

# Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2025

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## 2. Overall assessment and summary

### 2.1. About Childcare Sufficiency Assessments

Our Council has a legal obligation to provide an annual report to elected council members detailing how it is fulfilling its duty to ensure there is enough childcare available, and to publish this report in a way that parents can easily access and understand. This document, the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA), has been created to meet that statutory requirement.

According to statutory guidance, the purpose of this duty is to ensure that parents are able to work because childcare places are sufficient, accessible, affordable, and delivered flexibly across a variety of high-quality settings. Legislation further requires Local Authorities to “secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents engaged in study or training for employment, for children aged 0–14 (or up to 18 for those with disabilities).”

This assessment measures childcare sufficiency by analysing data on the demand for childcare and the supply of available places, alongside insights gathered from parents about their experiences finding suitable childcare options.

Childcare sufficiency is examined separately for specific groups of children, rather than being considered as a single total across the local authority area. The number of children in each group changes throughout the year—for example, the number attending funded early years provision is typically lowest in the autumn term following the school intake of 4-year-olds and rises through spring, reaching its peak in the summer term.

The findings from this analysis are used to guide and shape our work in maintaining and supporting a strong and sustainable local childcare economy.

### 2.2. Overall Sufficiency in Bracknell Forest

The assessment of childcare sufficiency presented in this report is based on data collected during the summer term 2025, which typically sees the highest demand for childcare. This term marked the first summer following the rollout of the expanded entitlement, offering 570 hours per year to working parents of children aged 9 months to 4 years. This followed the initial expansion in summer 2024, which extended entitlement to working parents of 2-year-olds.

While the data presented in this report primarily reflects information gathered during the summer term, it should be noted that due to limited engagement and response rates from childcare providers, some capacity figures may also incorporate information relating to the 2024–25 academic year. Consequently, the dataset does not represent a fully comprehensive picture of local provision. In certain instances, anecdotal evidence and supplementary data have been included—clearly identified where used—to help

provide a more complete understanding of overall sufficiency across the borough. The Local Authority acknowledges that provider engagement may have been affected by the considerable pressures currently facing the sector, including ongoing legislative changes related to fees and charges, the *Best Start in Life* reforms, new safeguarding and Ofsted requirements, and the full implementation of the extended entitlement, which has seen more families and children accessing funded childcare than ever before.

Table 1 below sets out the headcount and funded hours for all entitlements over the past three summer terms. Notably, summer term 2025 saw an increase in both the headcount and hours claimed for 3- and 4-year-olds, despite the additional pressure on early years places resulting from the expansion to under-3s.

The data also shows a significant decrease in the number of 2-year-olds accessing the Targeted 2 entitlement, from 192 in 2024 to 137 in 2025. However, this reduction aligns with a decrease in the number of potentially eligible 2-year-olds and still represents an 80% take-up rate for Targeted 2 places

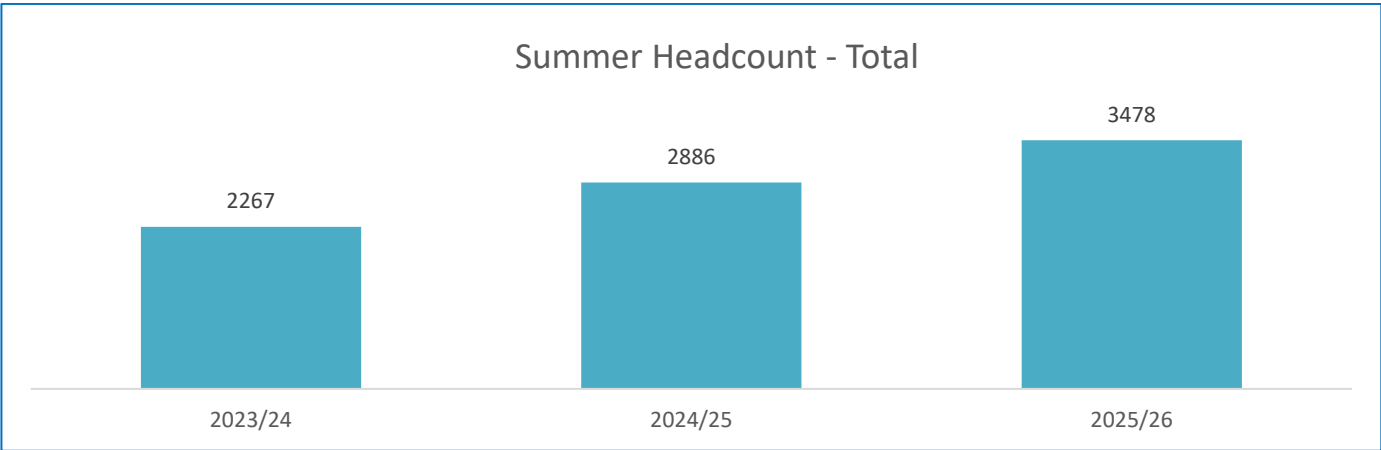
**Table 1: Numbers of early years children by age**

