



East Sussex County Council

Childcare Sufficiency Duty 2024



Table of contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Key findings](#)
3. [Childcare sufficiency - areas for development](#)
4. [Support for Parents and Carers](#)
5. [Population statistics in East Sussex](#)
6. [Projected housing growth](#)
7. [Sufficiency of childcare places](#)
8. [Consultation with parents and carers](#)
9. [Demand for childcare](#)
10. [Quality of provision and workforce development in East Sussex](#)
11. [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\)](#)
12. [Looked after Children](#)
13. [Childcare for children over five](#)

[Appendix 1 - Index of maps and data tables](#)

1. [Introduction](#)

The Childcare Sufficiency Duty report is a legal requirement. It outlines how East Sussex County Council (the Council) plans to secure enough childcare places as far as is reasonably practicable, for parents and carers who are working, studying, or training for employment. The report covers childcare for children from birth to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). The publication of this sufficiency document meets the Council's duty under sections 6 and 7 of the [Childcare Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#). It is also in line statutory guidance: [Early education and childcare - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The report focuses on two key areas of the childcare market in East Sussex:

- Measuring the demand for, and supply of, childcare within the five districts of East Sussex, identifying gaps in the market
- Planning how to support the childcare market within East Sussex to address any shortfall

It is placed within the context of the introduction of new early years funding streams for children aged two- of working families from April 2024, and from 9 months old from September 2024.

To assess the supply and demand for childcare places, the Council compares current known capacity with predicted demand. This takes account of factors such as births, housing growth and patterns of inward and outward migration.

The Childcare Act 2006 gives councils a role in shaping the childcare market. The Council is committed to working with providers from the private, voluntary, and independent sectors (PVI) and the school run sector to create a strong, sustainable, and diverse childcare market that meets the needs of families and supports children's learning through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The Council is required to report annually to elected members and publish information for families to show how it is meeting its sufficiency duty. This includes providing specific information about:

- The supply and demand for early education and childcare places
- Affordability, accessibility and quality of early education and childcare places
- Details of how any gaps in provision will be addressed

Whilst councils are required by law to ensure there are sufficient childcare places, attendance by children from birth to age five at any early education or childcare setting is voluntary. It is not compulsory for a child to attend education provision until the term after their fifth birthday.

The Childcare Act 2006 requires the following actions and measures which identify the strategic roles councils play. Councils should support (though not directly provide) the following:

- Early education places for two-, three- and four-year-olds supporting eligibility, flexibility, and quality of provision
- Distributing government funding that supports childcare and early education places
- Securing sufficient childcare so far as is reasonably practicable in a free market
- Providing information to parents and carers
- Providing information, support and training to early education and childcare providers

Childcare places are funded either by government entitlements or by parents. Councils are required to secure fully funded places offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks, and up to 52 weeks for every eligible child in their area.

Eligibility depends on a child's age and whether they meet certain funding criteria:

Figure 1: Eligibility Criteria for Funded two-, three- and four-year-olds

Eligibility	Offer	Criteria
All three- and four-year-olds	15 hours a week x minimum 38 weeks a year. 570 hours a year	Universal offer open to all age eligible children resident in East Sussex. No financial criteria to be met
Some eligible three- and four-year-olds	Extended Entitlement. 30 hours a week x minimum 38 weeks a year. 1,140 hours a year	For working families resident in East Sussex where both parents are working, or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family
Some eligible two-year-olds	15 hours a week x minimum 38 weeks a year. 570 hours a year	For families resident in East Sussex on either low income or a range of benefits, including Universal Credit
Some eligible two-year-olds from April 2024	15 hours a week x minimum 38 weeks a year. 570 hours a year	For working families resident in East Sussex where both parents are working, or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family
Some eligible under twos from September 2024	15 hours a week x minimum 38 weeks a year. 570 hours a year	For working families resident in East Sussex where both parents are working, or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family

30 Hour Extended Entitlement for working parent/carers of two, three- and four-year-olds - additional criteria:

- Parent/carers must each expect to earn at least £152 per week. This is equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage for persons aged 23 and over
- If parent/carers are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave they may still be eligible. If they are unable to work due to a disability or having caring responsibilities, they may also be eligible
- If either parent/carer earns more than £100,000, they will not be able to receive 30 hours free childcare but will still receive 15 hours per week over a minimum 38 weeks a year
- Foster carers may also apply (subject to approval from the child's social worker) if they meet the above financial criteria

Funded places for eligible two-year-olds on low income/benefits - additional criteria:

- Looked after children, those that have left care through special guardianship or through an adoption or residence order are also eligible. Children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) can also apply for a funded place for a two-year-old

For non-European Economic Area (EEA) citizens who cannot claim benefits, some families with an age eligible child may get free childcare if they are receiving support under the Immigration and Asylum Act and have either:

- Claimed asylum in the UK and are waiting for a decision (known as 'part 6')
- Been refused asylum in the UK (known as 'section 4')

Families may also receive free childcare for a two-year-old they care for if their household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, and they have:

- Leave to remain with 'no recourse to public funds' on family or private life grounds, or
- The right to live in the UK because they are the main carer of a British citizen (known as a 'Zambrano Carer')

Families can check with their local council if they are unsure if they qualify for free childcare.¹

Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of funded, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours, or additional activities. Families can, therefore, expect to pay for any meals offered by the provider alongside the fully funded entitlement, as well as paying for consumables e.g., nappies, or additional activities.

¹ Statutory Guidance for local authorities updated by the Department for Education April 2023

2. [Key findings](#)

Some of the key findings of the East Sussex Sufficiency Duty 2024 are summarised below. More information on each of the key areas is provided in later sections of this document.

2.1. East Sussex is growing and changing

The overall population in East Sussex has grown steadily, rising from 492,000 in 2001 to 546,000 in 2021 (Source: 2001 and 2021 Censuses).

2.2. Sufficiency of provision

East Sussex has 512 funded and non-funded childcare providers across the county. Several providers operate more than one type of childcare. Schools may have a breakfast and/or after school club as well as a nursery or a pre-school offering a holiday club. Generally, across East Sussex there are sufficient early years places to meet demand, but we are forecasting shortfalls in some rural areas.

2.3. Quality of childcare in East Sussex is high

The quality of early education and childcare in East Sussex is high. The percentage of early years providers in East Sussex judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding at the end of September 2023 was 97.5%. The national average was 89%.

In the 2022/23 academic year, 69.9% of children attained a Good Level of Development (GLD) in the EYFS profile assessment at the end of the foundation stage, which is 2.6% above the national average.

2.4. The cost of childcare remains just above national average

The average hourly charge by providers for day-care in East Sussex is £5.50 per hour. The national average hourly charge according to The Family and Childcare Trust Childcare is £5.41 for children aged three and four².

2.5. Cost of childcare places

Data on the cost of childcare is currently gathered annually in December each year by the Family Childcare Trust. Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the current average cost of 25 hours of childcare a week (part-time place) and 50 hours of childcare a week (full-time place), in England and in the Southeast³.

Figure 2: Average cost of 25 hours of childcare for children 0-5

Cost of 25 hours a week childcare	Nursery under two	Two and over	Childminder under two	Two and over
England	£150.89	£146.00	£126.20	£126.98
Southeast	£165.67	£154.80	£129.50	£128.86

Figure 3: Average cost of 50 hours of childcare for children 0-5

Cost of 50 hours a week childcare	Nursery under two	Two and over	Childminder under two	Two and over
England	£289.98	£283.95	£247.72	£248.00
Southeast	£311.91	£303.77	£256.00	£254.14

² [Childcare Survey 2023 | Family and Childcare Trust](#)

³ Family Childcare Trust: Childcare Survey 2023

Figure 4: Average cost of 25 or 50 hours of childcare for children aged three to five accessing funded hours including the free entitlements

	Cost of 25 hours a week childcare, including universal entitlement for three- and four-year-olds (paying for 10 hours)	50 hours a week, including extended entitlement (paying for 20 hours)
England	£59.83	£117.60
Southeast	£61.88	£131.98

Childcare for younger children is often more expensive due to factors such as staff to child ratios. Most parent/carers find that their childcare costs reduce as their child grows. All children are entitled to some form of funded nursery education from the funding period following their third birthday, meaning childcare fees for parent/carers fall.

