and infrastructure needs could be delivered across the area. This consultation is an opportunity for residents, businesses and stakeholders to provide feedback before the Plan is submitted for independent examination by a Planning Inspector. Once adopted, the Local Plan will help guide where development takes place and ensure that new homes are supported by essential infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, transport links and community facilities.

Housing development plans will have a direct impact on the demand for Early Years providers and childcare places for children aged 0–4 living in wards identified for planned growth. Over the coming years, the pattern of need is expected to change as developments progress, with specific areas experiencing increased pressure on provision. Through this CSA report, B&NES will be able to monitor where housing development is commencing and, in turn, assess and comment on the sufficiency of early years provision within those areas.

The EYE Team are actively working with relevant stakeholders in relation to new housing developments to ensure that the needs of young children and their families

within B&NES are considered in relation to accessing Early Years Education and Childcare provisions and available spaces within their local area.

Further information can be found here: https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/planning

4. Providers within B&NES

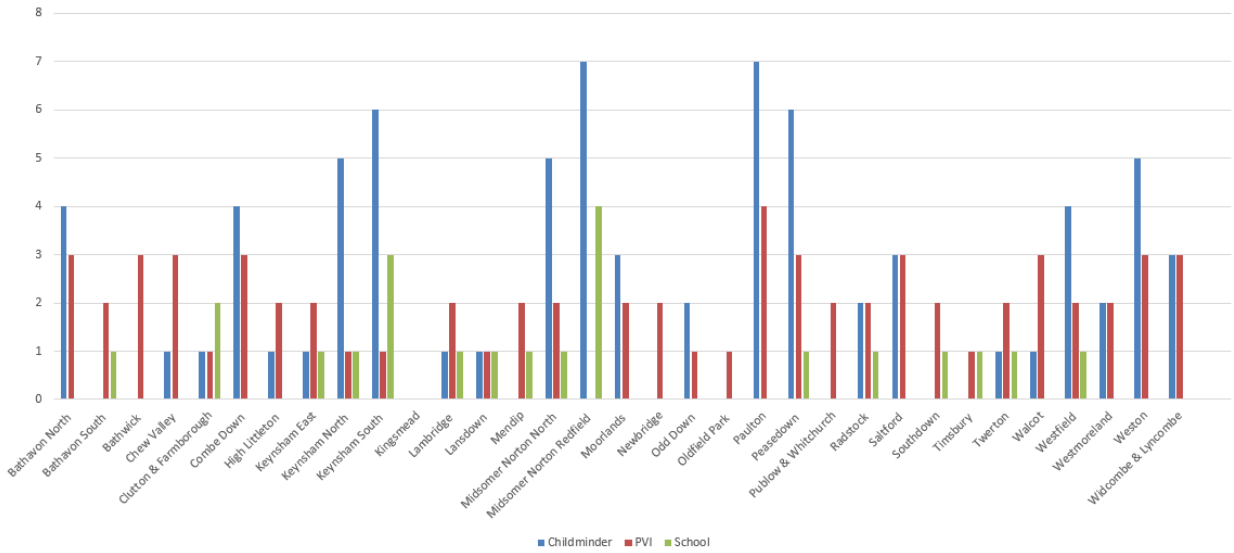
There are over 200 Ofsted-registered childcare providers listed on the LiveWell website, managed by B&NES Council. These providers offer a wide range of childcare options across different ages, from babies through to teenagers, and encompass a variety of provision types. Each setting tailors its offer to meet the individual childcare needs of families. Provision includes childminders, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings, as well as schools offering full-day care, sessional care, before- and after-school childcare, and holiday clubs.

During the Autumn 2026 headcount data collection, 163 of these settings offered the EYE funding to children from 9-months to 4-years-old; the breakdown of these settings is as follows:

Type of setting:	Approximate number of providers:
Childminder	76
PVI Settings	65
Schools	22

These Early Years Education and Childcare providers are spread across the wards within B&NES. The wards with the highest number of childcare providers are currently Midsomer Norton Redfield, Paulton, Peasedown and Keynsham South. These wards have at least ten Early Years Providers located within them. The wards with the lowest number of Early Years Providers are Kingsmead, Oldfield Park and Timsbury; these wards have two or fewer providers offering the EYE funding.

The graph below shows where the Early Years Education and Childcare providers are located across the wards within B&NES.



From the registered providers listed above, 55% offer the EYE funding all year round which equates to roughly 51 weeks of the year and 45% offer the EYE funding term-time only (38 weeks of the year).

Ofsted outcomes across the B&NES early years sector remain strong, with most childminders, group-based providers and school-based nursery provisions holding Good or Outstanding judgements, or achieving Expected, Strong or Exceptional Standards under the revised inspection framework. Inspection outcomes indicate that children across the authority generally have access to high-quality early education and childcare. Whilst a small number of providers have been identified as requiring additional support in specific areas, these are limited in number and will continue to be monitored through local authority quality improvement processes.