Term	Headcount				Funded hours			
	Under 2's	Targeted 2's	WP 2's	3 & 4 yr olds	Under 2's	Targeted 2's	WP 2's	3 & 4 yr olds
Summer 2023	0	173	n/a	2,094	0	30,827	n/a	564,999
Summer 2024	0	192	615	2,079	0	34,122	116,592	579,388
Summer 2025	624	137	594	2,123	123,762	23,803	114,485	595,514

Source: Bracknell Forest Council funding data, summer term 2025

Overall, the expansion of early years entitlements has led to a substantial increase in the number of children accessing funded childcare. As shown in Figure 1, participation rose from 2,267 children in the summer term 2023 to 3,478 in 2025—an increase of 53.4%.

**Figure 1: Children accessing the early years entitlements**



Source: Bracknell Forest Council funding data, summer term 2023, 2024 and 2025

Analysis of available data indicates that:

- For the financial year 2025/26 there were sufficient childcare places in Bracknell Forest in the following categories:
  - Targeted 2-year-old entitlement
  - Working parent entitlement for children aged 9 months to 2 years old
  - Universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
  - Working parent entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
  - Early years childcare outside the funded entitlements

Due to insufficient data returns from childcare providers during this assessment period, the Local Authority is unable to provide a fully accurate calculation of current childcare supply and capacity across the borough. While data collection was undertaken in line with statutory requirements, the limited response rate has restricted the completeness of the dataset. As a result, capacity levels presented in this report are based on a combination of available provider data, anecdotal evidence, and information gathered through local intelligence and engagement with the sector. <sup>1</sup>The response rate from providers nationally within the Pulse surveys of childcare and early years providers 2024-25 reflects similar levels of response rate and engagement we are seeing within Bracknell Forest.

Based on the information available, it is estimated that, with the introduction of new provision and the continued rollout of the expanded childcare offer from September 2025, there is currently no evidence to suggest an overall insufficiency of childcare places across the borough. Birth rate data and the estimated number of childcare places remain relatively stable compared with previous years. However, without sufficient provider-level capacity data, the Local Authority is unable to confirm an accurate borough-wide place count.

The number of childminders has remained broadly consistent over the past year, as has the size of the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) market, despite some setting closures. Work has continued to support the expansion of provision, including the development of two new school-based nurseries—one of which is now operational, with the second due to open by the end of the autumn half-term, both school nurseries will operate as committee run. —Additional PVI settings have also been established.

Anecdotal feedback from providers indicates that, at present, many are not operating at full capacity for the autumn term. During the summer 2025 term, however, most providers who shared data reported being full, with waiting lists in place and limited availability across all weekdays. Only one provider indicated

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<sup>1</sup> Pulse surveys of childcare and early years providers, 2024-25- [Pulse surveys of childcare and early years providers, 2024 to 2025](#) Demand for childcare

partial vacancies. This trend was mirrored within the childminding sector, where only 8.2% of respondents reported having available places during the summer term

Through the data and anecdotal evidence, the local authority estimates that there will be sufficient childcare available for working families with the further new provisions due to be opened in 2025-26. Intelligence suggests that childcare for the younger children with the expansion of the entitlements, under 2's, may be the more difficult to source. This is the area of expansion being prioritised through development of new provision and continued capital expansion projects to ensure parents have a choice of care to meet demand.