2.6. The childcare picture in East Sussex

In the Southeast there has been a higher than national decline in the numbers of childminders since 2015. In August 2023 there were 153 registered childminders in East Sussex offering childcare places, a reduction of 12% on the number in August 2022.

2.7. How COVID-19 impacted on childcare in East Sussex

Providers across the sector are still feeling the economic impact from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Early Years Improvement and Funding teams in the Council have kept in regular and targeted communication with all childcare provision to offer advice and support, and this communication remains ongoing.

The biggest issue facing the sector currently is recruitment and retention. Since the autumn of 2021, the sector has seen an increase in the number of qualified practitioners, especially at Level 3, leave the profession. This is a nationwide

problem and the Council's early years teams are collaborating with all providers and the Department for Education (DfE) to address this issue. The lack of staff has been given as a reason for settings across the county to cap the number of funded places available.

In total, two settings and 20 childminders closed between September 2022 and August 2023. In the same period, three new providers opened.

Since January 2023 we have seen an average increase of 17% in the number of families accessing the 30 hours extended offer reflecting the increasing number of parents and carers returning to work.

3. Childcare sufficiency - areas for development

To ensure the supply of high-quality early years and childcare provision, the Council will take the following actions in three key areas:

3.1. Data and sufficiency

- Propose to undertake regular capacity audits through the online provider portal as well as an annual data refresh. This will help to identify any sufficiency issues
- Encourage Early Years Hubs to work together in partnership to better understand local availability to meet parental demand
- Track areas of new housing development and community growth to target new early years places. Align the development of new early years places with school place planning priorities where applicable
- Continue to track all sectors of the market to identify potential reasons for any decline in provider numbers
- Use the early years forecasting model to analyse sufficiency across all five districts, looking particularly at supply and demand
- Encourage take-up of funded places, particularly two-year-old funded places, in areas where take-up rates are lower

3.2. Family information

- Use social media and the East Sussex Children and Families web pages to widen access to information about early education and educating children at home
- Help parent/carers (particularly vulnerable families) to understand the benefits of high-quality childcare and early learning for their children

3.3. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

- Improve the skills and knowledge of early years providers to meet the needs of children with SEND by adapting service delivery to ensure all providers

have access to support, guidance and training on how to implement the [Graduated Approach](#)

- Review and adapt service offer to ensure the Council's SEND Early Years Service can support providers to meet the needs of children as additional hours become available for working parents between now and September 2025.
- Review and adapt our transition support package to ensure that all parents/carers of children with SEND feel confident sending their child to their allocated school place.
- Ensure all service information is up to date and accessible via the Local Offer web page.
- Use Early Years data to support all children identified with SEND to access their early education entitlement and that support, training and guidance is in place to enable settings to do this.
- Continually review and update training offers to providers with a specific SEND focus. Training is offered at no cost to childcare settings with involvement from the Council's SEND Early Years Service.

4. [Support for Parents and Carers](#)

4.1. Affordability

For childcare to be sustainable, providers need to generate income to ensure they are meeting operating costs. Legislation states that councils cannot intervene in how providers operate their personal business, including any fees they may charge for provision over and above a child's funded place.

At the same time, childcare needs to be affordable to parents and carers, and councils have a legal duty to ensure there is sufficient affordable childcare for families who need it and will identify any gaps in the market.

4.2. Help with childcare costs

There are options available to parents and carers to help with childcare costs. Parents and carers must select the option that best suits their personal circumstances. Parents and carers in East Sussex can find further information on the [local authority's help with childcare costs webpage](#)

In addition, from April 2024 eligible working families of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks per year. This offer will extend to eligible working families of children from nine months old to 23 months old from September 2024. From September 2025, eligible working families will be able to access up to 30 hours of funded childcare for children from 9 months old up to school age. Information can be found at [Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#)

5. [Population Statistics in East Sussex](#)

5.1. Population

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 Census, the population of East Sussex is around 546,000. This is approximately 1% of the population of England.

Around three quarters of the population live in urban areas (Source: 2011 Census). The main centres of population and employment are concentrated in the southern coastal strip of the county in Eastbourne, Hastings and St Leonard's, Bexhill, Newhaven, Seaford, and Lewes.

In the urban areas of Eastbourne and Hastings there are 116 funded providers, in the more rural areas of Lewes, Rother and Wealden there are 199 funded providers. There are 197 unfunded providers across the county including non-funded childminders and holiday provision.

It is estimated that there are 111,890 children and young people aged 0 to 17 in East Sussex (Census 2021).

Between 2011 and 2021, the population in East Sussex in the 0-17 age group decreased by 3.8%, from 116,350.

Figure 5: Population Increase (all ages) in the last decade 2011 to 2021⁴

Area	2011	2021	Percentage change 2011-2021
England	53,012,456	56,489,800	6.6%
East Sussex	526,670	545,800	3.6%
Eastbourne	99,410	101,700	2.3%
Hastings	90,250	91,100	0.9%
Lewes	97,500	99,900	2.5%
Rother	90,590	93,100	2.8%
Wealden	148,920	160,100	7.5%

Interim population projections (March 2023) suggest that the whole population of the county will increase by 11.5% between 2021 and 2035. The 0-17 population is projected to increase by 2.3%.

⁴ ONS 2011 and 2021 Census data

Figure 6: Population projections (all ages) from 2021 to 2035

Year	Population 2021	Projected population 2035	Projected change 2021-2035	% Change 2021-2035
East Sussex	546,900	610,100	63,100	11.5%

Source: East Sussex County Council interim population projections March 2023

The table in figure 7 below shows the of numbers of children aged 0-17 and disabled children aged 10-17, based on the ONS mid-year estimates 2019 and disability projections.

Figure 7: Number of children aged 0-17 and disabled children aged 10-17

	Total population aged 10-17	Number of children with a didsability aged 10 to 17	Percentage
East Sussex	48,470	5,680	11.7%
Eastbourne	9,140	1,130	12%
Hastings	8,280	1,070	13%
Lewes	9,100	1,180	13%
Rother	7,550	880	11.6%
Wealden	14,410	1,410	9.7%

Source: ONS 2021 Census

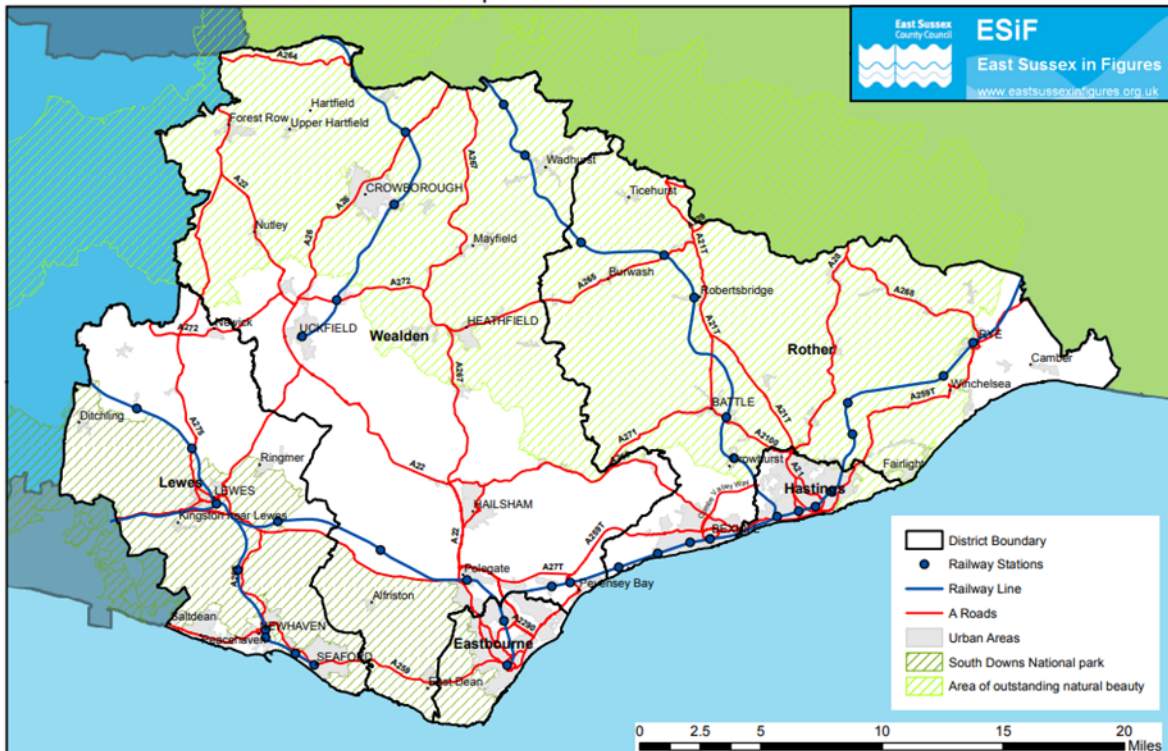
In the 2021 Census, 8.5% of all children aged 0-17 were classified as disabled under the Equality Act, and 3.3% had a disability which meant that their day to day activities were significantly limited.