From reviewing the early years settings listed above alongside the Autumn Headcount EYE claims, the data indicates that provision is broadly distributed across the different age groups. Within the Autumn Headcount, 64% of providers offered places for children under the age of 2, 83% catered for 2-year-olds, and 80% provided places for children aged 3 and 4. This suggests that, while there is relatively strong sufficiency for funded places for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds, provision for children under-2 is more limited This is due to a shift in the age ranges that some providers are now choosing to accommodate. This change is largely attributable to individual settings refining their offer to focus on specific age groups, often based on factors such as staffing ratios, financial viability, and the suitability of premises.

Across the 163 settings included in this report, the combined Ofsted registered capacity amounts to 4,111 places. Within individual settings, a single place may be used by more than one child where attendance is part-time. As a result, the settings

can offer this place to more than one child on different days or times of the week, due to this there is not a definitive way of knowing exactly how many spaces are on offer in total. A calculation can be made to provide an indicative figure for the number of spaces that are available within childcare providers. It should be noted that this estimate will fluctuate over time, and additional factors—such as staffing levels, statutory adult-to-child ratios, and variations in attendance across different days of the week—must also be considered. Using this calculation, there are approximately 5,281 childcare spaces available across the different funding streams. These spaces may be taken up by children accessing Early Years Entitlement (EYE) funding as well as by families paying privately. The Council has no information on the latter so cannot assess how many places are filled that way or how many hours are paid for on top of the EYE.

The number of places offered by early years providers vary depending on the type of setting. Childminders typically offer between 3 and 6 places per day, depending on the ages of the children in their care, whereas some larger private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) settings can provide up to 160 places per day across all age groups. Naturally, both the availability of places and the number of children accessing each age group fluctuate in response to factors such as parental working patterns, demand for specific days, and part-time attendance arrangements.

Appendix B details a breakdown of where these Ofsted capacity childcare spaces are located within B&NES. The spaces detailed do not refer to spaces being available, but the total number of spaces within settings which children can utilise.

5. Early Years Entitlement Funding

The Early Years Entitlement (EYE) funding has been in place since the 1990s and has been progressively expanded over subsequent decades. This expansion resulted in all 3- and 4-year-old children in England being entitled to 15 hours of funded childcare per week. In 2017, the entitlement was further extended to support working families. Eligible families were then able to access an additional 15 funded hours, providing a total of up to 30 hours of funded childcare per week.

In 2023, the government announced a further expansion of the Early Years Childcare Entitlements for working families with children aged 9-months to four-years, to be implemented over a two-year period. Since September 2025, eligible working parents have been able to access up to 30 funded childcare hours per week, delivered over 38 weeks of the year, for children aged 9-months to 4-years.

In the Autumn 2026 term, approximately 4,068 children accessed an Early Years Entitlement (EYE), representing a decrease of around 360 children compared with the Autumn 2025 headcount. This equates to an approximate 8% reduction in the number of children accessing funded early years provision across B&NES.

Population data shows that the number of children residing in B&NES in September 2026 was lower than in September 2025 (see page 6 for birth data), which is likely to have contributed to the reduction in EYE participation. However, a range of factors may also be influencing these figures, including changes in parental demand for childcare, children starting early years provision at a later age, families no longer meeting eligibility criteria, and eligible families failing to reconfirm their funding codes within the required timescales.

These figures are evaluated in more detail below.

5.1 Early Years Entitlement Funding for 3-and 4-year-olds

B&NES have been offering children and their families the universal hours and the extended 30-hours since both schemes were launched.

During the autumn headcount, B&NES had approximately 1,884 3- and 4-year-old children accessing Early Years Entitlement across all its wards. This number can be broken down to identify approximately 768 children who are accessing only their Universal Entitlement, and 1,116 children who are accessing their Universal Entitlement and the Working Families Entitlements.

During the Autumn 2026 headcount there was a slight decrease of 16 children (0.8%) compared with Autumn 2025. Whilst overall participation remained broadly stable, there was a shift in the type of entitlement being accessed. The number of children accessing only the Universal Entitlement decreased by 32, while the number accessing both the Universal Entitlement and Working Families Entitlement increased by 16. This suggests that a greater proportion of eligible families are accessing the extended entitlement offer.

5.2 Early Learning for 2-year-olds (ELF2)

In February 2026, the government announced a change to the name of the funding available for some families with two-year-old children receiving government support. The funding was renamed from “Families Receiving Additional Support” to “Early Learning for Two-Year-Olds (ELF2)”. This change aims to reduce any stigma

previously associated with the term "disadvantaged" and to encourage families to access the funding without perceiving it as having a negative connotation.

