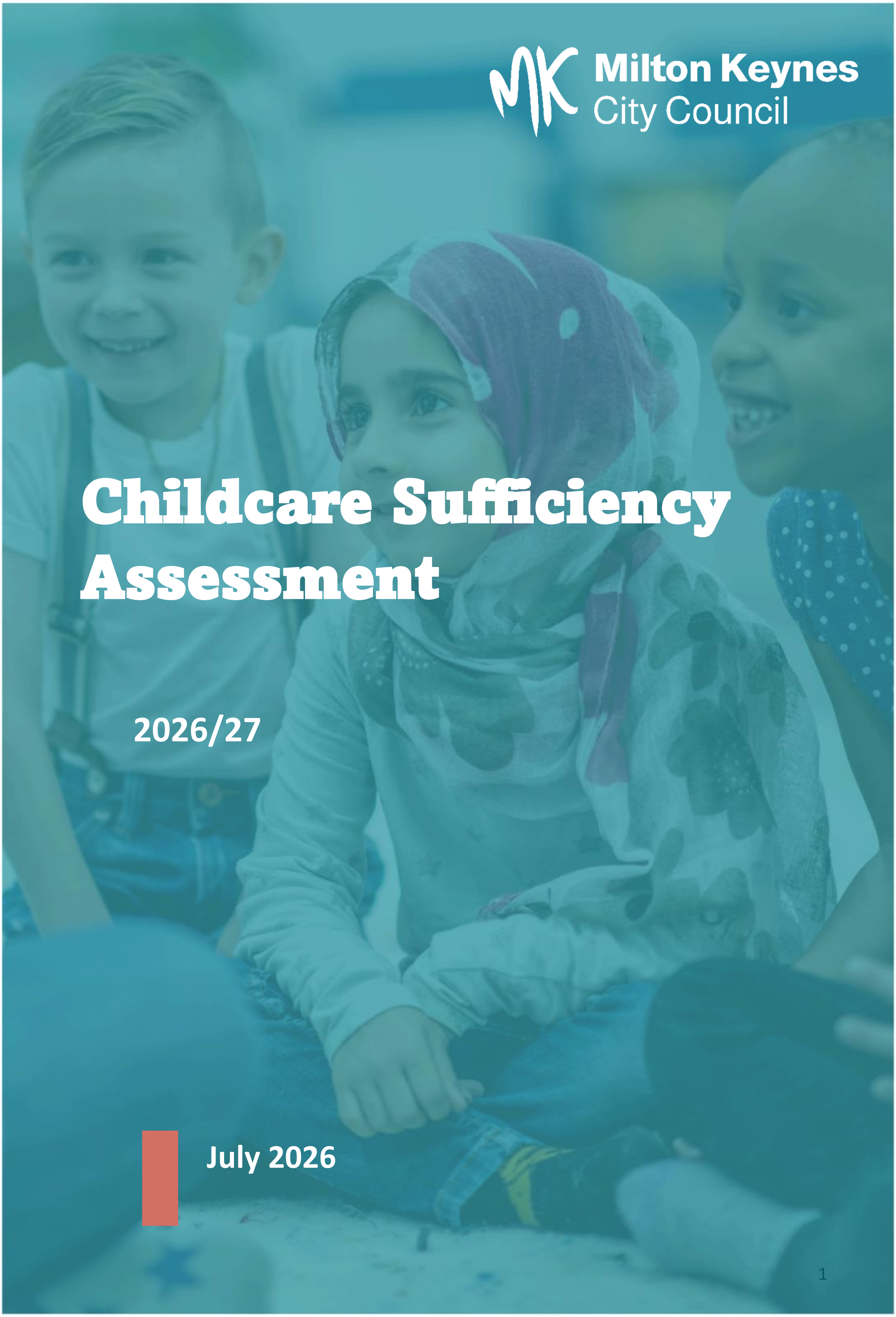

Milton Keynes City Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

2026/27

July 2026

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Contents

Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require it. This includes securing provision of funded early education entitlement places for eligible young children under compulsory school age. Local authorities must secure early years provision free of charge for eligible children, including:

- 15 hours a week for all 3- and 4-year-olds (universal entitlement)
- 15 hours a week for eligible 2- year- olds Early Learning for 2 Year Olds (Previously Families Receiving Additional Support)
- 30 hours a week for eligible working parents from 9 months.

There is no obligation on parents to access early education provision; however, evidence shows that access to high quality early education provision improves the life chances of children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In order to improve the well-being of young children and reduce social inequalities, there is a duty for LAs to identify parents who may be unlikely to access 'early childhood services'. LAs and relevant partners should encourage all parents to take advantage of these services as they may be of benefit to them and their young children.

Full statutory guidance can be found here

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provides an overview of the current childcare market within Milton Keynes evaluating the sufficiency, quality, and affordability of provision for children and families across the area. Drawing on a range of data sources—including provider data and demographic trends—this report identifies strengths, gaps, and emerging pressures within the local childcare system. It also reflects the impact of national policy changes and local conditions on both supply and demand.

Its purpose is to help the local authority assess the volume and location of childcare places and identify any potential areas where provision may be insufficient. It is also intended to support providers in mapping demand across Milton Keynes, helping to stimulate market growth to ensure sufficient childcare places are available. We expect this to help both existing and prospective providers better understand the market, with findings used to inform strategic planning.

The findings of this assessment will inform strategic planning, commissioning, and partnership working across the local authority and its partners. It supports our wider ambition to ensure all children can access high-quality early education and care, giving them the best start in life while enabling parents to work, train, and contribute to the local economy.

Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes has undergone rapid and sustained growth since its designation as a new town in 1967. Originally planned for 250,000 people, it has now evolved into one of the UK's fastest-growing cities, driven by population growth, strong economic performance, and proactive housing delivery. Sufficient quality childcare is vital in supporting the growth of Milton Keynes. In recent years, population size has increased by 15.3%, from around 248,800 in 2011 to 287,000 in 2021 census. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%), and higher than some of our neighbours (Buckinghamshire 9.5% & North Northamptonshire 13.5 %). It is critical that supply of childcare provision in Milton Keynes continues to meet demand as the city grows over the next 25 years.

Milton Keynes currently has an estimated population of around 306k residents, based on the mid-2024 Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimate. However, with continued diverse growth comes challenges. The Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IMD 2025) ranks Milton Keynes as the 102nd most deprived local authority out of 153 upper-tier local authorities in England on the overall Rank of Average Score measure. However, within Milton Keynes, there is considerable variation in deprivation levels, with pockets of marked deprivation concentrated in the Woughton & Fishermead, Stony Stratford, Bletchley East and Wolverton wards. Overall, eight Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOAs) fall within the most deprived 10% nationally whilst ten LSOAs are among the least deprived 10% nationally. We therefore need to take this into consideration when we plan for services across the city.

Following the May 2026 local elections, the changes introduced by The Milton Keynes (Electoral Changes) Order 2025 came into effect, increasing the number of wards to 21 and revising ward boundaries. These changes are not reflected in the 2026/27 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment but will be included in future editions if required. They do not affect our projections, which are based on catchment areas and Family Centre reach areas rather than wards.

We are currently in the process of delivering our new city plan which outlines our vision up to 2050. The plans seek to provide 60k additional homes over the period. Through previous local plans, neighbourhood plans and planning permissions (excluding CMK) we already have close to 23,000 new homes due to come forward by 2050. This means the MK City Plan 2050 seeks to allocate land that can deliver around 37,000 additional homes by 2050 which could mean the city's population approaches 500,000.

The Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 has been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination, subject to approval we hope our new plan will be able to be adopted in late 2026/early 2027.

A significant proportion of the new housing proposed is planned for new development areas of Milton Keynes. It is therefore important, as far as practically possible, that new childcare provision is delivered within these new areas and delivered in line with the additional demand new housing brings as developments build out across the years to ensure that residents continue to have access to local high quality education provision.

Current Position

Marketplace
Despite the retention of our early years duties, the operation of the early years sector has changed significantly over the past decade where Local Authorities role and relationship with the sector has altered from one of provision deliverer to one of market management and quality assurance.

Local authorities are reliant on Private, Voluntary, and independent providers, and school based provision to fulfil their duty to secure sufficient provision for those who need it. Providers within the early years marketplace deliver provision through a variety of operating models to ensure that there is the flexibility available to meet the needs of children and their families. This provision can range from childminder to playgroups through to year-round full day nursery. In Milton Keynes private, voluntary and independent (PVI) organisations account for the majority of the funded early education and childcare market (85%). These providers operate from a variety of different premises (including purpose-built facilities, shared community buildings, schools, churches, converted offices and domestic premises). The remainder of the sector consists of nursery schools and nursery classes within schools. These providers offer a mixture of full day care or sessional care dependent upon the type of setting to provide parents with a mixture of choice to meet needs of families across the city.

For the purposes of monitoring our early years supply, we have grouped early years provision into the following categories:

- Childminders
- Day Nurseries
- Nursery Unit at Independent School
- Pre-School Playgroup
- School Based Nursery Provision – Includes both School nursery classes and Nursery schools

Despite the challenges the marketplace has faced over the years due to the impact of Covid19, the Milton Keynes early years sector has remained relatively buoyant in comparison to the national position. In Milton Keynes, the number of providers has remained relatively stable over the past 6 years with the number of places available slightly increasing (1%). This can largely be attributed to an increased number of places being offered at nursery settings as their operational models enable them greater flexibility in what they are able to offer, and the significant focus locally on ensuring parents are aware of their entitlements to early education, and how it benefits children.