5.2. Districts and Boroughs

East Sussex comprises five borough and district council areas: Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother, and Wealden. Parts of the county are within the South Downs National Park.

Figure 8: Map of the five borough and district council areas in East Sussex

East Sussex: Main settlements and transport connections in 2017



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5.3. Ethnicity

Around 512,440 residents (93.9%) of East Sussex identified their ethnic group as white in the 2021 Census, including both white-British or Northern Irish (NI) and other white ethnic groups. The second most common ethnic group was "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups", comprising 2.3% of the population (12,310 people).

However, there was a higher proportion of people in different ethnic groups among children and young people. Only 85.7% of people aged 0-17 in the county were in the white-British (or NI) ethnic group. 5.6% were from mixed or multiple

ethnic groups, 4.1% were white-not British (or NI), and 2.5% were Asian or Asian British.

Figure 9(a): Population by ethnic group in 2021

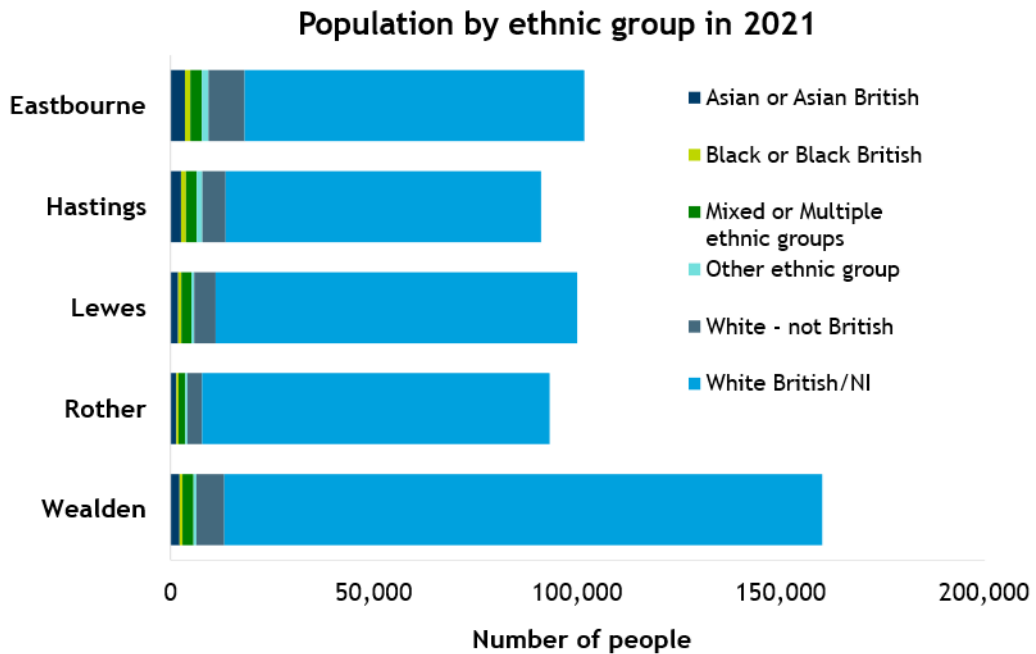
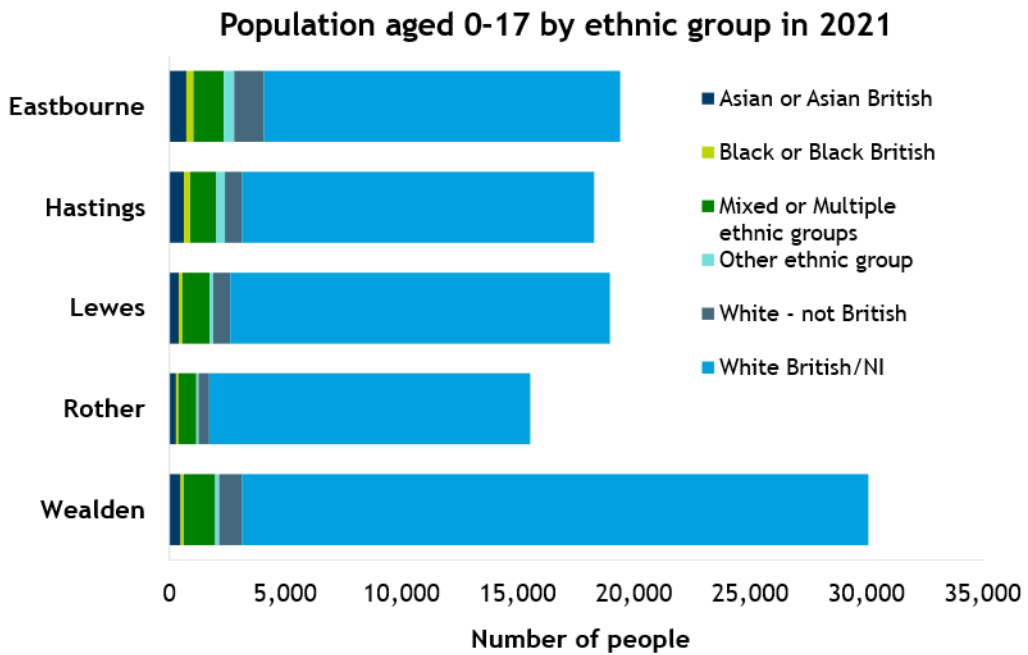


Fig. 9(b) Population aged 0-17 by ethnic group in 2021



5.4. Languages

There are over 100 languages spoken in East Sussex. For around 4,606 (7%) of school children (5-16) in the county English is not their first language. Polish is the most spoken language other than English across schools in East Sussex.