Since 2013, families who meet the ELF2 eligibility criteria have been able to access 15 hours of Early Years Entitlement funding for their 2-year-old children, starting from the term after their second birthday. This funded childcare can be accessed through a range of Ofsted-registered providers, including playgroups and pre-schools, nursery schools, nursery classes within primary schools, children's centres, and childminders.

Currently, B&NES supports 133 2-year-old children through the ELF2 funding entitlement. These children are accessing places across a range of provision types, including PVI settings, childminders, and a proportion of school-based settings. The number of two-year-old children accessing the targeted entitlement in B&NES has decreased from 172 children in Autumn 2025 to 133 children in Autumn 2026, a reduction of 39 children (22.7%).

Whilst this represents a notable fall in participation, it is likely to reflect an increase in parental employment and a corresponding rise in eligibility for the Working Families Early Years Entitlement. There remains a cohort of eligible children who are not accessing their entitlement, and the Council continues to undertake targeted engagement activities to increase take-up. The promotion of dual eligibility for both funding streams remains a priority, helping to ensure families maintain access to funded childcare should their circumstances change.

5.3 Early Years Entitlement Funding for 2-year-olds

Following the phased expansion of the Early Years Entitlement (EYE) for 2-year-old children, from 1st September 2025 eligible working parents have been able to access up to 30 hours of funded childcare per week, delivered over 38 weeks of the year, from the term after their child's second birthday.

Autumn 2026 headcount data indicates that approximately 1,174 two-year-old children are currently accessing EYE funding through the Working Families entitlement. When this is compared to how many 2-year-olds are residing in B&NES, this indicates that 75% of children of this age range are accessing their Early Years Entitlement.

Whilst this remains a strong level of participation, it represents a slight decrease (2.1%) compared with the Autumn 2025 headcount, when approximately 1,200 children were accessing funded provision. The reduction is relatively small and may reflect wider demographic changes. Despite the decrease, take-up of funded early

education among two-year-olds remains high, demonstrating continued demand for childcare provision and ongoing engagement with the Early Years Entitlement programme across B&NES.

5.4 Early Years Entitlement Funding for children aged under 2-years-old

Similarly, since 1st September 2025, working families of children aged 9-months-old and above have been able to access 30 hours of Early Years Entitlement per week (over 38 weeks of the year) from the term after their child turns 9-months-old.

The Autumn 2026 headcount data shows that approximately 1,010 children aged under two years are currently accessing Early Years Entitlement funding. This represents a small increase (1%) compared with the Autumn 2025 headcount, when just under 1,000 children were accessing funded provision.

Participation levels have remained broadly stable over the past year, indicating continued demand for childcare places for children aged 9-months to 2-years. The data suggests that a strong proportion of eligible children are successfully accessing funded childcare within settings that cater for this age group. This is encouraging given the ongoing expansion of the Early Years Entitlement programme and indicates that the local childcare market has, to date, been able to respond to increasing demand from younger children and their families.

5.5 Early Years Pupil Premium

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) has been available for all children aged 9-months to 4-years-old since September 2024. The EYPP hourly rate for 2026/2027 has increased by 15% from £1.00 to £1.15 an hour.

Since the expansion of the Early Years Entitlements, B&NES has continued to actively promote EYPP to all early year's providers to ensure that every child who is eligible for this additional funding is able to benefit from it. At the time of writing this report, approximately 305 children within B&NES are accessing EYPP as part of their Early Years Entitlement offer. This is a decrease in the total number from the summer headcount figures; this will be due to a number of children who have now left their early years provisions and who are now attending Primary School. The school will now claim for their Pupil Premium on their school census. As the year continues, we expect the number of EYPP to increase as more children join the settings and checks are undertaken to check eligibility of these families.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is typically paid to support children from low-income families and those in receipt of income-related benefits. It is also available for children who are looked after, adopted, or subject to a Special Guardianship Order under the care of the Local Authority.

EYPP is specifically designed to help narrow the attainment gap between these children and their peers, as children from eligible families often experience lower learning outcomes from pre-school through to school age and beyond.

6. Early Years SEND Funding in B&NES

B&NES provide Early Years SEND funding to support children aged 9-months to 5-years with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) to access early education and successfully transition into school. Funding is overseen by the multi-agency Early Years SEND Inclusion Panel (SENDIP).

Two main funding streams are available:

- **Inclusion Support Funding (ISF)** helps early years settings provide additional support, such as increasing ratios within the setting environment. Each child's needs are individual and different; therefore, a range of other support packages have been used in addition to increased ratio support. Research shows that a package of support (not just 1:1) is a better way of supporting children with SEND to develop their independence, resilience and interactions through small group work (lower ratio support) and targeted interventions. This includes a range of interventions such as purchasing additional speech and language support, occupational therapy support and additional resources.
- **Transition Support Funding (TSF)** supports children in their pre-school year and into reception, with funding for both the early years setting and the receiving school (during reception) to ensure a smooth and enhanced transition.