- There is currently insufficient evidence to draw a definitive conclusion about the adequacy of provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). However, feedback from the Parental Survey has underscored increasing challenges in accessing specialised services, particularly during school holidays. This pattern appears to be linked to the decline in the number of childminders within the area.
- Over the last academic year, the Local Authority acknowledges that the local early years market has been subject to rapid and wide-ranging change which has affected both supply and demand. Locally Bracknell Forest has seen a mix of setting closures and expansion projects as providers respond to the introduction and roll-out of expanded entitlements, alongside ongoing operational pressures. These pressures include rising costs associated with the cost-of-living crisis and wider UK economic factors, workforce recruitment and retention challenges, and the cumulative impact of regulatory and policy change. Together, these forces have altered the shape of the market and the operating context for local providers.
- Bracknell Forest's ability to secure sufficient childcare and to produce a fully comprehensive dataset this year has been impacted by the above factors. Provider engagement with our data collection was limited, and consequently some capacity figures included in this assessment relate to the 2024–25 academic year, where anecdotal or supplementary information has been used. The combined effect of increased demand from the entitlement expansions and fluctuating local supply necessitated closer monitoring, continued engagement with providers and partners, and targeted activity to support market stability so that families can access affordable, high-quality and flexible childcare across the borough

## **2.3. Out of School Care**

The local authority has supported the national wraparound expansion programme, which supports increasing the number of places available for working parents to be able to utilise out of school care for their children, before school, breakfast club, and after school clubs. Additionally, the local authority continues to support the Holiday and Activities and Food Programme (HAF).

Bracknell Forest has a range of schools and providers offering out of school care for working families with children that require all year-round care.

- The creation of additional out-of-school places in six local primary schools as part of the national wraparound expansion project increases childcare options for working families.
- Parental feedback from our ongoing survey highlights a strong demand for holiday care, with 92% of respondents requiring care during school holidays, especially during the summer. Only 7% of parents indicated they do not require holiday care. We are continuing to work with our out of school providers to ensure that we have varying provisions available during the school holidays for families to access. This data covers parents with both school age and early years aged children.

## **2.4. Our plans for childcare**

Bracknell Forest Council's priorities for planning childcare in 2025-26 are:

1. Continued collaboration with existing and potential childcare providers to secure sufficient childcare for the extended entitlements. To support the final phase which commenced in September 2025 with the roll out of 30 hours for under 3's working parent entitlement.
2. Provide ongoing support to schools exploring the establishment or expansion of school-based nursery provision through phase 2 and 3 of the capital expansion grant funding in line with the recent government initiative encouraging the use of spare spaces in schools for nurseries nationwide.
3. Continue the expansion of Early Years childcare to address sufficiency and demand across the local authority whilst aiming to manage and not destabilise the market. We are also working closely several providers and the planning department in terms of new provision and expansion of provision to meet demand.
4. Monitoring and support those schools that have been funded to expand wraparound provision with plans to create sustainability for the places when the scheme ends.
5. Continuing to support the national roll out of universal breakfast clubs as local authorities are required within the guidance with all eligible primary schools within Bracknell Forest adhering to the guidance when this becomes statutory.
6. Through working with colleagues in place planning, continue to engage with parents and carers via our ongoing parent survey and Parent Carer Forum (PCF) in relation to SEND provision and data with the SCAP return, School Capacity Return and development of the SEND strategy and Education Sufficiency Strategy (0-25yrs), to understand the emerging needs and demand for Early years SEND provision.