Figure 10: Number of Languages Spoken in Schools in East Sussex⁵

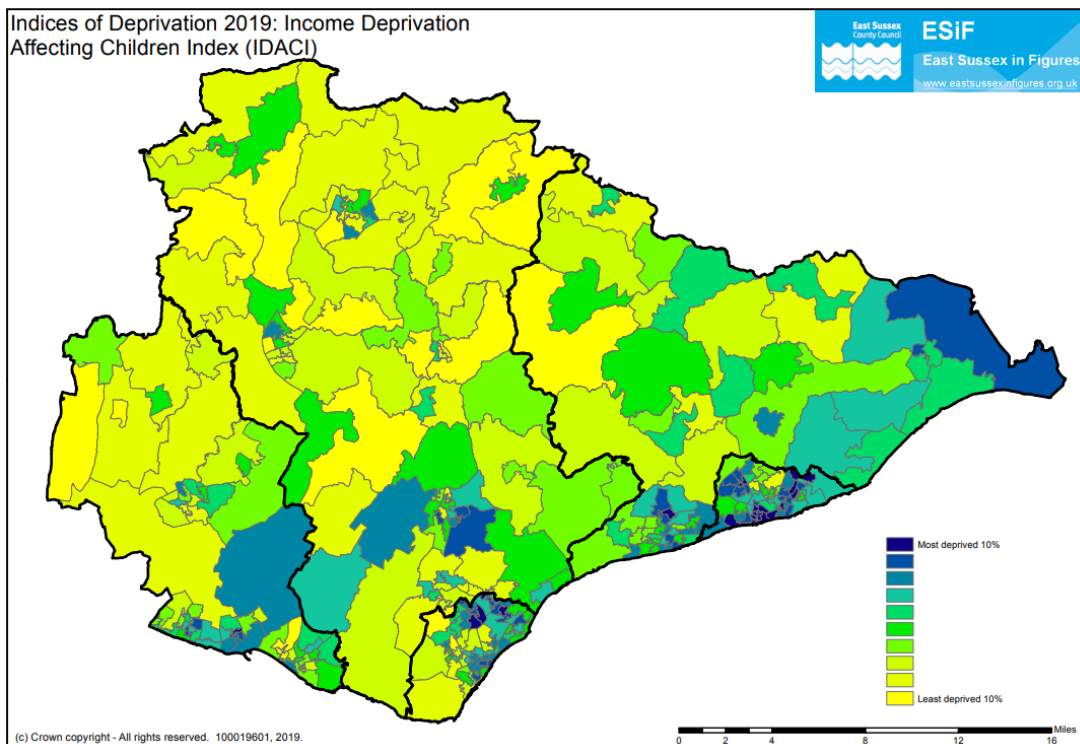
Language	Number of Pupils	Percentage
English	63,188	92.58%
Polish	598	0.87%
Ukrainian	302	0.44%
Malayalam	286	0.42%
Arabic	285	0.42%
Romanian	252	0.37%
Portuguese	220	0.32%
Russian	211	0.31%
Turkish	191	0.28%
Believed to be English	167	0.24%
Other than English	153	0.22%
Kurdish	142	0.21%
Bengali	140	0.20%
Spanish	122	0.18%
Albanian/Shqip	107	0.16%
Information not obtained	106	0.15%
Tamil	104	0.15%
Others	1,694	2.48%
Total Number of Children	68,268	100%

⁵ Data from May 2023 School Census

5.5. Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The map below in Figure 11 shows the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), which measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families. IDACI is a data subset of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD). This data measures the proportion of the population in an area experiencing deprivation relating to low income. The small areas used are known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), and there are 32,844 in England. The measures rank every LSOA in England from 1 (the most deprived area) to 32,844 (the least deprived area). The 10% of LSOAs with the lowest rank in the country are in the most deprived decile (coloured dark blue on the map below). The 10% highest rank are in the least deprived decile (yellow).

Figure 11: National deprivation rank in neighbourhoods LSOAs in East Sussex



In East Sussex there are 329 LSOAs, of which 22 are in the most deprived 10% nationally. 16 of these are in Hastings, four in Eastbourne, and two in Rother. 21

LSOAs are in the least deprived 10%, of which 13 are in Wealden, six in Lewes, and two in Eastbourne.

In 2022, 20,908 (18.6%) children and young people aged 0-19 lived in families with relative low-income (less than 60% of median income). A quarter of children in Hastings live in low-income families.

Figure 12: Children living in relative low-income families 2021/2022

	Number			Percentage		
	All children	Aged 0-15	Aged 16-19	All children	Aged 0-15	Aged 16-19
Eastbourne	4,455	3,566	883	20.9%	20.9%	20.7%
Hastings	5,017	4,036	983	25.1%	24.8%	26.5%
Lewes	3,194	2,541	651	15.3%	15.2%	15.5%
Rother	3,380	2,731	655	19.8%	20.1%	19.1%
Wealden	4,859	3,876	984	14.7%	14.6%	15.2%
East Sussex	20,908	16,746	4,160	18.6%	18.6%	18.9%
England	2,575,853	2,087,495	488,363	19.8%	19.9%	19.0%

Source: DWP StatXplore website

In February 2023, there were 72,070 working age people in the county who were receiving one or more Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits (23% of all working age people aged 16-64). Of these, 43,090 (13.8% of working age) were receiving a benefit because they were not in work (many will receive benefits because they have a disability or are too sick to work, others because they have caring responsibilities). 28,980 benefit claimants were not on an out-of-work benefit. Claimant rates were much higher in Hastings (32% on at least one DWP benefit) and Eastbourne (28%), with nearly 21% of working age people in Hastings on at least one out-of-work benefit.

In September 2023, there were 47,390 people in East Sussex (15% of all working age people) claiming Universal Credit, of whom 17,690 (37%) were in employment.

In August 2023, there were 40,020 households receiving Universal Credit, of whom 18,870 had at least one child dependent, and 13,160 were single parent families.

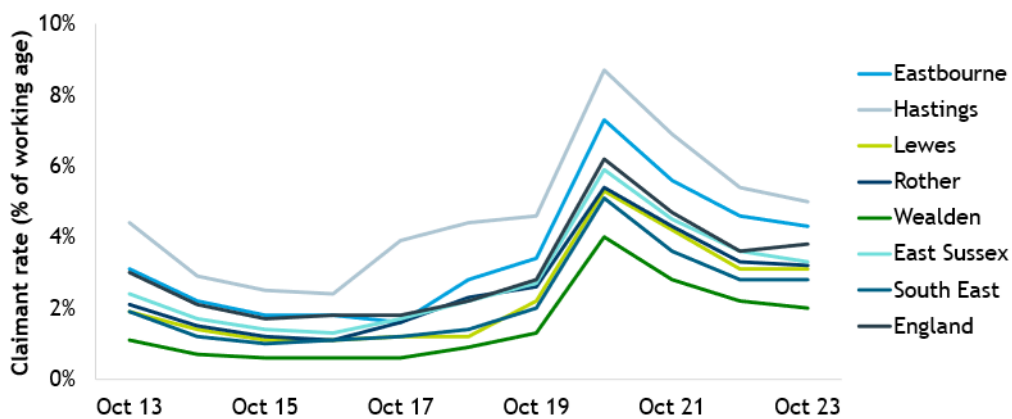
5.6 Unemployment

High unemployment will impact on the number of families accessing the Extended 30 Hours entitlement as this offer is only open to families in work.

According to the 2021 Census, although East Sussex had a lower unemployment rate (4% of people aged 16-64) than in England as a whole (4.4%) it was slightly higher than in the Southeast region (3.9%).

Figure 13 below shows claimant rates for the ten years from 2013 to 2023. Unemployed claimant rates in East Sussex reflect the downward England and regional trend since the Corona virus pandemic, but locally rates have continued to fall, whereas in England the rate has risen slightly since October 2022.

Figure 13: Claimant rate October 2013 - October 2023, districts



Source: ONS/Nomis Claimant Count Data

6. Projected housing growth

Local Plans produced by local planning authorities, including the South Downs National Park Authority, show the level and distribution of planned housing growth across the county, see Fig14.

Figure 14: Number of new dwellings to be built by area⁶

Adopted Local Plans (adoption date) in District and Boroughs	Number of dwellings still to be built over plan period
Lewes and the South Downs National Park Authority: Remaining Local Plan period to 2029/2030	4,300
Hastings: Remaining Local Plan period to 2027/2028	1,900
Eastbourne: Remaining Local Plan period to 2026/2027	1,600
Rother: Remaining Local Plan Period 2027/2028	3,200
Wealden: Currently no published strategic housing totals available	N/A

Planning authorities are currently reviewing their Local Plans, which could lead to higher levels of housing development in future years. In some areas of the county new housing may attract the need for childcare provision which may exceed current levels of supply and require new or expanded provision to meet demand for places.