In addition, some children may be entitled to the Disability Access Fund (DAF) which is a UK government payment designed to help early years settings support young children with disabilities or additional needs. DAF is a one-off annual payment paid to early years providers. The funding is intended to help settings improve access and inclusion, such as buying specialist equipment, supporting staff training and enhancing provision to support the child's needs. A child qualifies if they are aged from 9-months up to compulsory school age, receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and are accessing Early Years Entitlement (EYE) funding.

Funding requests are usually made by early years settings using evidence from the graduated approach, though health professionals can submit requests in some

cases. Parents and carers are encouraged to discuss concerns with their child's setting or health visitor in the first instance.

Due to data protection and sensitivity considerations, the level of detail that can be shared for identifiable data is limited. The following headline information provides an overview of Early Years Entitlement data for SEND children who are receiving at the start of September 2026. Please note that this information reflects the current position within B&NES at the time of writing this report and is likely to evolve over the academic year as decisions are finalised.

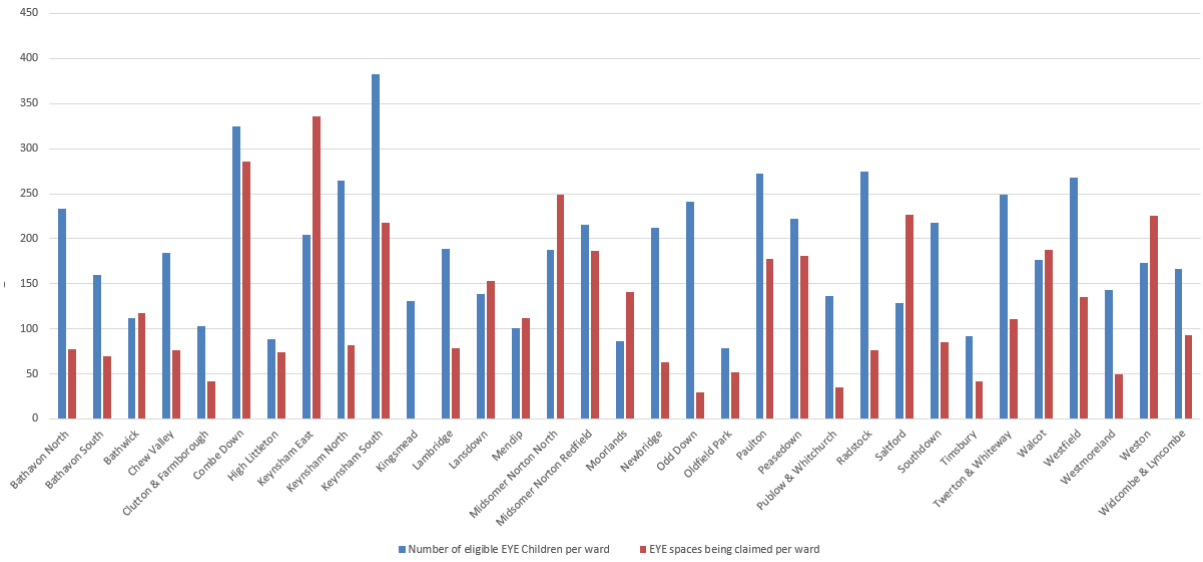
- The number of children receiving Inclusion Support Funding (ISF) is 114.
- The number of children in receipt of Disability Access Fund (DAF) funding is 48.
- The number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is 26.
- The number of children attending specialist provision is 31.

The headline figures outlined above have decreased slightly since the Spring Sufficiency Report was published. This decline reflects the transition of a number of children from early years provision into primary school. Support for these children will continue through their primary schools, who will now be responsible for holding the data.

B&NES Early Years SEND funding plays a vital role in ensuring that young children with additional needs are supported to access early education and achieve positive outcomes. Through targeted funding streams such as ISF, TSF, and DAF, alongside robust multi-agency oversight, the approach enables settings, families, and professionals to work collaboratively to meet children's needs and support successful transitions into school.

7. Sufficiency of Places Available

An assessment of childcare sufficiency has been undertaken by comparing the number of eligible children residing in each ward and the number of Early Years Entitlement (EYE) places being claimed. The comparisons can be seen in the graph below.



Expressing this as a percentage provides a clear indication of whether local supply meets, exceeds, or falls short of potential demand. From the current data used from the Autumn Headcount Data and the most recent GP data, there are 4,068 EYE places currently being claimed for the 6,159 eligible children, this equates to an average sufficiency rate of approximately 66%. This indicates a potential shortfall when compared directly with the number of children and number of spaces being claimed. It must be noted that this analysis does not consider children who are accessing early years childcare through privately funded arrangements, those not eligible for funded entitlements, children cared for informally by family and friends, or families who choose to keep children at home until they are ready to enter a childcare setting or begin school. In addition, families do not necessarily attend provision in the county they live in so Councils can be a net importer or exporter of children.