7. Assess assets and funding for projects that may be viable for an early years SEND provision or could have an early year's space within the provision aligning to the education sufficiency strategy and continual assessment of demand and emerging needs.
8. Monitor changes in the childcare supply landscape by continuing to:
  - Analyse evolving patterns in childcare demand.
  - Identify areas where supply and demand are misaligned and work collaboratively with providers to address these gaps.
  - Support providers in recognising and understanding opportunities within the childcare market and assist them in effectively promoting the services they offer.
  - Conduct ongoing termly assessments of childcare sufficiency, incorporating provider engagement, parental feedback, and birth rate data.
  - In addition to the above, our ongoing efforts include:
  - Collaborating with childcare providers to support the sustainability of their operations, while helping them understand and adapt to the evolving dynamics of the childcare market.
  - Providing business support to providers who require assistance in navigating these changes.
  - Actively promoting the Bracknell Forest Local Directory, which contains information on all childcare provision within Bracknell Forest
9. Early Years Forum:
  - Continue collaborative engagement with the forum to strengthen sufficiency and sustainability initiatives.
10. Actively promote and encourage broader participation in the forum to ensure more diverse representation among providers.

## **2.5. Population of early years children**

There is a total of 7,310 children under the age of five living in our local authority, all of whom may require early years childcare. In the summer term 2025, the Council had a statutory duty to provide funded early years provision for:

- All 3- and 4-year-olds (approximately 2,928 children, though some 4-year-olds will have started reception)
- Children of working families aged 9 months to 2 years (estimated at 3,209 children)
- The most disadvantaged 2-year-olds (currently estimated at 173 children)

Table 2 shows the distribution of early years children by age group and Ward.



**Table 2: Distribution of early years children by age and Ward**

Ward	Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4*
Binfield North & Warfield West	99	116	122	10	107
Binfield South & Jennett's Park	194	184	169	181	166
Bullbrook	102	69	90	85	78
Easthampstead & Wildridings	123	102	111	114	103
Great Hollands	106	81	97	105	117
Hanworth	95	102	88	108	121
Owlsmoor & College Town	82	96	108	98	113
Priestwood & Garth	114	124	114	123	113
Town Centre & The Parks	9	79	86	66	75
Crowthorne	71	64	63	62	61
Harmans Water & Crown Wood	123	124	142	86	113
Sandhurst	75	80	94	84	115
Swinley Forest	86	56	72	63	70
Whitegrove	53	54	51	49	61
Winkfield & Warfield East	78	79	85	79	110

Sources: ONS - Population Estimates for Electoral Wards in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022

\* Some four-year-olds will have started reception

## 2.6. Population of school age children

In the summer term 2025, there were an estimated children 10,932 aged 5-11, and 5,057 children aged 12-14 living in our local authority. These children may require childcare before and after school, as well as during school holidays.

**Table 3: Numbers of school age children by age**

Age	Number of children
Age 5	1,437
Age 6	1,521
Age 7	1,555
Age 8	1,521
Age 9	1,626
Age 10	1,681
Age 11	1,591
Age 12	1,638
Age 13	1,672
Age 14	1,747

Source: ONS - Population Estimates for Electoral Wards in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022

Detailed information about the school age population in Bracknell Forest can be found in the School Places Plan which is available on the Bracknell Forest website [Schools and learning strategies and policies | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/schools-and-learning-strategies-and-policies)

**2.7. Number of children with special educational needs and disabilities**

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are entitled to support with childcare up to the age of 18 (age 14 for children who do not have SEND). The number of children with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) in our local authority is:

**Table 4: Children with an EHCP by age**

Age	Number of children	Change from 2024
Aged 0 - 4	47	+11 (+30.6%)
Primary school (reception to Yr 6)	515	-51(-9.0%)
Secondary school (Yr7 to 13)	884	+192 (+37.7%)

Source: BFC Internal data as of 31 August 2025

Children’s needs evolve over time and may be identified at different ages. For the youngest children, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are often only recognised when they start childcare or school. All Early Years providers must adhere to the Early Years Statutory Framework (2025) and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2015) and are required to have arrangements in place to support children with SEND.

Some children have SEND but do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In the summer term 2025, there were 272 children aged 0–4 years known to the Child Development Centre (CDC), all with varying levels of additional needs, from mild to severe and complex.