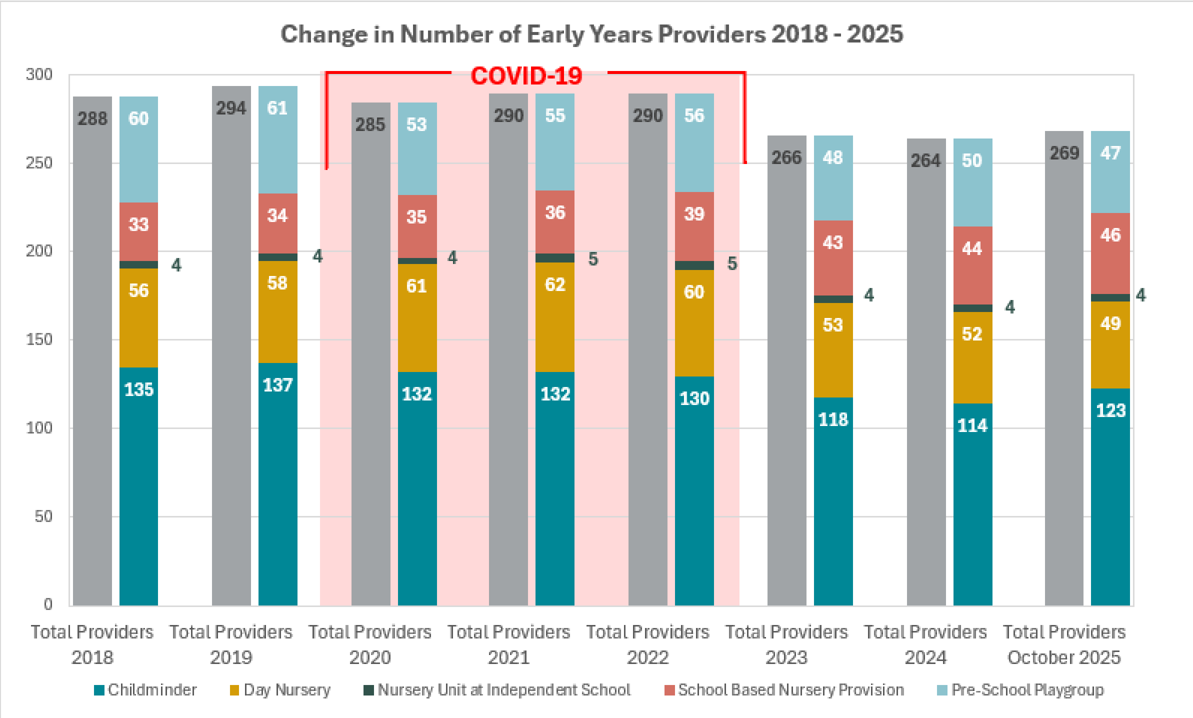


Figure 1: Number of funded Childcare providers by type 2018 - October 2025

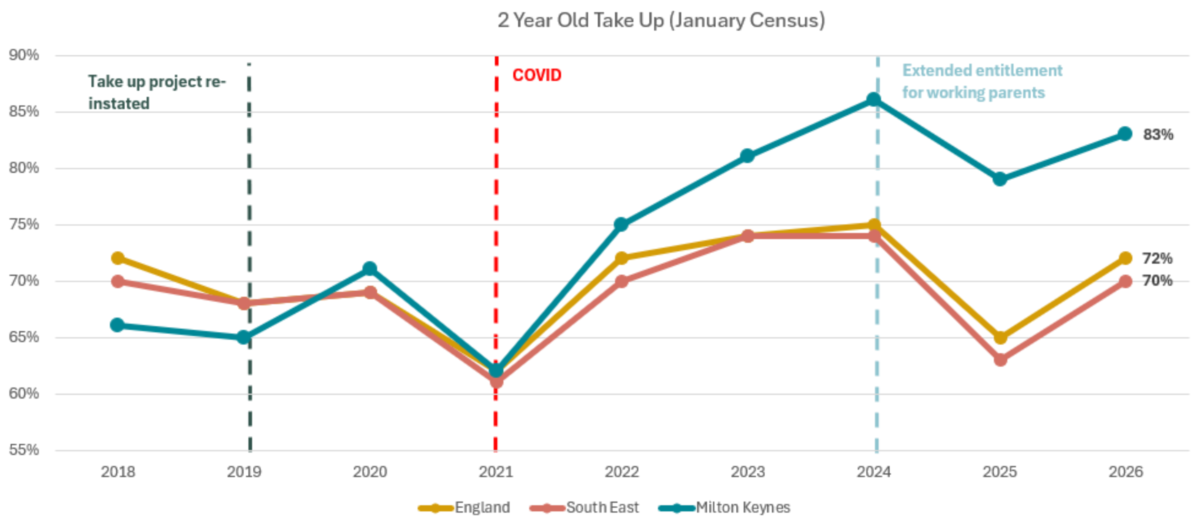
Two-Year-Old entitlement take up

When the statutory duty to offer free early education provision to all disadvantaged two-year olds was introduced it was supported by initial trajectory funding which Milton Keynes City Council used effectively to deliver a participation project which included a significant promotional campaign. Participation rates across Milton Keynes were consistently higher than that of the Southeast region and the national average. The participation project and promotional campaign stopped following the expiration of the initial trajectory funding, and Milton Keynes subsequently experienced a decrease in participation rates during 2018 and 2019.

In recognition of the reduced take up, a participation project and promotional campaign was re-instated in 2019 and has been running ever since, using centrally retained funding from the early years block. The project particularly focusses on improving direct engagement with families at the point they become eligible for the scheme. In addition to the information available on our webpages, and writing directly to inform families of their entitlements, this also includes colleagues within our Family Centres speaking directly with the eligible families to identify their individual barriers to accessing, supporting them to overcome these, and reporting back to the project group to inform further strategic planning and development.

Whilst there was an overall drop in 2021, due to the impact of covid at the point of the January Census, take up rates have continued to remain significantly higher than regional and national. In line with the national and regional picture, participation dropped in 2025 following implementation of the 30hours entitlement for working parents (see graph). However, the data integrity for this period is compromised as a result of national coding challenges of how to split the take up coding of early learning for two year olds and 2 year old working parent entitlement. It is very unlikely that participation had actually reduced by the percentages the data is displaying. The DfE have now resolved this coding issue.

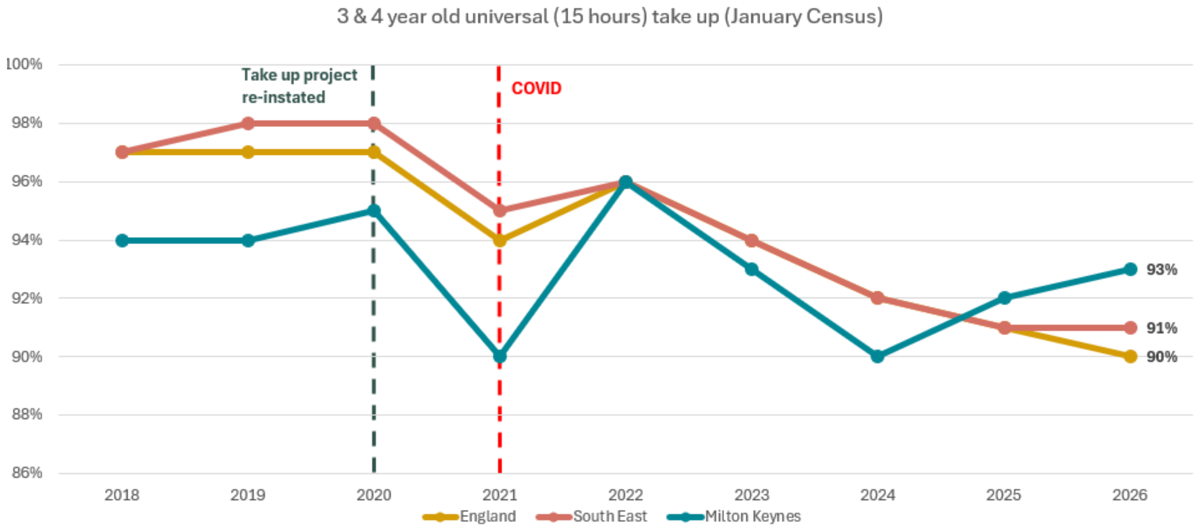
At the point of January 2026 census, participation has increased to 83%. This significantly higher than national (72%) and regional (70%).



Universal three- and four-year-old entitlement take up
Historically, Milton Keynes participation in universal three- and four-year-olds has been consistently lower than regional and national levels. Previous investigations have resulted in knowledge that much of this is to do with the mobility of families. DfE participation data for 2020 showed that take up in Milton Keynes had increased, which bucked the national and regional trends, and meant rates in Milton Keynes were only slightly below.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected both the availability of childcare provision and parental demand for places, particularly at the time of the January 2021 census. As a result, take-up rates fell nationally compared with previous years. Although rates recovered strongly following the pandemic and returned to pre-COVID levels by the January 2022 census, take-up has since declined nationally and regionally. Locally, take-up rates also decreased during this period.

However, since 2024, local take-up rates have bucked national and regional trends, continuing to increase year on year. By the January 2026 census, local take-up had reached 93%, exceeding both the national rate of 90% and the regional rate of 91%.



At time of writing, no national comparable dataset have been released for under 2 entitlement. Once released, more established and greater datasets are available, we will incorporate detailed take up analysis for working parent entitlements for under 2's in future years assessments.

The increase in early education participation rates at high quality early years provisions has had a positive impact on child development. The latest published data (relating to 2024/25) shows the proportion of children achieving a Good Level Of development (GLD) in Milton Keynes was 73% as compared to 68% nationally. Although this is a headline measure relating to the end of the reception year, it indicates the impact of higher early years participation rates in Milton Keynes, as research shows that pupils who enter reception with pre-school experience are better equipped to access learning in the reception class. In addition, discussions with MK leaders recognise the positive impact of the participation project in comparison to pupils who haven't accessed pre-school provision and are often significantly behind their peers. Milton Keynes City Council and our partners are united in our commitment to giving every child the Best Start in Life. By 2028, we will achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) target of 77.4%.

SEND

All Milton Keynes providers are accessible to children with special educational needs and provide an inclusive childcare market for parents.

Most early year's children will be able to have their special educational needs met at their local pre-school, nursery or childminder setting. In the early years phase, the number and proportion of children requiring specialist provision is low despite our high take up rates and we continue to expect all early years providers to deliver inclusive practice and to meet the needs of children with additional requirements appropriately. This approach is reflected in strong participation rates for two-year-olds and three- and four-year-olds, alongside feedback from providers and patterns in EHCP requests.

All childcare group settings are required to have a member of staff who is the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), and has responsibility for identifying children with SEND, whilst all childminders must act as their own SENCO. In the event that an early year's child requires a specific support for their needs, the setting is expected to have implemented the support documentation available on the Local Offer, giving consideration to the 'identifying need' at the earliest opportunity documents and the implementation the Ordinarily Available Provision documentation and strategies. From this starting a SEND Support Plan would guide to next layers of assessment if needed and local authority input and assessment as required.

The Children and Families Act 2014 saw the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans and a 'Local Offer' for families with a child or young person with SEND. More information about SEND and early years can be found on our local offer.

Milton Keynes City Council maintains a 'SEND Inclusion Grant' which is available upon request to providers with children with SEND. This funding is to be used to enable the setting to better meet the needs of the SEND children that attend.

Providers are also able to apply for Disability Access Funding (DAF) for eligible children at their settings. DAF is for early years providers to support children with disabilities or special educational needs. Information on how to apply for DAF is available on the SEND Local Offer as well as in the Provider Guidance.

Projection methodology

This section summarises the approach used to forecast early years childcare demand and supply in Milton Keynes. Key data sources were analysed to produce projections that reflect local patterns and ensure informed planning.

Supply

Milton Keynes City Council's childcare database and Ofsted were used to identify and map the supply of available places in Milton Keynes. Only providers that are registered for Early Education Funding (EEF) are included in our supply analysis as these providers are universally accessible to eligible children. This therefore means that there is also a private market that is available for families in Milton Keynes that require childcare provision.

Childminders offer childcare for children across all age groups, not just those in the Early Years sector. A single childminder may care for up to six children under the age of eight at any one time. Within this, no more than three children may be under five or within the Early Years Foundation Stage, and typically only one child may be under the age of one. To reflect the flexible operating models and ratios used by childminders, our projections allocate an average of three children per age range, accounting for variations across days and sessions.