Furthermore, the data does not reflect a range of additional factors that influence demand and accessibility, including parental working patterns, variations in attendance preferences (with higher demand typically observed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and lower demand on Mondays and Fridays), parental choice of provider, and the movement of families commuting into or out of the local authority area.

As a result, despite the availability of recorded places, families may have trouble in securing childcare that aligns with their individual needs, including preferred locations, providers, and attendance patterns. This may limit their ability to take up a place within their chosen setting or within practical travel parameters and travel out of borders.

The percentage sufficiency data reveals significant variation between wards, highlighting localised pressures and imbalances. Several wards are experiencing shortages (below 50% sufficiency), where provision meets less than half of potential demand. These include:

- Kingsmead (0%)
- Odd Down (~12%)
- Publow and Whitchurch (~26%)
- Radstock (~28%)
- Keynsham North (~31%)

In these areas, access to local childcare is likely to be particularly constrained, and families may face limited choice or the need to travel outside their immediate area.

A larger number of wards fall within the moderate shortage range (50%–80%), including Westfield, Keynsham South, Paulton and Oldfield Park.

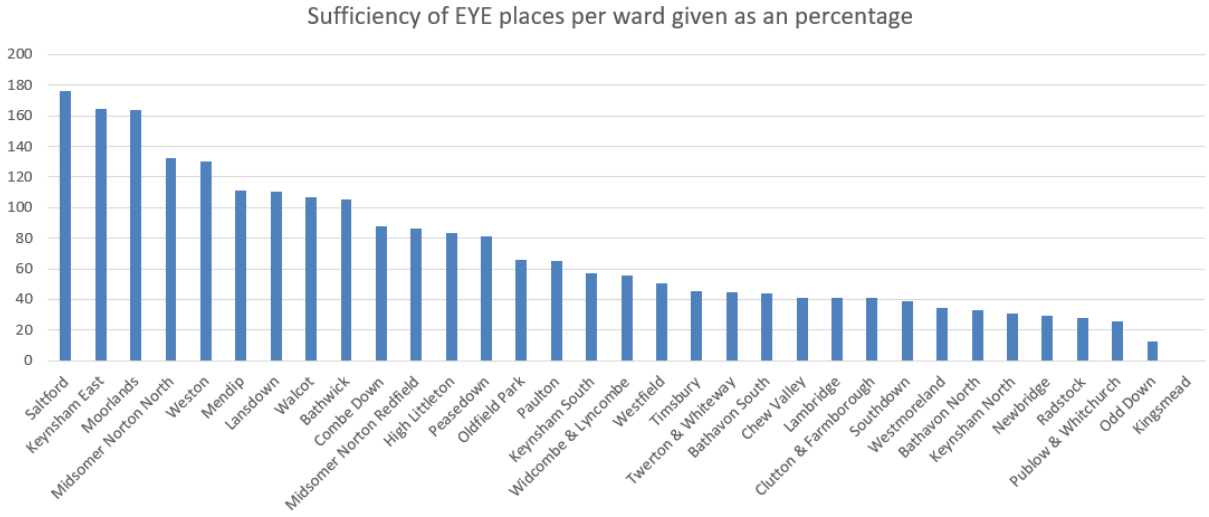
Some wards demonstrate broadly balanced provision (80%–110%), where supply is more closely aligned with local demand. These include areas such as Peasedown, High Littleton, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Combe Down and Walcot.

Conversely, several wards show surplus capacity (above 130%), including:

- Saltford (~176%)
- Keynsham East (~165%)
- Moorlands (~164%)
- Midsomer Norton North (~132%)
- Weston (~130%)

These surpluses may reflect overprovision in certain areas or indicate that settings are serving families from neighbouring wards.

The graph below illustrates the sufficiency of Early Years Entitlement (EYE) places across wards, presented as a percentage and ranked from highest to lowest. It highlights the wards with the greatest offering of EYE places at the start of the chart, descending to those with little or no capacity towards the end. This provides a clear comparison of the distribution of childcare capacity across B&NES.



The findings highlight that the primary challenge is not solely the overall number of places, but their distribution relative to where children live. The presence of both substantial deficits and surpluses indicates a spatial mismatch between supply and demand. This may have several implications for some families. Families in lower-sufficiency wards may experience reduced access and increased travel requirements. The surplus capacity in other areas may not be fully utilised due to geographical, transport, or preference barriers and the current pattern of provision may contribute to inequalities in access to early education and childcare.

8. Future Prospective Places and New Settings

Over the past 6 months, since the previous reporting period, several new childminders have joined the profession and registered to deliver Early Years Entitlement (EYE) funding. The number of overall childminders has not increased as unfortunately the same number of childminders have left the profession for reasons such as retirement and change of career.