Local authorities must also provide a Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) for children with emerging SEND who are accessing funded entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken. These funds enable local authorities to work with providers to address the individual needs of children with SEND, and providers can apply for SENIF support. During 2024/2025, 84 children accessed SENIF.

Data from our Child Development Centre (CDC), where children within early years are supported by Bracknell Forest suggests that the trend and primary need for SEND within the borough being Autism and or ASD remain. Of 272 children known to the CDC that are due to start school in September 2026 or beyond, 7% already have an EHCP. 3.7% of these children have a diagnosis of autism, with a further 75% on an ADOS pathway awaiting assessment.

**2.8. Characteristics of children in our area**

There are two characteristics of children in our area which must be considered when assessing childcare sufficiency - deprivation and parents’ working status.

2.8.1. Deprivation

Provisional ONS data for the financial year ending 2023 indicates that 2,341 children under 16 in Bracknell Forest—equivalent to 9.4% of the total population—live in low-income families. Growing up in such households can limit a child’s access to childcare, due to both direct costs and indirect expenses such as transportation. Children who meet financial criteria indicative of deprivation are eligible for additional funding to help improve their access to childcare. This support includes targeted two-year-old funding, the Early Years Pupil Premium (for all funded entitlement children not yet in school), and the Pupil Premium (for children in school). Table 5 details the number of children in our local authority who qualified for this funding during the summer term 2024.

**Table 5: Children eligible for additional funding through financial criteria**

<i>Funding type</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
Targeted 2-year-old Funding	173
Early Years Pupil Premium	384
Pupil Premium	2,441

*Source: BFC school census January 2025 and Bracknell Forest Council funding data, summer term 2025*

2.8.2. Parents’ working status

Early years funding includes the Working Parent entitlement, which in the summer term 2025 applied to children aged 9 months to 4 years. To be eligible, both parents in a two-parent household—or the sole parent in a single-parent household—must be employed<sup>2</sup>. According to the National Online Manpower Information System (NOMIS), 80.5% of Bracknell Forest residents aged 16 to 64 were economically active during the 2023/24 financial year. Based on this level of economic activity, it is estimated that up to 5,586 children aged 9 months to 4 years in Bracknell Forest could qualify for the 30-hour Working Parent entitlement.

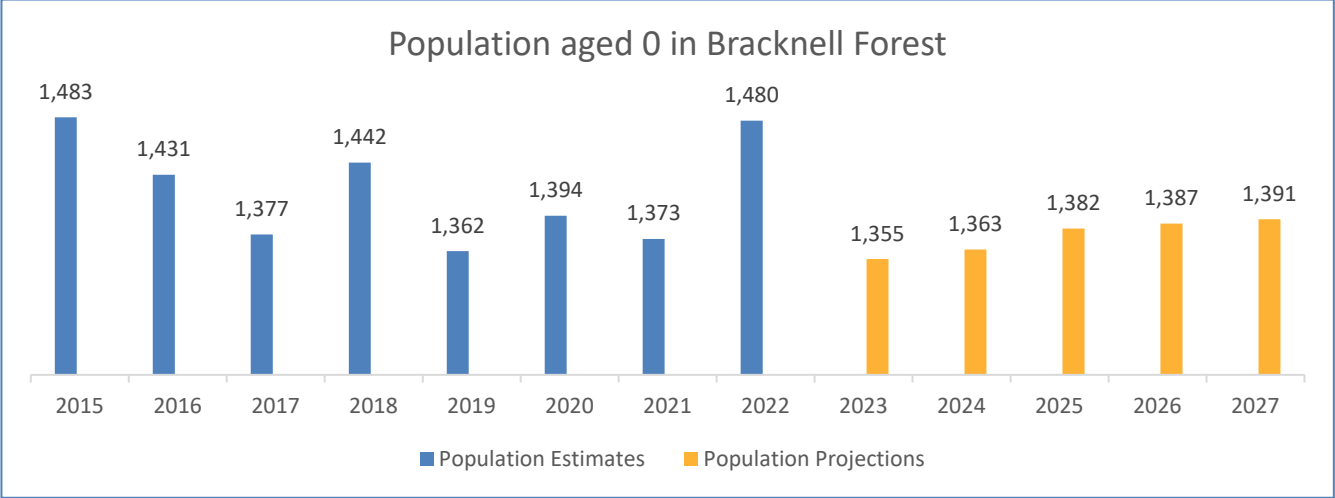
During the summer 2025 term, 2,009 children—approximately 36% of those potentially eligible—claimed the Working Parent entitlement. After excluding 4-year-olds enrolled in reception classes, who are not eligible for early years funding, the uptake of the Working Parent entitlement remains notably below the estimated number of eligible children.