⁶ East Sussex School Organisation Plan- 2023 to 2027

7. Sufficiency of childcare places

East Sussex has 512 childcare providers across the county. Several providers operate more than one type of childcare. Schools may have a breakfast and, or after school club as well as a nursery or a pre-school offering a holiday club.

Figure 15: Number of providers(funded/non-funded) by type in East Sussex⁷

Childcare Provider Type	September 2023
Childminder and Childcare on Domestic Premises	146
Nurseries in maintained schools and academies	50
Independent School Nursery	9
PVI Settings	159
Crèche	3
Nanny	22
Out of School Clubs	84
Stand-alone Holiday Play Scheme	39
Total	512

7.1. Funded early education places

Not all childcare providers offer funded early education places. The table below shows the number of childcare providers by borough or district offering funded early education places in the PVI sector, in local council-maintained schools and in non-maintained schools, including academies.

⁷ East Sussex Synergy FIS Portal- September 2023

Figure 16 (a): Number of Nursery Providers & Childminders Providing Funded Places by Sector in Each District⁸

District	Nursery Private	Nursery Voluntary	Childminder
Eastbourne	25	3	26
Hastings	25	5	13
Lewes	21	6	31
Rother	15	11	5
Wealden	30	18	22
Totals	116	43	97

Figure 16 (b): Number of Schools Providing Funded Places by Sector in Each District⁹

District	Non-Maintained (including Academies)	Maintained	Independent
Eastbourne	5	2	2
Hastings	8	1	1
Lewes	3	8	0
Rother	4	3	2
Wealden	5	11	4
Totals	25	25	9

The number and distribution of funded childcare places offered by childcare providers varies between districts. Most places are located within urban areas. For families living in rural areas the choice of type of provision is more limited.

⁸ East Sussex Synergy FIS Portal- October 2023

⁹ East Sussex Synergy FIS Portal- October 2023

Figure 17 (a): Number of full time equivalent (FTE) places available by borough/district¹⁰

Districts	(FTE Places) 2023 to 2024
East Sussex	10,233
Eastbourne	2,195
Hastings	1,714
Lewes	1,818
Rother	1,585
Wealden	2,921

Figure 17 (b): Demand for full time equivalent (FTE) places by borough/district¹¹

Districts	Demand for FTE Places by District 2022 to 2023 Onwards
East Sussex	8,918
Eastbourne	1,870
Hastings	1,607
Lewes	1,565
Rother	1,391
Wealden	2,485

7.2. Take up of funding streams¹²

Take up of the 15-hour universal entitlement for three- and four-year-olds is strong across all areas of the county with an increase of 2.4% since 2022, from 93% to 95.4%. This is above the national average of 93.7%.

¹⁰ Early years forecasting Model - July 2023

¹¹ Expanded Entitlement Modelling -East Sussex Estimates October 2023

¹² DfE Local Authority Interactive Tool - October 2023

Figure 18 shows the number of three- and four-year-olds accessing their universal 15 hour offer by borough or district.

Figure 18: Number of three- and four-year-olds accessing a funded place in April 2023¹³

District	Number of children accessing a Universal 15 hour offer place in April 2023
East Sussex	7,959
Eastbourne	1,785
Hastings	1,537
Lewes	1,465
Rother	1,088
Wealden	2,093

In East Sussex, the number of children taking up the extended 30-hour entitlement for the summer claim period in 2023 was 44.4% of the total number of three- and four-year-olds accessing a funded early education place. This equates to a 0.4% increase on the same period in 2022. Nationally, in 2022-2023 363,000 children registered for the extended 30-hour entitlement. This is 30% of the total number of children (1.2 million) registered for the universal 15-hour entitlement, a four percent increase from 2022.

Analysis of the supply of and demand for places for eligible funded two-year-olds shows that take-up is lower than for the universal three- and four-year-old entitlement. Only 40% of the two-year-old population meet the DfE eligibility criteria to access a funded place. In East Sussex 1,009 children accessed a funded two-year-old place in April 2023. This equates to 21% of the total estimated 2-year-old population. The economic and social vulnerability of these families can impact on take-up rates. One key factor is parental preference for wanting to keep very young children at home; this is particularly relevant for two-year-olds. Local

¹³ East Sussex Headcount data - April 2023

childcare offers which do not meet parental preferences and the use of informal childcare instead of the more formal options such as a nursery, all contribute to the impact on the pattern of take-up. Figure 19 shows the number of eligible two-year-olds accessing a funded early education place by district.

Figure 19: Number of eligible funded two-year-olds accessing a funded place in April 2023¹⁴

District	Number of funded two-year-olds accessing the 15-hour offer - April 2023
East Sussex	1,009
Eastbourne	243
Hastings	266
Lewes	157
Rother	149
Wealden	194

¹⁴ East Sussex Headcount data - April 2023

8. [Consultation with parents and carers](#)

Consultation with parents and carers is an important part of establishing the demand for childcare. The most recent Childcare Sufficiency Duty Parental Survey was undertaken in November 2023. It ran from 1 November to 30 November 2023 and was available on the East Sussex County Council [Consultation Hub](#). The survey was advertised to parent/carers and early years providers in East Sussex via social media and via direct email communication.

By the close of the consultation period, 829 responses had been received. The responses can be broken down as follows:

- 92% of respondents were female
- 85% of respondents were a couple parent/carer household
- 71% of those that responded had children four years old or younger
- 66% of those that responded had school age children (Reception to age 14, or 18 if disabled)
- 17% of respondents had children with a special educational need and/or disability
- 49% of those that responded worked more than 30 hours a week and 37% worked part-time (29 hours a week or less). 3% of respondents indicated they were unemployed and looking for work and 3% indicated they were not looking for work. 1% of respondents were in education or training and 2% indicated being long term sick/disabled. 8% indicated other

Respondents told us:

- 68% of respondents wanted childcare all year round
- 96% of respondents wanted childcare on Monday to Fridays only
- 5% of respondents wanted childcare on Saturdays and 3% wanted childcare on Sundays
- 30% of respondent's wanted between 20-30 hours of childcare a week
- 64% of respondents were willing to use more than one provider
- 68% of respondents needed childcare through the school holidays

- 47% of respondents with school aged children used a breakfast club and 68% used after school provision
- 56% of respondents looking for early years provision found it difficult to afford the childcare they wanted. 31% of families using before and after school care found affordability an issue. When accessing school holiday provision, 43% of parent/carers found affordability difficult
- 41% of respondents used the government's Tax-Free Childcare benefit
- 88% of respondents were aware that funding was available to help with childcare costs
- 34% of respondents were happy with the funded sessions offered
- 38% of respondents were happy with where they could access funded hours
- 26% stated they were happy with the choice of childcare available
- 62% of respondents said childcare provision was within the right location
- 41% of respondents were happy with the quality of childcare provision on offer
- 30% of respondents found it difficult to access information on childcare provision in their area
- In the last 12 months, 24% of respondents to the survey stated they had been unable to access childcare when needed

The information provided by those that responded will be used to inform where there are gaps in provision within the county. This information will be shared with current providers and new providers moving into East Sussex to help meet the needs of families.

The Council's Customer Relations Team (which incorporates the Family Information Service) takes enquiries by email, social media and by phone between 10am and 3pm during weekdays. This service helps parents (particularly vulnerable families) to understand and access the benefits of high-quality childcare and early learning for their children.

For the period 1 September 2022 to 31 July 2023, the Customer Relations Team responded to 1,455 enquiries, a 25% increase over the previous year. The enquiry data shows that childcare and early years funding enquiries, where identified, saw

an increase in requests for financial support, free school meals vouchers and help with school uniform.

The helpline now receives the more complex enquiries regarding eligibility to additional available funding streams from professionals working with vulnerable families.

The Customer Relations team uses social media to promote the Early Years Education Entitlement, 30 hours funded childcare and tax-free childcare. For the period 1 September to 31 July 2023, [Facebook](#) has increased page reach from 106,000 to 126,000 and followers have increased from 3,700 to 4,100 in this period.