Demand

Due to the mitigating factors that impact projections, analysis of data sources are undertaken to produce forecasts that reflect the behaviour of the Milton Keynes childcare market. ONS birth data is used as a fundamental data source for the projections, the birth data of previous years is analysed to project future rates and therefore future potential demand in Milton Keynes.

Employment data, the Early Years census, Eligibility Checking System (ECS) Code Validation Rate data, and Department for Work and Pensions List are analysed to identify the behaviour of the childcare market in Milton Keynes. These data sources are reviewed to detect trends in participation rates and area demand mapping. Subsequently these characteristics are applied to potential demand to produce projections with a greater degree of accuracy.

Working Parent Entitlement

Eligibility for the Working Parent Entitlement is calculated based on the number of births within the entitlements age range multiplied by the most recent employment rate for Milton Keynes. Take up is calculated based on the number of codes validated in an age bracket and compared to the number of eligible children. Demand is the calculated based on eligible children multiplied take up rate

Early Learning for 2 Year Olds Entitlement

Eligibility for the Early Learning for 2-Year-Old Entitlement is calculated based on the number of children who are 2 years old divided by the number of 2 years old whose parent is in receipt of employment benefits based on the DWP list. This figure is taken as an average across 3 years. Take Up is set at 90% based on the "minimum expectations" set to Milton Keynes City

Council by the DfE. Actual take up rate is monitored internally. Demand is the calculated based on eligible children multiplied take up rate

Universal 3- and 4-Year-Old Entitlement
Eligibility for the Universal 3 and 4-Year- old entitlement assumes a 99% eligibility. Take up is assumed as 100% Demand is the calculated based on eligible children multiplied take up rate.

Mitigating factors
The nature of the early year's childcare market creates several difficulties when mapping supply and demand for childcare in Milton Keynes**.**

A prominent forecasting issue is the role parental preference plays when accessing childcare provision. Parental preference directly impacts participation rates in the childcare market; as there is no mandatory requirement for pre-school age children to attend an early year's provision hence projecting the level of take-up can be problematic and volatile from year to year. Parental preference also impacts demand mapping as parents regularly access provisions outside of the family centre area in which they live for a variety of different reasons.

It is therefore important to note that whilst some geographical areas in Milton Keynes within this document are projecting a shortfall of places, particularly in the under 2 phase, this shortfall may not actually come to fruition given parental preference does not necessarily mean accessing early years provision from within local family centre areas.

The flexibility and adaptability of the early year's market and providers also adds a further degree of difficulty when allocating supply to projected demand. As childcare providers independently manage their resources to accommodate the child demand they receive, providers will amend their ratio of spaces at varying age ranges to reflect their intake and therefore their vacancies are interchangeable. Private, voluntary and independent providers possess the autonomy to freely expand or reduce the capacity of their settings in accordance with the Ofsted prescribed requirements. Furthermore, providers can decide to enter or exit the childcare market without honouring a notice period.

Therefore, the childcare market is an ever-changing fluid landscape that is hugely market driven and supply and demand can, and often does, fluctuate frequently and as a result of this as do projections.

Early Years Sufficiency Summary

The most significant aspect of entitlements will be the parent and how they choose to use their entitlements. The individual patterns and needs of each parent will differ; therefore, the adaptability of the childcare market is essential to meeting the demand that arises**.**

As the childcare market is driven by consumer participation the allocation of places between the age groups is adaptable to the demand which minimises the risk of insufficient places to access entitlements. The flexibility of the childcare market should ensure providers can adapt their ratios to meet demand. This marketplace flexibility will be critical throughout the years with the continued growth of Milton Keynes as a city and the growing increased number of eligible children that coincides with this growth.

We will continue to work closely to monitor the supply and demand of childcare places and work with providers from the private, voluntary, independent, and maintained sector to ensure there are sufficient places to meet the needs of parents.

Under 2's (Working Parent)

Milton Keynes is showing a projected small shortfall of provision for under 2' across the city. Shortfalls are projected in 7 out of the 11 Family Centre areas.

Projections for under-2s are expected to continue evolving over the next 12 months as we receive richer take-up data for this cohort and as entitlements become imbedded for parents across the city.

2-year-old entitlement (Early Learning for 2-Year-olds) & working parent

Overall, Milton Keynes has sufficient supply of funded 2-year-old places to meet the projected demand for the various entitlements across the city. Sufficient places for 2-year-olds to is projected all 11 Family Centre areas. Any actual shortfall in places is likely to be offset by surplus in local 3- & 4-year-old places and with the addition of new expanded places via the DfE and locally led early years expansion schemes.

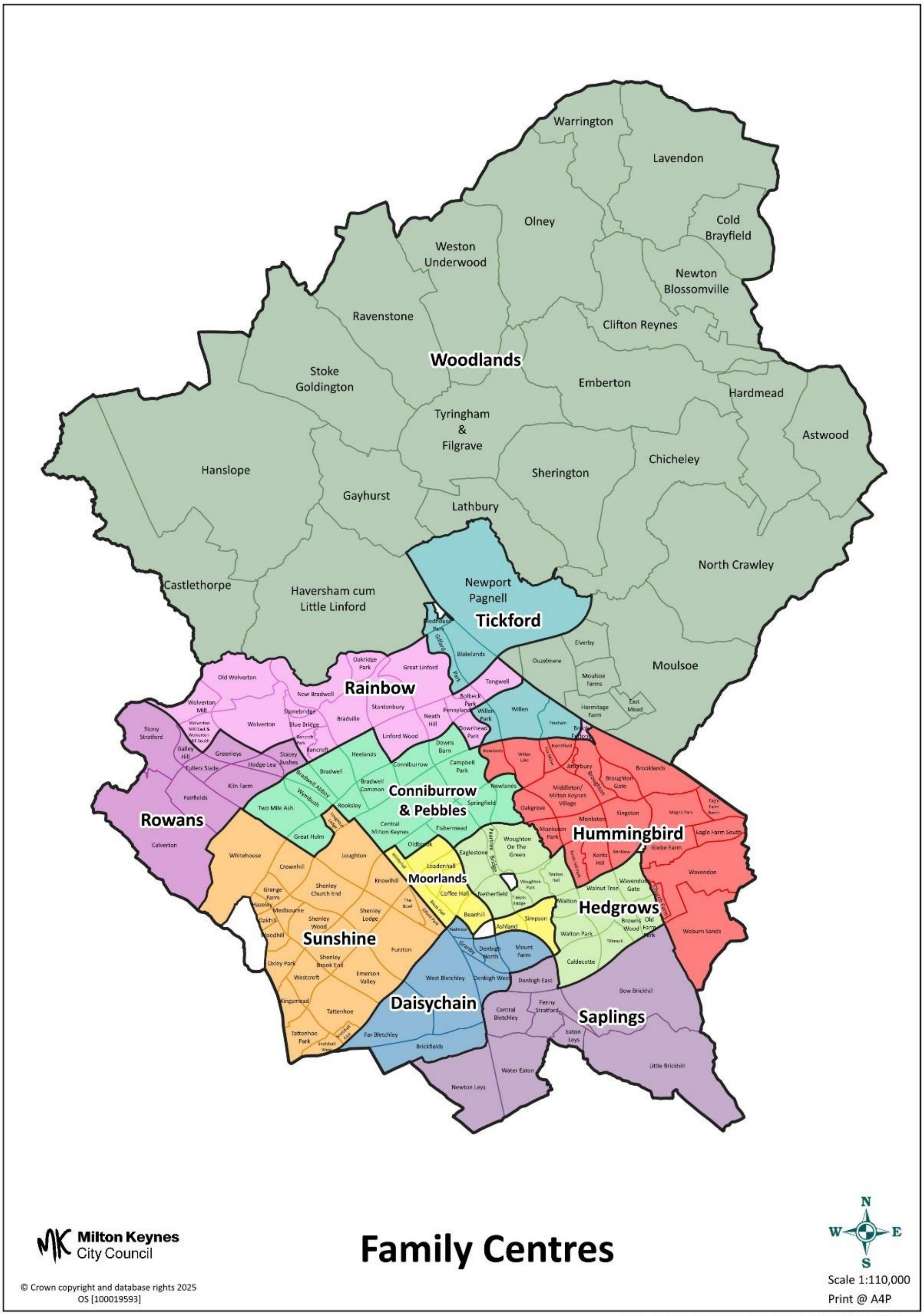
3 & 4-year-olds entitlement (universal 15 hours and 30 hours working parent)

Overall, Milton Keynes has sufficient places for 3- & 4-year-olds accessing the universal and working parent entitlement. 9 out of the 11 Family centre areas are projected to have sufficient places to meet demand. There is a small shortfall projected in 2 Family Centre areas which can be offset by surplus in local 2-year-old places.

Family Centre areas can cover large parts of the city, so it is important that us and the sector triangulate projections with local intelligence from settings and parents. This helps identify potential shortfalls in smaller areas within Milton Keynes that may be masked by an overall surplus position, and vice versa.

Early Years Projections

Milton Keynes Projections



Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	123	834*	FULL
Day Nursery	49	3328	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	4	392	
Pre-School Playgroup	47	1784	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	46	1889	
Total	269	8227	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 834 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