B&NES continues to engage with existing providers who are seeking to expand their businesses through the opening of additional settings. However, many face significant challenges, including securing suitable premises and fully staffing new provision due to ongoing recruitment difficulties. The Early Years Team have supported the recruitment within early years settings by developing a recruitment website dedicated to early years jobs within B&NES: https://www.shapeyourfuturebathnes.org.uk/. It is hoped that this dedicated recruitment website for B&NES will ease some of the recruitment difficulties for both providers and prospective applicants.

The Early Years Funding Capital Grant project has been in progress for the past 18 months, during which, capital funding was allocated to a range of provider-led projects across the county in areas such as Paulton, Keynsham, Twerton and Bathavon. Investment was made to 14 providers, including both PVI settings and childminders. Projects have varied in scope, ranging from the purchase of additional storage and internal reconfiguration of space to physical extensions that increase overall floor area. While differing in scale, all projects shared a common objective: to support the sufficiency of early years places for children accessing provision through the expanded Early Years Entitlements for eligible working parents.

All 14 projects have now been successfully completed and are actively offering the newly created places to children accessing the Early Years Entitlement. Notably, the actual total number of places created exceeded the original projections submitted at the application stage. This represents a significant achievement, increasing the availability of high-quality early years provision for local families and ensuring that the funding has delivered greater capacity and impact than initially anticipated. The additional places will help meet growing demand for childcare and support more children to access their funded entitlements.

The table below provides a comparison of these figures:

	Predicted number of places	**Actual number of places created at time of writing report**
Under 2s	59	101
2-year-olds	137	134
3- to 4-year-olds*	24	50
Total:	**220**	**285**

* Unfunded spaces - created consequently because of making additional spaces within the setting.

All new places created are accessible to all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

9. School-Based Nurseries

The School-Based Nurseries Programme is a Department for Education (DfE) initiative in England that funds the creation and expansion of nursery provision on primary school sites, with the aim of increasing access to affordable, high-quality early education, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

The School-Based Nurseries Programme provides capital funding to create or expand nursery spaces on school premises. It supports the government's wider childcare expansion, and the 30 hours funded childcare offer.

The programme is being delivered in 3 phases:

Phase 1 (2024–2025) focused on the initial rollout of the programme and funded around 300 schools. This phase created up to 6,000 new nursery places across England and primarily concentrated on making use of surplus space within existing school buildings. Within B&NES, St. Johns CofE Primary in Keynsham school was successfully granted funding and has been successfully offering EYE provision since September 2025.

Phase 2 (2025–2026) built on this foundation with a further £45 million of investment. Schools were able to apply for up to £150,000 each in capital funding, and eligibility was extended to include maintained nursery schools. This phase placed a stronger emphasis on supporting disadvantaged communities and is expected to deliver at least a further 300 school-based nurseries, opening during the 2026–27 academic year. Schools have now been notified if this application was successful. Clutton Primary School was successful within round 2. Development of this project started imminently, and the school launched the nursery in September 2026.

Phase 3 (2027–2030) represents a shift to a local authority-led model. Under this phase, councils are responsible for submitting strategic, multi-year plans to expand provision in areas of greatest need. These plans can include provision in primary schools, maintained nursery schools and Best Start Family Hubs, with a strong focus on effective place planning, inclusion for children with SEND, and achieving value for money. B&NES contacted all schools across the county and asked them if they would be interested in applying for an SBN. A total of 7 applications have been submitted by B&NES on behalf of schools across the county to the DfE for SBN funding. B&NES fully supports these proposals and is now awaiting further information from the DfE, which is expected in Spring 2027, to determine whether any of the applications have been successful and to understand the next steps required.

The funding is capital only and can be used for a range of building-related purposes. This includes converting or refurbishing existing classrooms, building or extending nursery spaces, and installing essential facilities such as toilets, kitchens and nappy-change areas. Funding may also be used to improve accessibility and inclusion through SEND adaptations, as well as to cover essential building works

such as heating, electrical systems and fire safety improvements. The funding cannot be used for staffing costs or any other ongoing revenue expenses.

10. School Aged Childcare

10.1 Headline Outcomes of the Wraparound Childcare Programme

Since September 2024, B&NES has delivered the Department for Education's Wraparound Childcare Programme to increase access to childcare before and after the school day for primary-aged children. The programme has focused on expanding existing provision, creating new provision where none existed, extending operating hours, and supporting the long-term sustainability of providers.

As of July 2024, 13 PVI providers (excluding childminders) delivered wraparound provision locally. Schools themselves accounted for 72% of before-school provision and 62% of after-school provision. Prior to the programme, provision was inconsistent:

- 5% of schools had no wraparound offer;
- 10% lacked either before- or after-school provision;
- Only 45% offered a full programme in line with Department for Education guidance (or equivalent hours);
- The remainder provided partial provision.