In the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 July 2023, the number of ‘entrances’ where visitors entered our website through our ‘Help with childcare costs’ page about funded childcare was 2,295. The bounce rate, where a user enters the site and leaves instantly without spending any time in the site, was 38.7%¹⁵.

The page has information about funded early education, tax credits and childcare vouchers for parents and professionals working with families, such as social workers and health visitors.

9. [Demand for childcare](#)

Data taken from the Council’s early years forecasting model, updated in October 2023, indicates that across the county there is sufficient capacity within the sector in most areas to meet demand for 0 to five-year-old childcare places. Countywide, GP data is showing that the number of children aged under five is likely to fall in the short term. Pressures on the early years sector may start to increase in the next few years as birth rates start to rise. The new funding streams for working families being implemented from April 2024 will increase demand for places.

¹⁵ East Sussex customer management system - Fresh Desk and Google Analytics

Figure 20: Shows the towns in East Sussex where the current supply of early years childcare places is close to capacity in 2023/2024:

Town	Capacity	Solution to sufficiency gaps
Eastbourne West	22 spare places (3%)- Sufficient overall capacity across the Borough as a whole.	New provision opened in neighbouring area in November 2023.
Hastings South-Western	21 fte spare places (5%)- Sufficient overall capacity across the Borough as a whole.	Look at capacity of existing provision and support opening new provision.
Hastings North-Western	28 fte spare places (5%)- Sufficient overall capacity across the Borough as a whole.	Look at capacity of existing provision and support opening new provision.
Bexhill	5 fte spare places (1%)- Sufficient overall capacity across the Borough as a whole	New provision opened in November 2023

Figure 21 (a): Shows the rural areas in East Sussex where settings are forecast to be at or close to capacity:

Rural Area	Number of Spare Places	Solution to Sufficiency Gap
Barcombe	0	We will look at the capacity of existing provision in each area and support the expansion of additional places where needed
Ditchling	1	
Hamsey	0	
Newick	0	
Chailey	0	
Brede	0	
Staplecross	0	
Stonegate	0	
Maresfield	0	
Blackboys	2	
Chiddingly	1	
Frant	0	
Herstmonceux	0	
Mark Cross	1	

Mayfield	1	
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Figure 21 (b): Shows rural areas in East Sussex with currently no early years provision:¹⁶

Firle	These areas currently do not have enough demand to enable sustainable early years provision to be in place. Future demand will be monitored.
Burwash	
Winchelsea	
Playden	
Buxted	
Danehill	
Fletching	
High Hurstwood	
Park Mead Primary School/Upper Dicker Area	
St Michael’s Primary School/Withyham Area	

10. [Quality of provision and workforce development in East Sussex](#)

“High quality pre-schooling relates to better intellectual and social and behavioural development for children” (taken from The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project). Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage 1 inspections, undertaken by Ofsted, measure the quality of early provision. Ofsted is the sole arbiter of quality and through the inspection process each setting will receive one of four grades (Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate) depending on the inspection findings.

Current inspection outcomes of registered early years and childcare providers in East Sussex show that the quality of provision across East Sussex is higher than the national average. By the end of September 2023 Ofsted judged 97.5% of registered early years providers in East Sussex as good or outstanding.

¹⁶ Local early years area boundaries are based on primary school place planning areas which are largely determined by the school’s admissions areas for the local primary school

Support is available for providers to improve the quality of delivery and meet the requirements of the EYFS and Ofsted. The quality of provision plays an important part in the sufficiency of places.

All registered early years providers and childminders in East Sussex are offered a package of support by a team of Early Years Support and Intervention Officers within the Council. The support entails a management and safeguarding audit and observations of practice to ensure providers are confident in delivering the Statutory Framework for the EYFS. With this continued support offered until their first inspection all new early years providers have achieved good or outstanding at their first Ofsted inspection. All early years providers and childminders are invited to take part in this support on a rolling basis dependent on their last Ofsted inspection. Schools that have lowered their age range to take pre-school children are now included in this support if they wish to participate. All providers are contacted at least once a year either by phone or a one-off visit to ensure we maintain contact.

The East Sussex figure for children attaining a Good Level of Development (GLD) in the EYFS profile assessment at the end of the foundation stage is 69.9% which is 2.6% above the national average. The gap between East Sussex and National has narrowed. Last year East Sussex was 3.8% above the national for GLD.

The percentage at expected level across all the Early Learning Goals is 68.2% which is 2.5% above national.

The Council has a statutory duty in relation to provision of childcare training. The training programme delivered by the local council's Early Years Team aims to improve outcomes for children through the development of a skilled workforce. The training is available to practitioners working in any registered provision, as well as prospective childminders. The private and voluntary sector can access subsidised courses.

Bespoke training is also provided fully funded to whole teams in settings where a package of support is in place or as a traded service. Feedback from providers evidence that training is needed and valued. Providers who have received a

‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’ Ofsted grade to improve practice receive priority access to training.

Recruitment of qualified and experienced practitioners remains a challenge for providers across the county. This reflects a national issue. The Council provides a recruitment website that providers can use to support the appointment and development of their workforce.

The Early Years Team have set up Early Years Hubs for Excellence over the past nine years. These are now well established and continue to enable a wide variety of providers in East Sussex- private, voluntary, childminders, independent, maintained and non-maintained - to work together to deliver sustained improvement. The hubs are coordinated by reception teachers and pre-school leads who plan networking and training opportunities to meet the needs of their locality. Currently there are 15 Early Years Hubs which are linked to school Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPS). The Early Years Hub leaders meet with the other hubs within their EIP group to create an action plan that meets the needs of the local EIP group and informs the training and support that the hubs offer their members.

East Sussex has also been funded by the DfE from the Early Years Social Mobility Programme to develop two Continuous Professional Development (CPD) partnerships in areas with high levels of children in receipt of 2-year funding and early years pupil premium (EYPP). The funding will support the training of four practitioners in each partnership which will be delivered by the DfE’s national partner Educational Development Trust (EDT), in partnership with Elklan Ltd. This programme is to support the DfE’s target to halve by 2028 the percentage of children leaving Reception year without the communication, language, and literacy skills they need to thrive, and it is anticipated that this will reach beyond the two partnerships via the Early Years Hubs for Excellence.

The Council finished an award-winning Baby Room Project in 2019. This supported practitioners in baby rooms to reflect on their day-to-day interactions with the children in their care and to research how to improve their practice in early communication to support quality childcare. A new project working with two-

year-olds was postponed by the COVID-19 pandemic but launched in 2022. A total of 22 settings were recruited but only 11 settings completed the project due to staffing and recruitment issues. There continues to be a focus on training and networking events for practitioners working with under threes. In preparation of the expansion of funded places for children aged two and under from April 2024 the team aim to visit all baby rooms in the next six months to review provision for babies ahead of the expansion plans. The Integrated Progress Review is now embedded amongst our health visitors and early years practitioners; this allows for swifter intervention and support to children identified through the review process.

'50 Things to do before you're 5', continues to be promoted to families and settings as fun and educational activities for families, carers, and childcare practitioners to do across East Sussex - all at low- or no cost. In a small-scale evaluation of the project, settings have told us that children are keen to share what they have done and are more confident to talk, which has improved their communication and language. Nearly 7,500 families have signed up to the scheme since its launch in 2019. All primary schools and early years settings received resource packs to encourage working with parents to develop home learning activities. The use of 'notifications' and an 'events' tab allows direct communication with families. A Facebook page dedicated to the project means ideas can be shared with schools, settings, and families. '50 Things to do before you're 5' has been incorporated into other projects within East Sussex to encourage schools and settings to see it as a universal offer for all families. The next phase for 5-11-year-olds will be launched in 2024 to continue to promote activities for primary aged children.