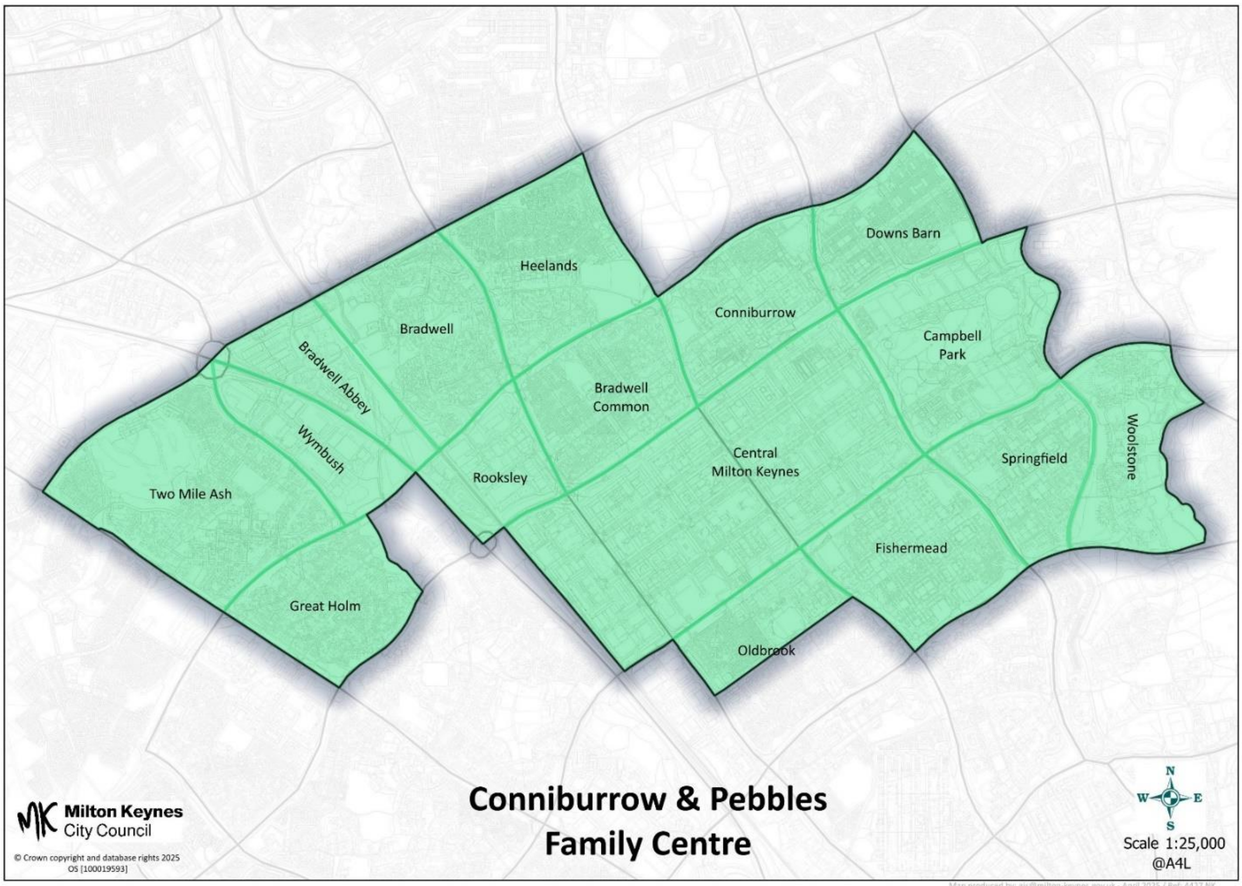
Milton Keynes: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	1260	1260	1260	1260	1260
Working parent demand	1346	1349	1355	1350	1351
Balance of places	-86	-89	-95	-90	-91

Milton Keynes: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	3115	3115	3115	3115	3115
Working parent demand	1466	1437	1446	1450	1444
Early learning for 2's demand*	688	675	679	681	678
Balance of places	961	1003	990	985	993

*Early Learning for under 2's was previously referred to a Families requiring additional Support. In February 2026 DfE set Milton Keynes a "minimum expectation" of 89.7% take up of this entitlement. Our projections are based on a 90% take up rate not the actual take up rate in MK (80%) to ensure we can meet the DfE expectation.

Milton Keynes: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	4115	4115	4115	4115	4115
Universal demand	3242	3311	3252	3268	3277
Of which is working parent	*1659*	*1692*	*1693*	*1681*	*1689*
Balance of places	873	804	863	847	838

Conniburrow and Pebbles Family Centre Area Projections



Conniburrow and Pebbles Family Centre Area covers:		
• Bradwell	• Bradwell Abbey	• Bradwell Common
• Campbell Park	• Central Milton Keynes	• Conniburrow
• Downs Barn	• Fishermead	• Great Holm
• Heelands	• Oldbrook	• Rooksley
• Springfield	• Two Mile Ash	• Woolstone
• Wymbush		

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	17	105*	FULL
Day Nursery	3	244	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	6	198	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	6	276	
Total	**32**	**823**	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 105 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Conniburrow and Pebbles: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	108	108	108	108	108
Projected demand	182	186	187	185	186
Balance of places	-74	-78	-79	-77	-78

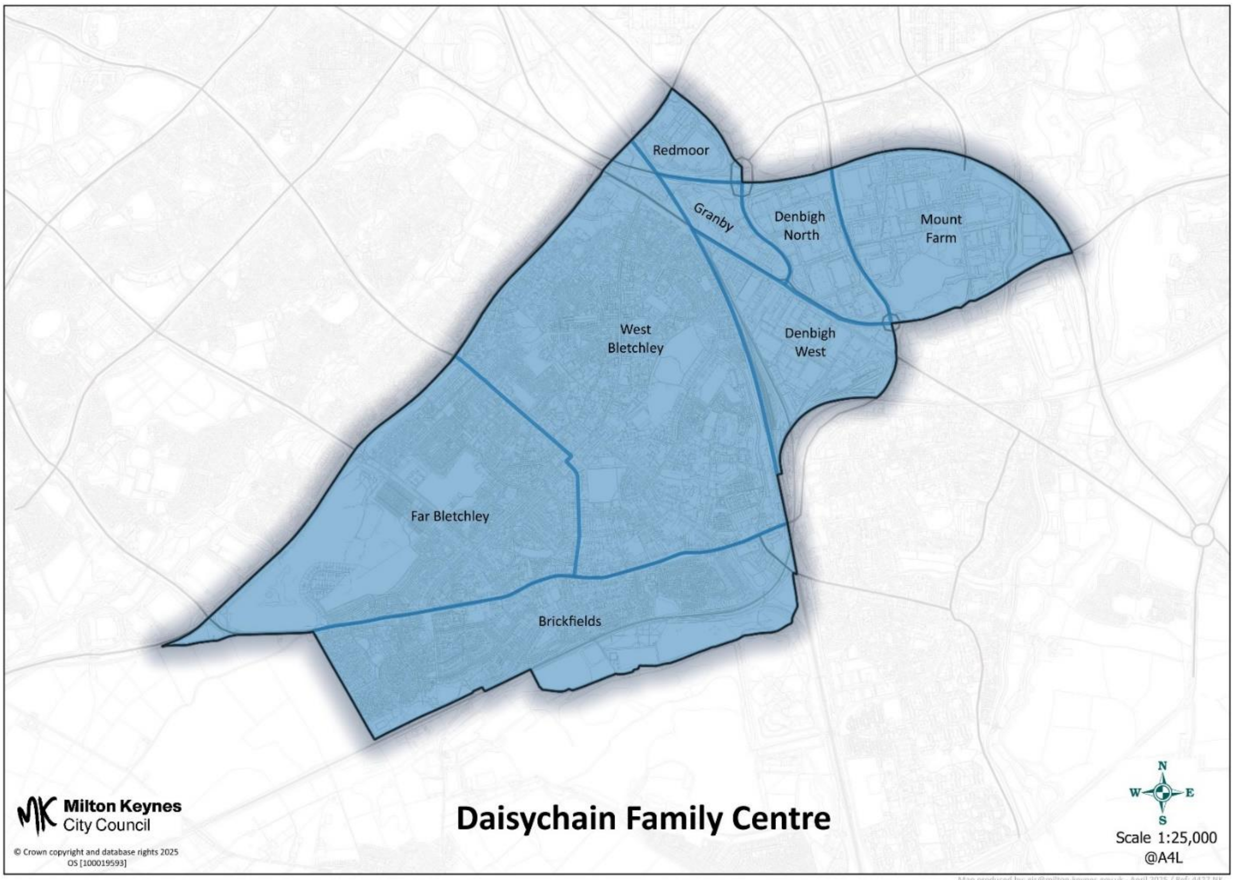
Conniburrow and Pebbles: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	319	319	319	319	319
Working parent demand	203	192	199	198	196
Early learning for 2's demand*	95	90	93	93	92
Balance of places	21	36	27	28	30

Conniburrow and Pebbles: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	444	444	444	444	444
Universal demand	452	458	436	449	448
Of which is working parent	*218*	*236*	*230*	*228*	*231*
Balance of places	-8	-14	8	-5	-4

Conniburrow and Pebbles Analysis

- Shortfall projected for under 2 provisions. Position will continue to be monitored closely in partnership with the sector over the next 12 months with additional places added if required as appropriate.
- Sufficient 2-year-old places projected to meet the demand in the area.
- The 3- & 4-year-old shortfall has been predicted in previous years, however, there has been no access issues for parents reported. The supply of 2-year-old places can typically be flexed by providers to offer more 3- & 4-year-old places if required.

Daisychain Family Centre Area Projections



Daisychain Family Centre Area covers:		
• Brickfields	• Denbigh North	• Denbigh West
• Far Bletchley	• West Bletchley	• Granby
• Mount Farm	• Redmoor	

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	2	18*	FULL
Day Nursery	3	116	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	1	148	
Pre-School Playgroup	3	127	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	3	123	
Total	12	532	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 18 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Daisychain: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	68	68	68	68	68
Projected demand	92	92	92	92	92
Balance of places	**-24**	**-24**	**-24**	**-24**	**-24**

Daisychain: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	170	170	170	170	170
Working parent demand	101	99	98	100	99
Early learning for 2's demand*	47	47	46	47	47
Balance of places	**21**	**24**	**25**	**24**	**24**

Daisychain: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	293	293	293	293	293
Universal demand	215	228	225	223	225
Of which is working parent	*115*	*114*	*117*	*115*	*116*
Balance of places	**78**	**65**	**68**	**70**	**68**

Daisychain Analysis

- Small shortfall projected for under 2 provisions. Position will continue to be monitored closely in partnership with the sector over the next 12 months with additional places added if required as appropriate.
- Sufficient projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand in the area.
- Large projected surplus of 3- and 4-year-old places to meet the demand in the area.

Hedgerows Family Centre Area Projections

Hedgerows Family Centre Area covers:		
• Browns Wood	• Caldecotte	• Eaglestone
• Netherfield	• Old Farm Park	• Peartree Bridge
• Tinkers Bridge	• Walnut Tree	• Walton
• Walton Park	• Wavendon Gate	• Woughton Park
• Woughton-on-the-Green	• Walton Hall	• Tilbrook

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	4	36*	FULL
Day Nursery	6	477	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	1	106	
Pre-School Playgroup	2	56	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	3	106	
Total	16	781	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 36 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Hedgerows: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	136	136	136	136	136
Projected demand	95	93	94	94	93
Balance of places	**41**	**43**	**42**	**42**	**43**