2.9. Changes to the population of children in our area

In line with the School Places Plan the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment uses data from the Office of National Statistics population estimates and projections. Figure 3 shows the annual estimated number of children aged 0 in Bracknell Forest in blue. The projected number of children aged 0 for future years are shown in orange.

<sup>2</sup> Eligibility criteria available on the government website [Eligibility for 30 hours childcare | Best Start in Life](#)

**Figure 2: Births in Bracknell Forest**



Sources: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2015 to 2022 & ONS population projections 2018 to 2043

**2.10. Future demand for early years funded entitlement places**

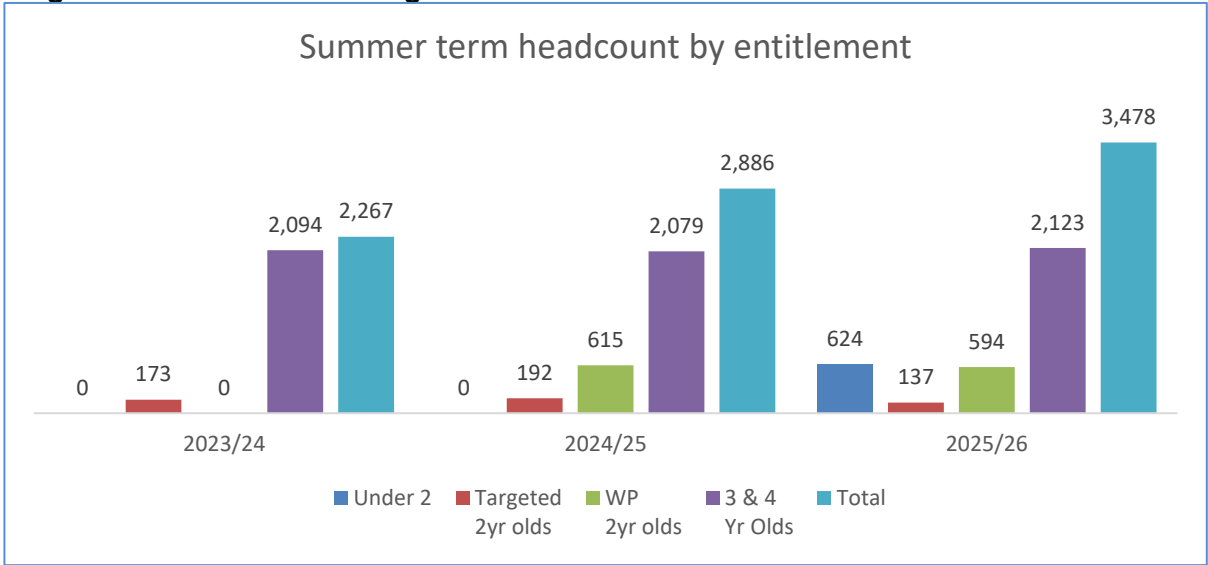
Due to the ongoing rollout of the expanded early years entitlements, it is not currently possible to accurately forecast future demand for childcare places. The evolving eligibility criteria and phased implementation mean that patterns of uptake are still emerging and may continue to shift over time. However, Table 6 (below) illustrates a clear increase in demand for funded childcare places between summer 2023 and summer 2025. The data shows:

- A 27% increase in demand in 2024
- A further 21% increase in 2025
- An overall increase of 54% over the two-year period

For the summer term 2025, this includes:

- 2,123 children aged 3 and 4, representing approximately 73% of the estimated population (noting that some 4-year-olds will be attending school)
- 1,218 children under the age of 3 from working families, representing approximately 38% of the estimated eligible population

**Figure 3: Children accessing the funded entitlements**



Source: Bracknell Forest Council funding data

To support future planning, the table below presents the Office for National Statistics (ONS) population projections for children aged 0 to 4 over the next five years. While these figures do not directly indicate entitlement uptake, they provide a useful indication of the potential demand for early years places as the expanded entitlements continue to roll out.