A new project to revive the use of poetry and rhyme to support oracy was launched in early 2022. This has been bought from Make Believe Arts and is called Poetry Baskets. Settings have access to poems and rhymes through a website. They have been tasked with using one per month from a pre-selected list which has been linked to an activity from '50 Things to do before you're 5'. Anecdotal evidence has shown that children have picked up the poems really quickly and whole families have become involved. Some settings have reported that children

with English as an additional language have joined in with poems when they are usually very quiet.

Two members of the Early Years Team are Area Leads for the DfE Covid Recovery programme. They offer leadership support, coaching and mentoring to one setting each, but oversee the work of other experts and mentors; one working in East Sussex and one in Kent. Settings benefit from additional support to review areas of practice of their own choosing. East Sussex childminders have been able to benefit from the childminder mentor scheme through the DfE Covid Recovery programme. This provides a working childminder mentor for any childminder who participates.

In February 2023, the first cohort of practitioners began the Early Years Professional Development Programme which is being funded by the DfE as part of the Early Years Recovery Programme. The programme is targeted to support practitioners with children who have an EHCP, in receipt of EYPP or accessing the disadvantaged two-year-old offer. The programme aims to improve outcomes on school readiness, early language, early mathematics and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED). In East Sussex, 31 practitioners have signed up to the programme, of which nine subsequently withdrew or deferred to cohort 2. The remaining 22 are expected to complete the programme at the end of 2023. A further 28 practitioners signed up to Cohort 2 which started in September 2023. Cohort 3 will begin in January 2024 and 2finally Cohort 4 will commence in April 2024.

11. [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\)](#)

The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity for children with SEND and ensure that all providers delivering early education places meet the needs of children with SEND. Both locally and nationally, there is an increase in the number of children presenting with SEND in the early years. To help fulfil the Council's duties and enhance capacity within the early years sector, the SEND Early Years Service in the Council supports early years providers to develop quality, inclusive environments and support the inclusion of children with SEND.

All education and childcare providers must fulfil their obligations under the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) (EYFS), [the Equality Act 2010](#), and the [SEN Code of Practice \(2015\)](#). They are required to provide a graduated response, an approach that educational settings take to support children and young people with SEND. This approach involves carefully assessing each child's needs when deciding how best to support them, ensuring arrangements are in place to identify and support children with SEND and promote equality of opportunity.

The Council expects all childcare and education settings to be inclusive and support the needs of the majority of young people with SEND within high-quality provision. When universal and targeted support are insufficient, settings are supported to make referrals for specialist support from the SEND Early Years Service, Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service (CITES) and the Child Development Clinic (CDC).

Information on childcare is available online to all parents and carers, with extra information for parents and carers of children with SEND accessible via the [East Sussex Local Offer](#). Other services also provide support to parents and carers to access the funded early years entitlement offer. The [East Sussex Local Offer](#) pages list a wide range of activities and clubs for young people with a disability or additional needs.

The Council's SEND Early Years Service offers comprehensive training packages on assorted topics related to inclusion and SEND. This includes online training videos

and web-based support materials accessible directly through the SEND Early Years Service.

The SEND Early Years Service provides an Inclusion Advice Line that settings can contact for information and resources to meet children's needs. SEND Early Years Practitioners offer guidance on universal and targeted support strategies, enabling settings to implement the graduated approach. They also direct settings to appropriate resources and provide advice on the evidence required for referrals to specialist support services.

When a child with SEND is not attending an Early Years setting, the SEND Early Years Service supports families in their homes, working with them to identify and transition into a setting.

Children's needs may change over time and are identified at different ages and stages. Most children with SEND will have their needs met within mainstream provision with access to SEND Support. However, a small minority of children requiring additional support may need an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and, in some cases, access to specialist provision. For children with the most significant needs, three specialist nursery settings - Glyne Gap School in Bexhill, South Downs School, and Summerdown School (both in Eastbourne) - allow parents to use their early years education entitlement (EYEE) hours to access places.

The Council recognises the importance of early intervention and the value of a comprehensive transition from nurseries/pre-schools into Reception. Additional Needs Plans that clearly identify children's needs and the support they may require are in place when starting school. This enables schools to implement support promptly.

Research suggests some childcare providers may lack confidence in meeting the needs of children with high-level medical needs. The Council offers providers training and specialist equipment if appropriate, working closely with colleagues in CITES and the Health Visiting Team to ensure children's needs are met. This includes planning for any required adaptations to schools at the point of transition.

The SEND Early Years Service collaborates closely with the [Early Years Team](#). Inclusion Support Group meetings offer continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinators (SENDCo's) of nurseries, pre-schools, and childminders across the county. Joint training packages are also available to settings.

The SEND Early Years Service collaborates closely with colleagues in other services across the council, including health, community, and social care.

Whole family working is a key priority for the SEND Early Years Service. Providing signposting to services that support with wider contexts, such as finances, housing, and transport so that families of children with SEND can access their entitlements and thrive. The service continues to develop a whole family working agenda to ensure families in East Sussex get the right resources and tools to thrive.

Councils are required to provide a Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund. This funding is available to early years providers to meet the individual needs of children with special educational needs who are in receipt of three- and four-year-old early years education funding. Funding can be allocated to children before they are age-eligible to access early education funding. Settings are required to make applications to apply for this funding and must evidence that support is being put in place.

While there is no statutory duty to provide additional funding for children in receipt of two-year-old early years education funding, support within East Sussex is not age-dependent. Provision is made for this age group as well, and requests for additional funding can be made if a child has an identified need that requires additional support.

For children with more complex needs, additional funding support is provided through a combination of funding streams, including the Early Years and High Needs Block. Joint funding may be allocated from both the Children's Services and Health teams within the council for some children.

In the financial Year 2022-2023, 340 children received Early Years Inclusion Support Funding (EYISF) across a total of 132 early years settings. Of these, 70 were 2-year-olds and 62 were in receipt of the Extended 30 hours funding. When comparing this data to the 2021-2022 financial year, there has been an increase of 41.4% of children funded. The SEND Early Years Service is developing an auditing program to ensure that children in receipt of funding are provided with appropriate support.

For children with more complex needs additional funding support is provided via a combination of funding streams including the Early Years and High Needs Block. For some children joint funding will be allocated from both the Children's Services and Health teams within the council.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) goes to early years providers to support children with SEND. Its purpose is to remove 'barriers' which prevent children from accessing their funded early education entitlement. To attract DAF, children must be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and the three- and four-year-old early years education entitlement. This annual payment of £800 goes to the provider nominated by the parent or carer. In the 2022/2023 financial year 110 children were in receipt of a DAF payment.

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) enables childcare providers offering funded places for three- and four-year-olds to apply for extra funding to support children from families on certain benefits.

Families who meet the following criteria can claim EYPP.

In receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support allowance
- Support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- Guaranteed element of the state pension credit

- Child tax credit and earn no more than £16,190 (provided not also entitled to Working Tax Credit)
- Working Tax Credit four-week run-on (paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for working tax credit)
- Universal Credit - and earn no more than £7,400.

Or the child is:

- looked after by the Council
- adopted from care
- left care through adoption, residence order or special guardianship

The amount of funding available is up to £302 per year, per eligible child. In the 2022/2023 financial year, 3,125 children were identified as eligible for EYPP payments.

The identification of eligible children relies upon parents making schools and settings aware so that they can apply for the funding. To ensure as many parents as talk with their childcare provider about possible eligibility, publicity work through leaflets and the Council's website continue to raise awareness and increase the take-up rate.

12. Looked After Children

Looked after children are less likely than their peers to access early education.

In East Sussex 59% of looked after children eligible to access a funded place with childcare providers did so during the 2023 summer funding period.

The Council's Early Years Funding Team collaborates closely with colleagues in the Virtual School team, Adoption and Special Guardianship teams and Fostering Team to track looked after children to identify access to early years provision. It is acknowledged that childcare provision may not be suitable for all looked after young children.

A number of foster carers are also entitled to claim the extended 30-hour entitlement if they have paid employment outside of their fostering commitments. In East Sussex, less than five children were funded under these criteria within the summer 2023 funding period.