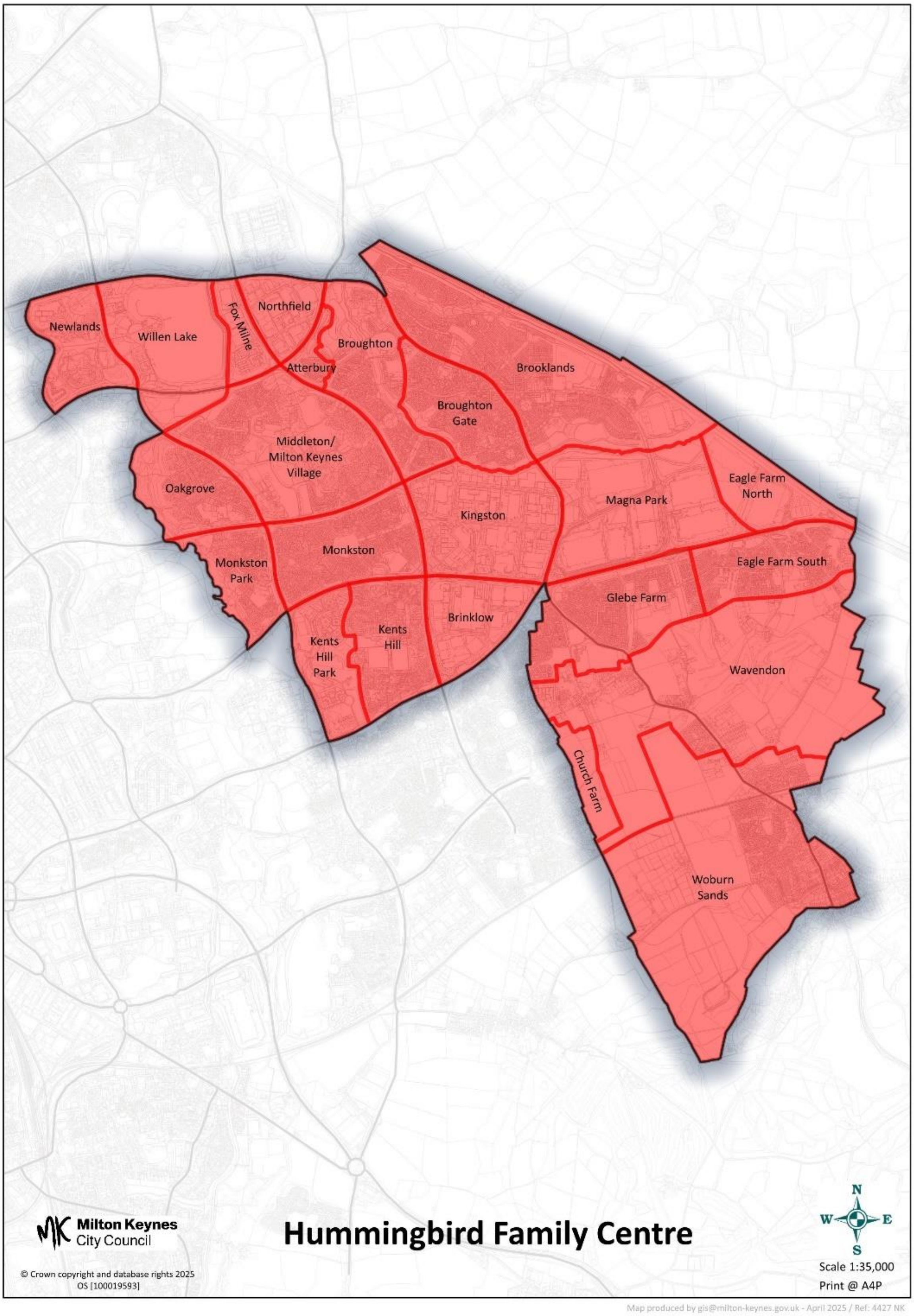
Hedgerows: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	310	310	310	310	310
Working parent demand	97	98	97	97	97
Early learning for 2's demand*	46	46	45	46	46
Balance of places	**167**	**166**	**168**	**167**	**167**

Hedgerows: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	336	336	336	336	336
Universal demand	215	219	222	219	220
Of which is working parent	*115*	*112*	*114*	*114*	*113*
Balance of places	**121**	**117**	**114**	**117**	**116**

Hedgerows Analysis

- Sufficient projected surplus of under 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Large projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Projected surplus of 3- & 4-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.

Hummingbird Family Centre Area Projections



Hummingbird Family Centre Area covers:		
• Atterbury	• Brinklow	• Brooklands
• Broughton	• Broughton Gate	• Church Farm
• Eagle Farm North	• Eagle Farm South	• Fox Milne
• Glebe Farm	• Kents Hill	• Kents Hill Park
• Kingston	• Magna Park	• Middleton
• Milton Keynes Village	• Monkston	• Monkston Park
• Newlands	• Northfield	• Oakgrove
• Wavendon	• Willen Lake	• Woburn Sands

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	22	168*	FULL
Day Nursery	6	396	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	1	84	
Pre-School Playgroup	4	281	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	7	165	
Total	**40**	**1094**	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages. The total of 168 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Hummingbird: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	169	169	169	169	169
Projected demand	218	217	221	219	219
Balance of places	**-49**	**-48**	**-52**	**-50**	**-50**

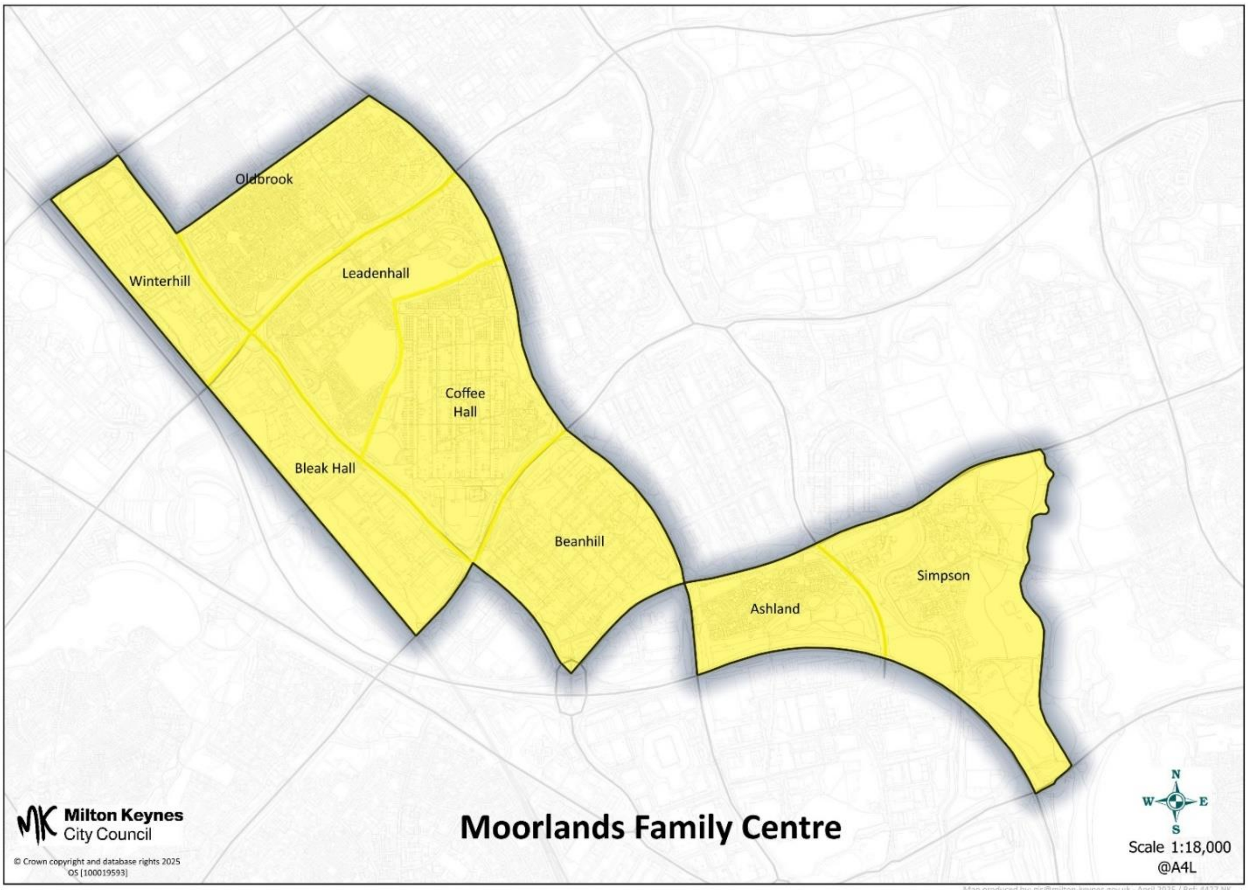
Hummingbird: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	388	388	388	388	388
Working parent demand	245	229	232	235	232
Early learning for 2's demand*	115	107	109	110	109
Balance of places	**27**	**52**	**48**	**42**	**47**

Hummingbird: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	567	567	567	567	567
Universal demand	499	552	519	524	532
Of which is working parent	*257*	*272*	*277*	*269*	*272*
Balance of places	**68**	**15**	**48**	**43**	**35**

Hummingbird Analysis

- Small shortfall projected for under 2 provisions. Position will continue to be monitored closely in partnership with the sector over the next 12 months with additional places added if required as appropriate.
- Projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Projected surplus of 3- & 4-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.

Moorlands Family Centre Area Projections



Moorlands Family Centre Area covers:		
• Ashland	• Beanhill	• Bleak Hall
• Coffee Hall	• Leadenhall	• Oldbrook
• Simpson	• Winterhill	

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	2	12*	FULL
Day Nursery	5	372	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	2	72	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	3	125	
Total	**12**	**581**	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 12 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Moorlands: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	80	80	80	80	80
Projected demand	58	59	60	59	60
Balance of places	**22**	**21**	**20**	**21**	**20**

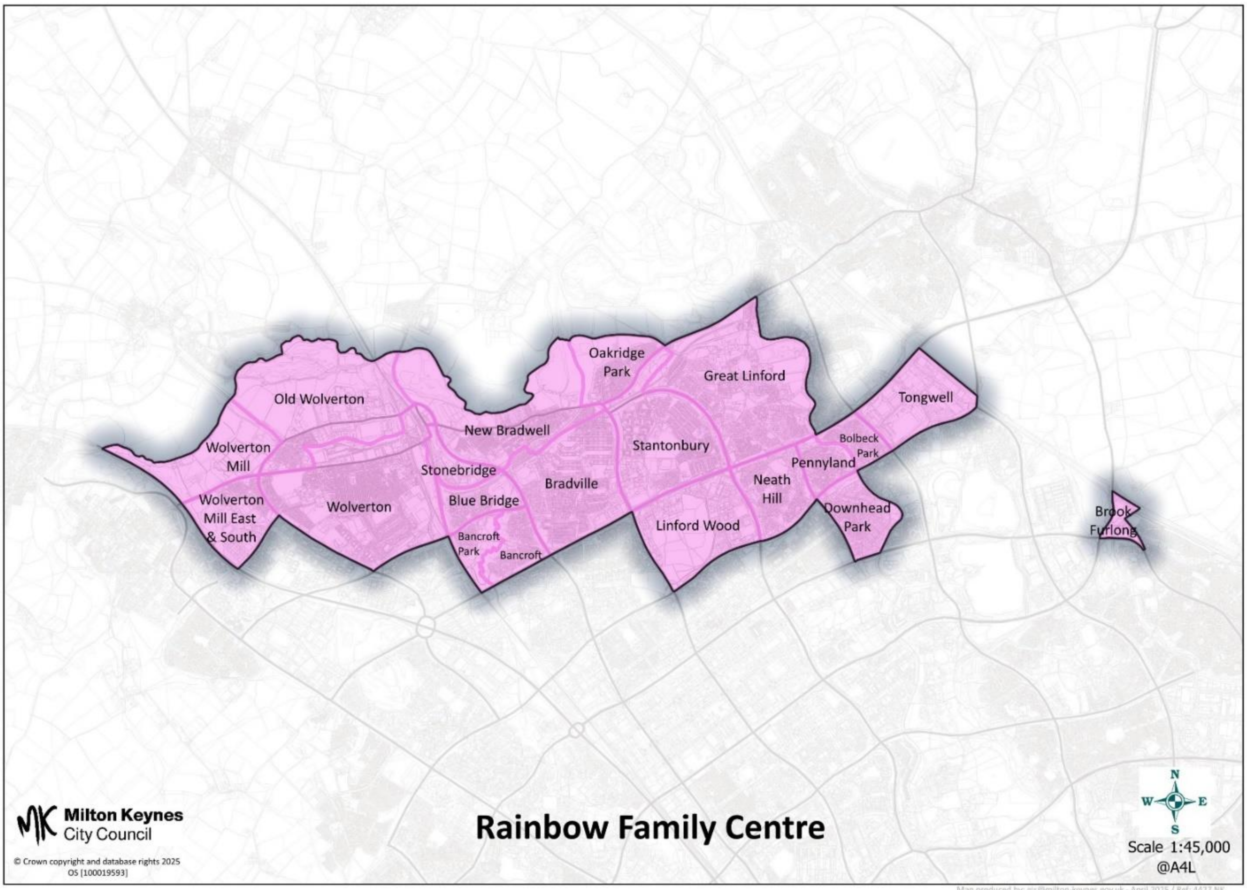
Moorlands: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	240	240	240	240	240
Working parent demand	68	63	64	65	64
Early learning for 2's demand*	32	30	30	31	30
Balance of places	**140**	**147**	**146**	**144**	**146**