**Table 6: Population projection – children aged 0 to 4**

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Aged 0	1,387	1,391	1,386	1,390	1,393
Aged 1	1,399	1,402	1,406	1,402	1,405
Aged 2	1,386	1,402	1,406	1,410	1,406
Aged 3	1,381	1,384	1,400	1,405	1,408
Aged 4	1,513	1,387	1,390	1,407	1,411

Source: ONS - Population projections for local authorities by single year of age and sex, England – Mid-2022 based

### 3. Supply of childcare

Data on available childcare capacity in Bracknell Forest for the summer term 2025 was collected from early years providers via an online survey, emailed questionnaire, and telephone calls, in addition to anecdotal evidence shared with providers through varying mediums such as setting visits, meetings and written and verbal discussions.

3.1. Number of early years providers and places

In the summer term 2025 there were 191 early years childcare providers in our local authority, offering an estimated 4,302 funded childcare places.

Table 7: Early years providers and funded places by type of provision

Type of provision	Number of providers	Number of funded places
Childminders*	132	665
Nursery classes in schools	17	943
PVI providers	42	2,694

Source: Bracknell Forest Council internal data and Bracknell Forest Council funding data, summer term 2025

A place is defined as 15 hours of childcare per week over 38 weeks of the year and is based on the universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds. This provides a standard unit for estimating capacity and demand. However, in practice, many children access more than 15 hours per week—either through the extended entitlement or additional privately funded childcare—meaning a single child may occupy multiple places depending on their attendance pattern. For example, a child attending for 30 hours per week under the extended entitlement would occupy two places, while a child attending full-time in a day care setting may occupy three to four places.

A setting’s capacity is also influenced by the age of the children attending, as younger children require higher staff-to-child ratios under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

Furthermore, the figures presented above only reflect places accessed via the early years entitlements, as the council does not hold data on privately funded childcare hours. This means the data represents an underreporting of the total number of places accessed by children during the summer term.

Taken together, these factors—variations in attendance patterns, age-related staffing requirements, and incomplete data—make the analysis of available places and demand complex and indicative rather than definitive.

3.2. Number of school age providers and places

In total, there are 65 providers of childcare for school age children during term time (excluding childminders), and 43 providers of childcare for school age children during the holidays. Some childminders will offer out of school care for school age children, however, the number offering this provision fluctuates and is data that is not readily available for the local authority to determine. In addition to the provider being able to set the number of places they offer within Ofsted ratio’s so it will vary childminder to childminder.

**Table 8: School Age provision and**

<i>Type of provision</i>	<i>Number of provisions</i>
Breakfast club	31
After-school club	34
Childminders*	132
Holiday club	43

Source: BFC internal data and OFSTED registration data

\*Childminders is total number of registered providers – insufficient data on number that offer out of school care.

Not all provision of childcare for school age children is registered with OFSTED and may not be listed on the Family Services Directory. Parents may also use provision which is not considered 'childcare' - for example sports or arts clubs after school or in the holidays. Table 9 may therefore under report the total available school age provision.

OFSTED registration requirements for school age children does not include a maximum number of available places and providers will often vary their offer based on demand. These factors make collating available places for school age children challenging.

The local authority has supported the national wraparound expansion programme and as a result has funded 6 local primary schools to expand and or create out of school care places.

Throughout the expansion project the local authority's assessment of out-of-school childcare provisions indicates a robust offering for working parents, with comprehensive before and after school care available for school-aged children (Reception to Year 6) across the borough. All maintained and academy primary schools provide before and after school care directly or via a local provider. Schools facing increased demand or waitlists were asked to consider the opportunity to expand their services through the government's Wraparound Expansion Grant. However, the grant was open for all provisions to apply and be considered with any expansion plans and not limited to those with a waiting list.