These figures reflected availability of provision rather than capacity, with many settings operating at full capacity and reporting waiting lists.

Programme funding has supported both new provision and expansion of oversubscribed services.

By September 2026, 56 projects had been approved across schools, private providers and childminders, with total grant commitments more than £875,000 revenue funding and £64,760 capital funding.

Now the National Wraparound Childcare Programme has officially ended, the key outcomes achieved through the programme include:

- 1,098 wraparound childcare places created or expanded across B&NES.
- 507 new full wraparound places created, providing access to both breakfast and after-school childcare.
- 58% of schools now offer full wraparound provision (with minor variations in hours).
- Delivery of a range of projects including:

  - expansion of existing breakfast and after-school clubs;
  - introduction of new breakfast or after-school provision where only one element previously existed;
  - extension of operating hours to better meet parental demand;
  - creation of entirely new wraparound childcare provision.
- Increased childcare availability through partnerships with school-run provision, private providers, sports providers, nurseries and registered childminders.
- Only two schools have no provision, with a further seven offering only breakfast OR after school club.
- Seven settings ceased operating their wraparound childcare provision during the final months of the programme, citing financial viability challenges as the primary reason for closure.
- Demand for paid childcare has been identified as low in Twerton, Paulton and Southdown.
- 6 schools have reapplied for funding to further expand provision due to strong uptake.

The programme has supported provision across a wide range of communities including Bath, Keynsham, Radstock, Midsomer Norton and several rural villages. Investment has enabled providers to recruit staff, purchase equipment, improve facilities and establish sustainable childcare models that support working families.

Monitoring information indicates that most funded projects have successfully implemented their planned expansion and continue to operate. Several providers have reported strong take-up of places and growing demand from families. As with the wider childcare sector, some providers continue to face challenges relating to staffing, recruitment and long-term sustainability, particularly where demand remains low or schools are in smaller rural communities. The local authority continues to work alongside providers to address these challenges and maximise the availability of childcare places.

Overall, the programme has significantly increased the availability of school age childcare across B&NES and contributed towards the national ambition for families to be able to access childcare from 8am to 6pm, helping parents and carers to work, train and study while ensuring children have access to safe, enriching environments outside of the school day.

10.2 National Free Breakfast Club Programme

Commencing in April 2025, the government initiated its commitment to provide a free breakfast club in every state-funded school with primary-aged pupils across England.

The programme is designed to remove barriers to educational engagement by ensuring children arrive at school on time, well-nourished, and ready to learn.

To support its development, 750 Early Adopter schools were selected to pilot the initiative and provide valuable insights to inform the national rollout during April 2025. Peasedown St. John Primary School and St Michael's Junior School were among those chosen to participate in the trial and have successfully delivered a universal free breakfast club offering to all pupils ever since.

Following the initial phase, the next stage of the national programme commenced after Easter 2026, with a further three schools in B&NES joining the initiative: North Star 180, St Martin's Garden Primary School, and Twerton Infant School.

Whitchurch Primary School joined the programme in September 2026 to bring the total number of participating schools across B&NES to six.

At the time of writing, the Department for Education is expected to announce details of the next cohort of schools eligible to join the Free Breakfast Club Programme. Expressions of interest are anticipated to open in early 2027, with successful schools expected to begin delivering their free breakfast club offer from April 2027. Several schools across B&NES have already expressed an interest in joining the programme, subject to the publication of the eligibility criteria.

10.3 Holiday Activities & Food Programme (HAF)

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is now coordinated and delivered in-house by B&NES, having previously been commissioned through an external provider. As part of the Best Start in Life framework, the HAF programme has been strategically aligned with the National Wraparound Childcare Programme and the National Free Breakfast Club Programme to strengthen partnership working, improve intelligence sharing, and enhance collaboration between providers across the local authority.

Summer 2026 was the first HAF programme to be coordinated and delivered directly by B&NES Council.

Key outcomes from the Summer 2026 programme included:

- 5,471 vouchers issued to children eligible for benefits-related free school meals.
- 6,330 places were commissioned across the programme. A total of 6,714 bookings were made by families, reflecting re-booking following cancellations, and 5,314 places were attended.

- 14% of programme funding was used to support children and young people who were not eligible for free school meals but were identified by the local authority as likely to benefit from HAF provision. This was within the Department for Education's permitted threshold of 15%.
- 37 providers delivered HAF activities across 57 locations, including five specialist SEND provisions.
- 293 SEND-specific places were commissioned, with 219 places attended.

From September 2026, changes to the national Free School Meals eligibility criteria will affect the number of children who may qualify for HAF. As eligibility for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is linked to Free School Meals entitlement, these changes have the potential to alter the demand for HAF provision in B&NES. The full impact on programme participation, capacity requirements, and future delivery arrangements is not yet known and will continue to be monitored as further data becomes available.