Moorlands: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	266	266	266	266	266
Projected demand	139	153	144	145	147
Projected 30hr demand	*71*	*75*	*76*	*74*	*75*
Balance of places	**127**	**113**	**122**	**121**	**119**

Moorlands Analysis

- Surplus of under 2-year old places to meet the demand from the area
- Large projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Large projected surplus of 3- & 4-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.

Rainbow Family Centre Area Projections



Rainbow Family Centre Area covers:		
• Bancroft	• Bancroft Park	• Blue Bridge
• Bolbeck Park	• Bradville	• Brook Furlong
• Downhead Park	• Great Linford	• Linford Wood
• Neath Hill	• New Bradwell	• Oakridge Park
• Old Wolverton	• Pennyland	• Stantonbury
• Stonebridge	• Tongwell	• Wolverton
• Wolverton Mill	• Wolverton Mill East and South	

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	15	102*	FULL
Day Nursery	5	353	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	1	54	
Pre-School Playgroup	6	364	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	3	105	
Total	30	978	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 102 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Rainbow: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	159	159	159	159	159
Projected demand	155	156	156	156	156
Balance of places	**4**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**

Rainbow: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	346	346	346	346	346
Working parent demand	164	167	168	166	167
Early learning for 2's demand*	77	79	79	78	78
Balance of places	**105**	**100**	**100**	**102**	**100**

Rainbow: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	507	507	507	507	507
Projected demand	388	371	378	379	376
Projected 30hr demand	*197*	*196*	*193*	*195*	*195*
Balance of places	**119**	**136**	**129**	**128**	**131**

Rainbow Analysis

- Surplus of under 2-year old places to meet the demand from the area
- Large projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Large projected surplus of 3- & 4-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.

Sunshine Family Centre Area Projections

Sunshine Family Centre Area covers:		
• The Bowl	• Crownhill	• Elfield Park
• Valley	• Furzton	• Grange Farm
• Hazeley	• Kingsmead	• Knowhill
• Loughton	• Loughton Lodge	• Medbourne
• Oakhill	• Oxley Park	• Shenley Brook End
• Shenley Church End	• Shenley Lodge	• Shenley Wood
• Snelshall East	• Snelshall West	• Tattenhoe
• Tattenhoe Park	• Westcroft	
• Whitehouse	• Woodhill	

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	23	150*	FULL
Day Nursery	6	563	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	12	446	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	8	250	
Total	**49**	**1409**	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 150 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Sunshine: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	222	222	222	222	222
Projected demand	193	189	190	191	190
Balance of places	**29**	**33**	**32**	**31**	**32**

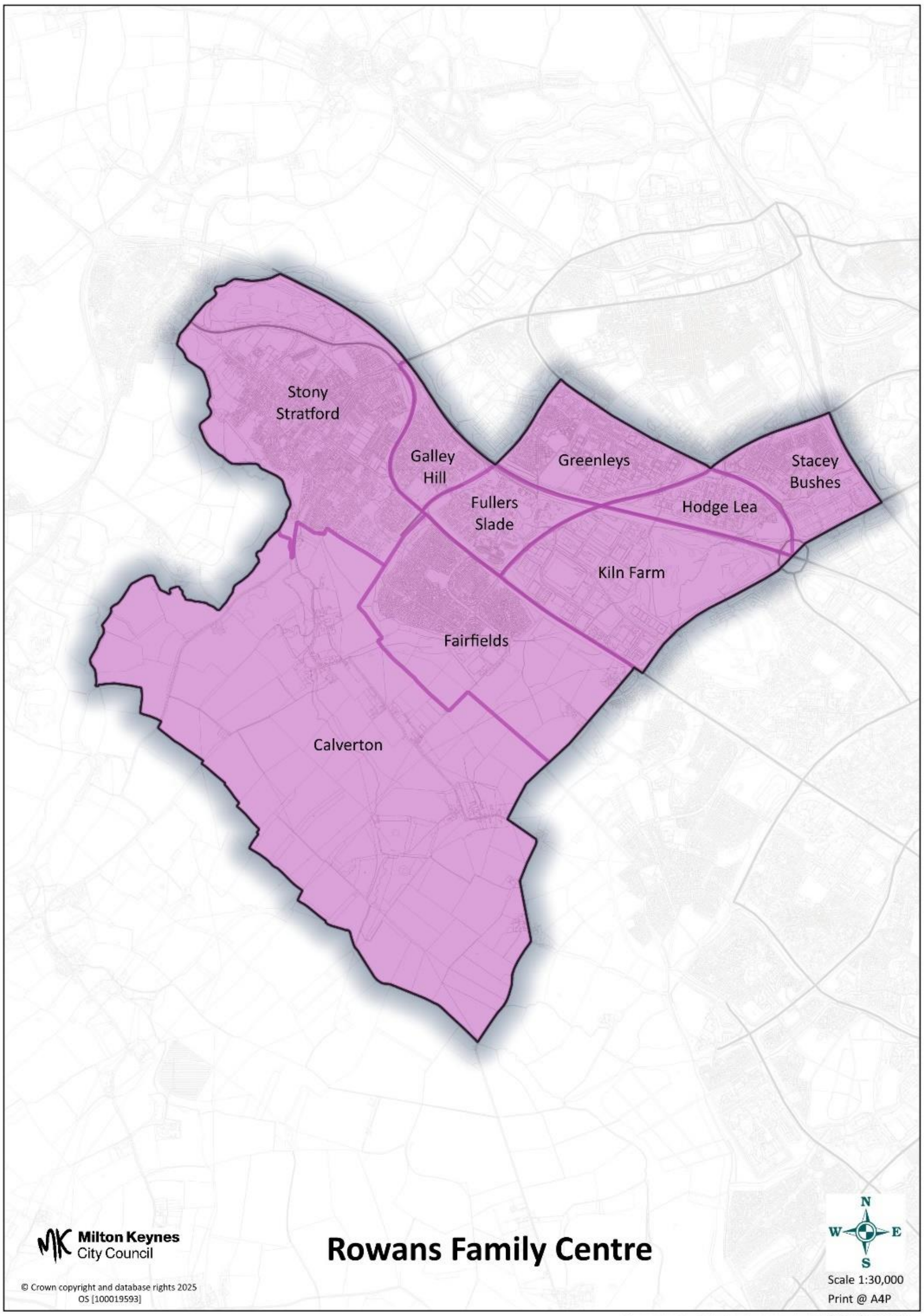
Sunshine: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	551	551	551	551	551
Working parent demand	211	200	203	205	203
Early learning for 2's demand*	99	94	95	96	95
Balance of places	**241**	**257**	**252**	**250**	**253**

Sunshine: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	692	692	692	692	692
Projected demand	450	475	453	459	463
Projected 30hr demand	*227*	*239*	*239*	*235*	*238*
Balance of places	**242**	**217**	**239**	**233**	**229**

Sunshine Analysis

- Surplus of under 2-year old places to meet the demand from the area
- Large projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Large projected surplus of 3- & 4-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.

The Rowans Family Centre Area Projections



The Rowans Family Centre Area covers:		
• Calverton • Galley Hill • Kiln Farm	• Fairfields • Greenleys • Stacey Bushes	• Fullers Slade • Hodge Lea • Stony Stratford

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	6	35*	FULL
Day Nursery	3	142	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	4	168	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	4	147	
Total	17	492	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 35 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

The Rowans: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	74	74	74	74	74
Projected demand	87	86	85	86	86
Balance of places	-13	-12	-11	-12	-12

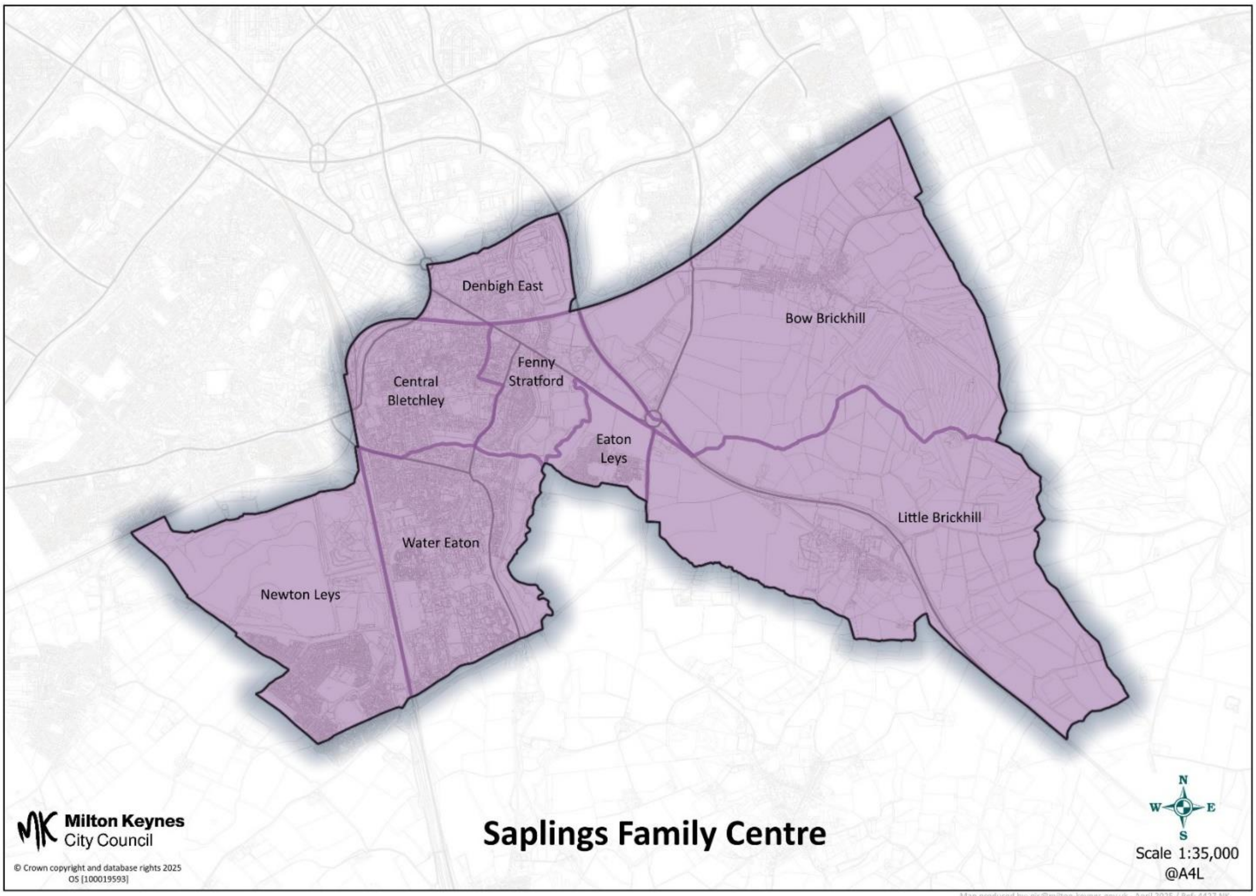
The Rowans: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	177	177	177	177	177
Working parent demand	87	96	91	91	93
Early learning for 2's demand*	41	45	43	43	44
Balance of places	50	36	43	43	41