The Council also tracks 'hidden children' (pre-school aged children who could be at a setting but are not attending). 1.8% of the total number of children identified by Early Help teams (8,353) were not accessing a funded early years place in summer 2023 funding period.

13. Childcare for children over five

Out of school childcare includes breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday play schemes. This form of childcare can operate either on or off a school site and can be run by the school or by the PVI sector.

Many schools provide extra-curricular after school activities such as sports clubs, gardening clubs and film clubs. Although these may not be classed as childcare, they still provide a safe learning environment for children whilst parents or carers are at work or studying. These types of clubs may not operate throughout the school year and may vary from term to term and are often only an hour in duration.

Good quality out of school childcare has a positive effect upon children's outcomes. Research has shown that this type of good quality childcare can improve children's behaviour, social and emotional skills as well as impacting upon academic performance.

Children taking part in organised sports and physical activities at the ages of five, seven and 11 were almost one and a half times more likely to reach a higher-than expected level in their Key Stage 2 (KS2) maths test at age 11. Among disadvantaged children, those who attended after school clubs also fared better than their peers who did not take part in such groups. They achieved, on average, a 2-point higher total score in their KS2 assessments in English, Maths and Science at the end of primary school¹⁷.

Dependent upon specific criteria, not all wraparound provision is Ofsted registered and there is no legal need to inform councils of operation. A provider who only offers two hours a day or provides two activities or less is not required to register with Ofsted. A setting may choose to join the voluntary part of the childcare register to allow parents to claim childcare vouchers. Providers do not have to

¹⁷ UCL: Institute of Education-Out of school activities improve children's educational attainment, study reveals. 20 April 2016

meet specified child to adult ratios if they only care for children over the age of eight.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of places available for children outside of school hours and in holiday periods. Many non-registered holiday activities are run by local leisure or sport centres which may not be represented in council figures that show the number of places reportedly available by all registered providers in East Sussex. Figure 20 shows the number of known providers offering wrap around care during term time and holiday care in East Sussex.

Figure 22: Number of Ofsted registered providers offering care during term time and holidays¹⁸

District or Borough	Number of breakfast clubs	Number of after school clubs
East Sussex	78	83
Eastbourne	11	12
Hastings	14	13
Lewes	16	25
Rother	9	15
Wealden	28	18

19% of schools in the primary phase run their own breakfast club on site. 12% of schools in the primary phase provide an after-school club on site. This data only refers to known childcare provision and does not include extra-curricular after school activities such as gardening clubs and film clubs. Figure 22 shows the number of known holiday clubs and play schemes run across the county.

¹⁸ Extract from Synergy FIS Provider Portal - September 2023

From September 2024 a national programme to provide wraparound support in primary schools for children from Reception to Year 6 of working families will be in place. Officers are currently working with colleagues in the DfE to produce a delivery plan and to map supply against demand.

Figure 23: Number of holiday clubs and play schemes across East Sussex¹⁹

	Number of holiday clubs / play schemes
Total in PVI Sector	38
Total in Maintained Sector	1

Currently, only one school is registered with the Family Information Service to run a holiday club or play scheme in the maintained sector in East Sussex.

Fig.24: link to the location of after school clubs November 2022:

[After School Clubs in East Sussex](#)

For the majority of families there is enough holiday childcare for 4-7-year-olds and 8-11-year-olds in all areas of the county. But for those families with disabled children or parents working full-time (9am-5pm on weekdays) or atypical hours there are still some gaps in provision.

From 2016 parents had the ‘right to request’ that their child’s school should consider establishing wraparound childcare or allowing PVI providers to use the school facilities to deliver childcare at times when the school is not using them. Whilst it is not compulsory to offer wraparound childcare at parental request, schools should not refuse a request without reasonable justification. To date East Sussex has not received any request under this policy.

The demand for childcare lowers for young people of secondary school age (11 years and over) as many parents and carers feel their children are independent

¹⁹ Extract from Synergy FIS Provider Portal - September 2023

enough not to need childcare outside of school hours. This age group of children are more likely to access activities run by leisure centres or other private organisations, or other type of provider.

Figure 25 shows the current average cost of out of school care in East Sussex.

Figure 25: Current average cost of out of school care in East Sussex²⁰

	Breakfast club session (1 hour) (average cost)	After school club session (average cost) 2 hours and 45 minutes	Holiday play scheme session. Based on 8-hour day (average cost)
Maintained Sector	£3.70	£9.40	£33.30
PVI Sector	£4.40	£11.55	£39.20 per day £196 per week

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme

The HAF programme is a DfE-funded initiative and has been running in East Sussex since April 2021. The programme has helped to develop a range of out-of-school provision on offer county wide. The programme’s aims were to provide free enriching activities and healthy food for children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) during the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays. The programme was initially funded for a year (2021), but the DfE has since confirmed that funding will continue through to 2024.

Since the first year of the HAF programme in East Sussex, at Easter 2021, the Council has worked with more than 125 local organisations, funding more than 106,000 sessions over the eight delivery periods. Activities have taken place across more than 150 sites. Whilst these were focused in six key target areas with the

²⁰ Synergy Report: FIS Out of School Club Report (October 2023)

highest levels of FSM (Hastings, Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hailsham, Newhaven and Peacehaven), there was a geographical spread of provision in all parts of East Sussex.

HAF grants were paid to established organisations running out of school activities and to a number of new providers during the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays. The programme has continued to gain momentum in 2022 and 2023, with the last delivery period (summer 2023) seeing the highest levels of demand and strongest attendance so far.

Families can view the local HAF offer and book places using the online booking [platform](#). Many local activity providers continue to use this platform for after school and non-HAF funded holiday provision. The site acts as a resource for local families on provision available locally throughout the year.

Figure 26: Link to the location of HAF providers in East Sussex in August 2023:

[HAF Summer Programme - East Sussex County Council | Tableau Public](#)

Appendix 1 - Index of maps and data tables

Figure	Description	Page Number
1	Eligibility Criteria for Funded 2, 3-and 4-year-olds	5
2	Average cost of 25 hours of childcare for children 0-5	9
3	Average cost of 50 hours of childcare for children 0-5	9
4	Average cost of 25 or 50 hours of childcare for children 0-5	10
5	Population Increase (all ages) in the last decade 2011 to 2021	16
6	Population projections (all ages) from 2021 to 2035	17
7	Number of children aged 0-17 and disabled children aged 10-17	17
8	Map of the five borough and district council areas in East Sussex	18
9(a)	Population by ethnic group in 2021	19
9(b)	Population aged 0-17 by ethnic group in 2021	19
10	Number of Languages Spoken in Schools in East Sussex	20
11	National deprivation rank in neighbourhoods LSOAs in East Sussex	21
12	Children living in relatively low-income families 2021/22	22
13	Claimant rate October 2023- Districts	23
14	Number of new dwellings to be built by area	24
15	Number of providers (funded and non-funded) by type in East Sussex	25
16 (a)	Number of Nursery Provision & Childminders Providing Funded Places by Sector in Each District	26
16 (b)	Number of Schools Providing Funded Places by sector in Each District	26
17 (a)	Number of full time equivalent (FTE) places available by borough / district	27
17 (b)	Number of full time equivalent (FTE) places demanded by borough / district	27

18	Number of 3- & 4-year-olds accessing a funded place in April 2023	28
19	Number of funded 2-year-olds accessing a funded place in April 2023	29
20	Shows the towns or areas in East Sussex where current supply of early years childcare places is tight 2023/24	33
21(a)	Shows the towns/areas in East Sussex where settings are forecasted to be full	33
21(b)	Shows rural areas in East Sussex with currently no early years provision	34
22	Number of Ofsted registered providers offering care during term time and holidays	46
23	Number of holiday clubs and play schemes across East Sussex	47
24	Link to Location of after school November	47
25	Current average cost of out of school care in East Sussex	48
26	Link to Location of all HAF providers across the county - July 2022	49