11. Conclusion

B&NES continues to maintain a strong and diverse childcare market that is responding positively to the expansion of the Early Years Entitlement programme. Despite a reduction in the population of children aged 0 to 4 and a corresponding decrease in the number of children accessing funded childcare, overall participation remains high across all entitlement streams, and most children continue to have access to high-quality early education and childcare provision.

The evidence presented within this report indicates that childcare provision across B&NES is broadly sufficient to meet current demand. However, there are notable variations between wards, with some areas experiencing lower levels of provision and others demonstrating surplus capacity. This highlights that the key challenge for the local authority is not the overall number of childcare places available, but their distribution and accessibility for families living in different communities.

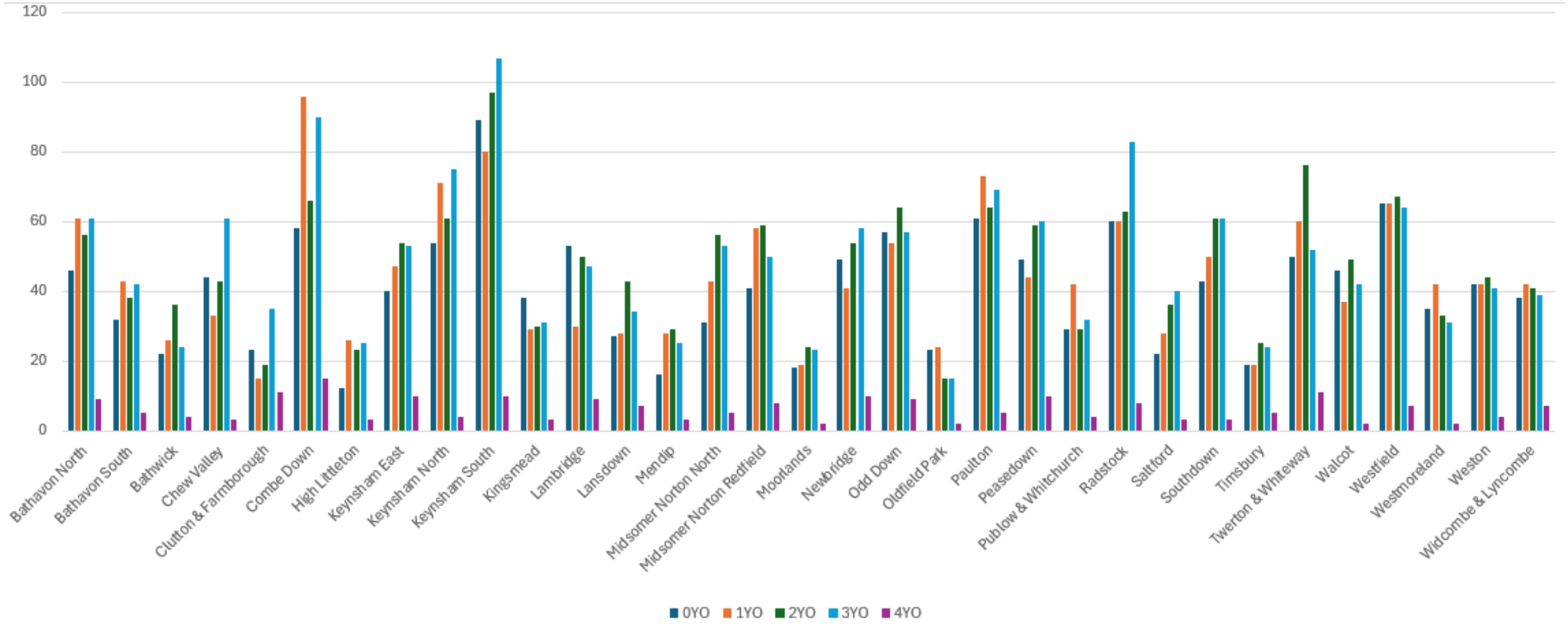
Continued investment in the early years sector, including capital expansion projects, School-Based Nursery developments, wraparound childcare, and support for children with SEND, has strengthened local provision and increased capacity across the county. Looking ahead, B&NES will continue to monitor demographic trends, housing growth, participation levels, and emerging sufficiency pressures to ensure that childcare provision remains accessible, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of children and families.

Overall, the findings of this report suggest that B&NES is well placed to meet its Childcare Sufficiency Duty and support children to access high-quality early education and childcare provision now. In the not-too-distant future with a large expansion of housing proposed across the Council, this report will need to continue to monitor how the market responds to new families moving into the area and whether market forces or direct intervention are required to ensure ongoing sufficiency of provision.

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Appendix A: Number of children per B&NES ward



Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Appendix B: Number of Ofsted capacity childcare spaces within B&NES