The Rowans: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	259	259	259	259	259
Projected demand	208	216	38	207	206
Projected 30hr demand	*117*	*104*	*106*	*109*	*106*
Balance of places	51	43	221	52	53

The Rowans Analysis

- Small shortfall projected for under 2 provisions. Position will continue to be monitored closely in partnership with the sector over the next 12 months with additional places added if required as appropriate.
- Sufficient 2-year-old places projected compared to demand from the area.
- Sufficient 3- & 4-year-old places projected compared to demand in the area.

The Saplings Family Centre Area Projections



The Saplings Family Centre Area covers:		
• Bow Brickhill	• Central Bletchley	• Denbigh East
• Eaton Leys	• Fenny Stratford	• Little Brickhill
• Newton Leys	• Water Eaton	

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	10	70*	FULL
Day Nursery	4	223	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	4	145	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	5	198	
Total	**23**	**636**	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 70 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

The Saplings: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	90	90	90	90	90
Projected demand	124	129	126	126	127
Balance of places	**-34**	**-39**	**-36**	**-36**	**-37**

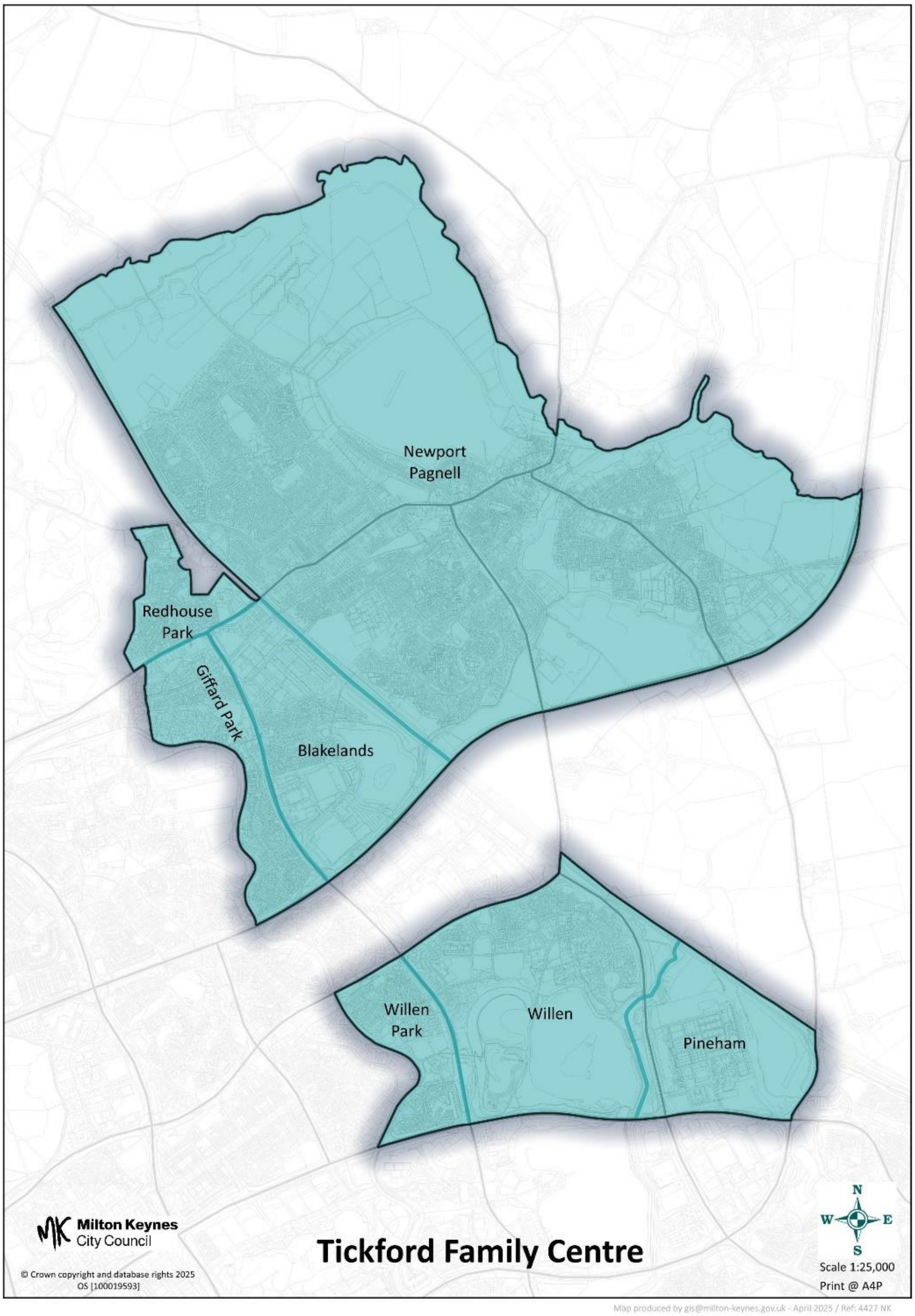
The Saplings: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	249	249	249	249	249
Working parent demand	132	140	141	137	139
Early learning for 2's demand*	62	65	66	64	65
Balance of places	**56**	**44**	**42**	**47**	**44**

The Saplings: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	317	317	317	317	317
Projected demand	342	300	315	319	311
Projected 30hr demand	*167*	*165*	*158*	*164*	*162*
Balance of places	**-25**	**17**	**2**	**-2**	**6**

The Saplings Analysis

- Small shortfall projected for under 2 provisions. Position will continue to be monitored closely in partnership with the sector over the next 12 months with additional places added if required as appropriate.
- Projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand in the area.
- The 3- & 4-year-old shortfall has been predicted in previous years, however, there has been no access issues for parents reported. The supply of 2-year-old places can typically be flexed by providers to offer more 3- & 4-year-old places if required.

Tickford Family Centre Area Projections



Tickford Family Centre Area covers:		
• Blakelands	• Giffard Park	• Newport Pagnell
• Pineham	• Redhouse Park	• Willen
• Willen Park		

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	12	72*	FULL
Day Nursery	2	94	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	3	102	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	2	69	
Total	19	337	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 72 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

Tickford: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	55	55	55	55	55
Projected demand	80	81	81	81	81
Balance of places	-25	-26	-26	-26	-26

Tickford: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	149	149	149	149	149
Working parent demand	85	87	86	86	87
Early learning for 2's demand*	40	41	41	40	41
Balance of places	25	21	22	22	22

Tickford: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	218	218	218	218	218
Projected demand	198	192	197	196	195
Projected 30hr demand	*103*	*100*	*100*	*101*	*101*
Balance of places	20	26	21	22	23

Tickford Analysis

- Small shortfall projected for under 2 provisions. Position will continue to be monitored closely in partnership with the sector over the next 12 months with additional places added if required as appropriate.
- Projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand in the area.
- Sufficient 3- & 4-year-old places projected compared to demand in the area.

Woodlands Family Centre Area Projections

The Woodlands Family Centre Area covers:		
• Astwood	• Castlethorpe	• Chicheley
• Clifton Reynes	• Cold Brayfield	• East Mead
• Elverby	• Emberton	• Gayhurst
• Hanslope	• Hardmead	• Haversham cum little linford
• Hermitage Farm	• Lathbury	• Lavendon
• Moulsoe	• Moulsoe Farms	• Newton Blossomville
• North Crawley	• Olney	• Ouzelmere
• Ravenstone	• Sherington	• Stoke Goldington
• Tyringham & Filgrave	• Warrington	• Weston Underwood

Provider Type	No. Providers	Registered Places	Type of Care
Childminder	9	60*	FULL
Day Nursery	6	348	
Nursery Unit at Independent School	0	0	
Pre-School Playgroup	3	102	SESSIONAL
School Based Nursery Provision	0	0	
Total	**18**	**510**	

*Childminders provide places for children of all ages, not solely those in the Early Years. The total of 60 therefore reflects all registered childminder places, not only places for children aged 9 months to 4 years.

The Woodlands: provision for under 2's					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	99	99	99	99	99
Projected demand	63	61	63	62	62
Balance of places	**36**	**38**	**36**	**37**	**37**

The Woodlands: provision for 2 Year Olds					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	216	216	216	216	216
Working parent demand	74	65	67	69	67
Early learning for 2's demand*	35	31	31	32	31
Balance of places	**107**	**120**	**118**	**115**	**118**

The Woodlands: provision for 3 and 4 Year Old					
	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Number of places available	216	216	216	216	216
Projected demand	136	166	149	150	155
Projected 30hr demand	*71*	*78*	*81*	*77*	*79*
Balance of places	**80**	**50**	**67**	**66**	**61**

The Woodlands Analysis

- Surplus of under 2-year old places to meet the demand from the area
- Large projected surplus of 2-year-old places to meet the demand from the area.
- Large projected surplus of 3- & 4-year-old places to meet the demand from the area

Milton Keynes Early Years Provision

Quality of early years provision

As at the end of May 2026, 97% of early years settings and 98% of childminders that had been inspected by Ofsted had received a good or outstanding inspection outcome. Ofsted have significantly changed how it judges early years settings from November 2025 with the introduction of a new inspection framework that replaces the one-word overall effectiveness grade with a detailed report card. We will continue to consider how best to report quality in future reports

Cost of early years provision

The DfE reports annually on childcare costs with the latest national information taken from costs as at September 2025. Below providers a summary of how costs in Milton Keynes compare nationally.

	Average hourly costs per hour	
Age Group	**MK***	**England****
Under 2's	£7.60	£7.18
2-year-olds£	£7hr	£7.09
3–4-year-olds	£7.36hr	£6.78

*based upon May 2026 provider survey on current charges

**based upon DfE September 2025 national survey.

It must be noted that we would expect the national average hourly costs to increase when new data is released in December 2026. From 2024 to 2025, childcare fees increased across all age groups and provider types. For children under 2, fees rose by about 5% for childminders and up to 10% for voluntary group providers. For 2-year-olds, increases ranged from around 5% to 8%, while for 3- and 4-year-olds, fees rose more modestly—between about 2% and 8% depending on the provider.

While eligible working parents are benefiting from the increase in funded hours, the higher cost of non-funded hours continues to impact parents, particularly those not eligible for funded hours. Support with costs is available through tax-free childcare or Universal Credit (UC) and will continue to promote these schemes to parents across the city.

Provider survey

We recently carried out an early years provider survey with c.50% response rate. The high-level insights from this are:

- **44% of providers reporting vacancies** showing that there continues to be a number of vacancies across the city, however, many of these vacancies are sessional (e.g. afternoon only) rather than full day vacancies meaning they are inaccessible for some parents.

- **52% of providers report waiting lists** with the highest waiting lists reported for full day nursery settings. This demonstrates a parental trend towards a desire for this type of early years provision as opposed to other operating models.
- **Demand pressure is most acute for under 2s provision**, where higher staffing ratios, cost, and delivery complexity limit supply.
- **All settings continue to deliver inclusive practice and to meet the needs of children with additional requirements**. This approach is reflected in strong participation rates for two-year-olds and three- and four-year-olds, alongside feedback from providers and patterns in EHCP requests.
- Providers have reported that they would welcome continued engagement on **any practical SEND support/training available.**
- **Many providers are keen to expand.** However, staffing availability, funding constraints, space & ratios and lack of suitable buildings are restricting expansion for some providers.
- **Workforce constraints** of staff recruitment (particularly level 3) and training are the most prominent reported system-wide issue, impacting:
    - Expansion
    - Under 2s provision
    - Extended hours availability
    - SEND delivery

Demand is strong and increasing, particularly for younger children. While vacancies exist across the system, they often sit alongside waiting lists, as provision is not always in the areas of highest demand or of the right type to meet parental needs.

Feedback from providers aligns with projections, highlighting pressure points—especially for under-2 provision and in densely populated (Conniburrow and Pebbles) and growing areas (Hummingbird) of Milton Keynes. It is therefore important to continue working across the city to expand provision where appropriate, respond to shifting demand, and ensure we meet both statutory sufficiency duties and parental needs.

Workforce

Milton Keynes City Council supports the wider early years workforce through bespoke training, targeted mentoring, and inclusion resources.

We deliver this support through several key initiatives such as:

- **Communication with providers through the Early Years Essential (EYE) e-newsletter**: The 'EYE' is published regularly and includes national and local updates and news. It is closely aligned to the e-newsletter for schools - 'Heads Up.' The EYE provides a quick way for providers to be updated about significant news and changes in the Early Years world. Providers also receive Early Years information and regular briefings through the joint SENCo meetings and the Early Years pages of the MKCC website. This means that there is valuable, direct communication between providers and MKCC, which in turn ensures that the Early Years workforce is skilled at working in line with local and national agendas and initiatives.
- **Targeted Mentoring and Quality Improvement:** Early Years Quality Improvement Practitioners (EYQIPs) provide bespoke advice and curriculum design guidance to settings.
- **Specialist Inclusion Support:** Dedicated teams assist educators in managing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and provide targeted visits from EMA (English as an Additional Language/Multilingual) Officers to support settings with high proportions of multilingual children.
- **Guidance Resources:** Comprehensive operational toolkits and support plans are available to help providers on our website.
- **Workforce Training & CPD:** The council offers a wide array of free or subsidized courses. Community Learning MK *currently offer Level 1 and Level 2 early years* courses to support individuals into the profession. We have plans to expand this offer to include Level 1 to Level 3 provision for the 2026/27 academic year. These courses will be promoted across the early years sector to support recruitment, create accessible local career pathways, and grow the city's early years workforce. Our largest local post 16 provider (MK College) also provides a variety of early years courses to support the sector.

Wraparound Childcare

As part of the Spring 2023 budget, the previous government announced the National Wraparound Childcare Programme in England. This is a Department for Education (DfE) initiative, backed by around £289 million of funding from 2023–2026, designed to ensure that all parents of primary-school-aged children who need it can access affordable before- and after-school childcare (typically 8am–6pm, term time) to support working patterns. The programme provided grant funding to local authorities to work with schools and private, voluntary and independent providers to create or expand provision such as breakfast and after-school clubs, with a wider aim of increasing parental employment and flexibility. The programme’s funding period ended on 31 March 2026, with government guidance now shifting towards maintaining a sustainable school-age childcare market beyond this point rather than continuing the programme in its current form, as the ambition transitions to universal availability by September 2026 supported through mainstream arrangements

Since September 2024 when rollout began, significant expansion has been achieved locally with over 1,249 additional childcare places created across 43 schools. All schools in Milton Keynes have a breakfast club offer with the majority of schools across the city delivering full wraparound care where demand dictates this is required with most provision delivered on school sites. Across Milton Keynes, on average, the cost of breakfast club provision is £4.16 and the cost of afterschool club is £11.58 which is in line with national averages. We will continue to promote the financial support available to eligible parents and carers through Tax-Free Childcare and Universal Credit childcare schemes to support with these costs.

While provision is strong overall, demand varies, and some setting, particularly in rural areas or areas of higher deprivation, report lower uptake. Wraparound delivery in specialist provision also remains more complex and we continue to work with the sector to understand the demand and barriers to participation/delivery. We will continue to work closely with schools and providers to support long term sustainability now that programme funding has ended and work to ensure that all parents have access to wraparound provision where required.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

The availability and cost of childcare during the holidays, are among the biggest challenges for working parents. In its annual holiday childcare survey, Coram Family and Childcare, comments in the executive summary: “Holiday childcare remains the unspoken outlier of childcare policy and the gap that parents must bridge every school holiday.”

Quantifying demand and supply of holiday childcare is difficult due to the varied offers of days and hours, and the range of options used by parents.

HAF currently runs during Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays, but not during half term. Parents are typically using free activities in combination with other chargeable childcare options. With the HAF programme extended for a further three years, until 2029, the government is aiming for a more joined up strategy around holiday activities and food for the lowest income households, and holiday childcare for working families.

Benchmarking data from the Department for Education for Winter 2023 to Winter 2026 shows that Milton Keynes has steadily increased its reach to children eligible for free school meals (FSM), consistently performing above national averages across all reporting cycles.

Primary-aged pupils continue to show the strongest and most consistent engagement, with reach levels ranging from 27% to 42%, while secondary-aged participation remains lower, between 13% and 21%. This trend reflects the national picture but also highlights an opportunity to strengthen engagement with older children.

Overall, the data shows that HAF is reaching an increasing proportion of eligible children each year, with Milton Keynes reliably outperforming national comparators.

Milton Keynes vs National FSM Reach

Reporting Cycle & Year	MK FSM Reach	National FSM Reach
Winter 2023	17.5%	11.8%
Spring 2024	18.9%	14.3%
Summer 2024	24.6%	21.5%
Winter 2024	23.5%	10.7%
Spring 2025	20.6%	13.5%
Summer 2025	25.6%	20.8%
Winter 2025	13.7%	9.7%

Across 2025/2026 programme we have seen 32% increase of targeted children and young people, 12% growth of booked places being attended and 160% increase in those with SEND attending.

As Milton Keynes continues to expand the reach and quality of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, our focus moving forward is on strengthening the depth and consistency of engagement, improving participation among secondary-aged young people, and reducing the high volume of booked but unattended sessions.

These areas form the core of our improvement priorities for the next phase of delivery. With the government's Best Start in Life mission confirming over £600 million of HAF funding for the next three years (2026/27–2028/29), there is a significant opportunity to strengthen our long term approach. This sustained investment will support a more joined up strategy that not only enhances access and engagement for low income families but also better integrates HAF into the wider landscape of holiday childcare, helping parents balance work and caring responsibilities and enabling Milton Keynes to further improve the impact, reliability and inclusivity of its offer.

A survey of holiday providers who deliver provision outside of the HAF programme highlighted challenges with ability to expand limited by staffing and building capacity. Providers also highlighted that additional training linked to children with additional needs would be welcomed to support the workforce to deliver even more inclusive provision. We will continue to work with the sector across the year on these points.

According to the latest Corum survey parents across the UK pay an average of £179/week for holiday clubs. Based upon our latest survey results, parents in Milton Keynes pay an average of £85/week. It must be recognised that the costs have significant variation. We endeavour to further understand holiday childcare outside of HAF and continue to promote the financial support available to parents to ensure costs remain affordable to parents (Tax-Free Childcare & Universal Credit schemes)

Action Plan: 2026-2027 priorities

The Local Authority will continue to manage the childcare market in Milton Keynes to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient and suitable childcare is available to every parent/carer who needs it by undertaking the following:

- Ongoing analysis and monitoring of the childcare market, including the continued impact of entitlement expansion

- Continue to investigate areas of projected Family Centre area place deficit, working with the sector to identify gaps and opportunities for additional early years provision

- Maintain high levels of participation across all childcare entitlements when compared with national rates, with a particular focus on take-up of the 'Early Learning for Two-Year-Old' entitlement

- Conduct a parent and carer survey to assess how well current provision meets needs across early years, wraparound and holiday childcare

- Continue to work with our primary phase schools to address areas where demand outweighs supply for wraparound provision

- We will seek to have a better understanding of holiday childcare outside of the HAF programme

- Work collaboratively across sectors and with stakeholders to deliver:
    - The outcomes set out in the Milton Keynes *Best Start* plan
    - The local roll out of National Free Breakfast Club Programme in line with national phasing
    - School Based Nursery Programme as appropriate to develop provision, where this is needed in Milton Keynes, ensuring to consider any possible market disruption and maintaining a mixed model of provision across the city.
    - Continued growth of our HAF programme

- Support the growth and sustainability of the childcare workforce through the rollout of Level 1–Level 3 childcare training and qualifications.

- Enhance the Milton Keynes City Council website to improve information, accessibility, and engagement for both parents, carers and providers.

Annex A: Provider funding

As the administrator of early education funding, and in accordance with statutory guidance, the local authority will seek to maximise parental choice by funding a child's free entitlement place at any provider who satisfies the required quality standards and local conditions of funding, as set out in the Milton Keynes City Council Provider Guidance. The Milton Keynes City Council website will continue to provide information of childcare providers that parents can access their entitlement.

Providers who wish to offer register as government funded childcare hours must be Ofsted registered.

Government funded childcare hours will be paid directly to a provider by Milton Keynes City Council. To register to offer funded hours providers should email the request to nursery.education@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Further information about available funding for providers can be found on the council's website: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance for settings, childminders and schools

Milton Keynes
City Council