51 breakfast club places have been created to offer working parents the option to take their child into school prior to the start of the school day, with a further 83 additional after school club places created to allow parents the option of collecting their child after the school day up until 6pm and fit within their working hours.

The creation of the expanded places through the scheme is enabling our schools to deliver more wraparound care to support the needs of working families across the borough.

According to our ongoing parent survey, 55% of parents reported finding it either very easy, easy, or neutral to access before and after school care.

## 4. Funded Early Education

### 4.1. Introduction to funded early education

The government provides early years funding to support parents with the cost of early years education and childcare. This funding is separated into three distinct entitlements based on eligibility criteria:

- **Universal entitlement** - All children aged 3 to 4 years are entitled to 570 hours of childcare per year, equivalent to 15 hours a week over 38 weeks, from the term after the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday until the term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday or they start reception class in school.
- **Working parent entitlement** - From September 2024 children aged 9 months to 4 years where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, could be entitled<sup>3</sup> to an additional 570 hours of funded childcare per year (increasing to 1,140 hours a year for children aged 9 months to 2 years old from September 2025), equivalent to 15 hours a week over 38 weeks, from the term after the child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday until the term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday or they start reception class in school.
- **Targeted 2-year-old entitlement** - Children aged 2 whose families receive certain benefits (including low-income families in receipt of in-work benefits), or those who meet additional non-economic criteria<sup>4</sup>, are entitled to 570 hours of funded childcare a year, equivalent to 15 hours per week over 38 weeks. Nationally, about 40% of 2-year-olds are entitled to this offer, but the proportion varies by area.

Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement and may choose to split them between more than one provider. With the agreement of their provider, parents may also stretch the entitlement across the year – for example, rather than taking 15 hours for 38 weeks a year they could take just under 12 hours for 48 weeks a year.

### 4.2. Take up of funded early education

The take up of early years places are measured in the summer term of each year, when the number of places being accessed is at its highest, using data submitted by providers as part of the funded entitlement funding process. Table 9 sets out the number of children (headcount) taking up their funded place for at least part of the available hours in our local authority in summer 2024 and the proportion of the eligible population this represents. Four-year olds who have started reception class are not included in these figures.

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<sup>3</sup> Eligibility criteria available on the government website [Eligibility for 30 hours childcare | Best Start in Life](#)

<sup>4</sup> Eligibility criteria available on the government website <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-claim-benefits>



**Table 9: Take up of funded early education by age**

Age	Children	% of eligible children
Age under 2	624	31%
Age 2 (Targeted)	137	80%
Age 2 (Working Parent)	594	49%
Age 3	1360	97%
Age 4*	763	50%

Source: BFC Internal data, DWP eligibility data and ONS – Population Estimates for Electoral Wards in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022

\*Some 4-year-olds will be in reception

In summer 2024 a total of 417 children resident in neighbouring authorities accessed their funded early education in Bracknell Forest. Table 10 provides a breakdown of these children.

**Table 10: Children resident outside BF - attending BFC Early Years provision**

Local Authority	Children
Arun	1
Buckinghamshire	2
Guildford	2
Hart	90
Hillingdon	1
Newham	1
Reading	3
Richmond upon Thames	2
Runnymede	2
Rushmoor	17
Slough	3
Surrey Heath	63
West Berkshire	1
Windsor & Maidenhead	70
Woking	3
Wokingham	156
<b>Total</b>	<b>417</b>

Source: Bracknell Forest Council funding data, summer term 2025

Some children resident in Bracknell Forest claim early years entitlement funding in neighbouring authorities.

### 4.3. Providers offering funded early education places

Providers are paid by government for delivering funded early education places (via the Local Authority). Delivering early years funded places is not a requirement, but of course parents may choose to use a different provider if they do not. Some providers offer a restricted number of funded places. The table

below sets out the number of providers offering funded places in the summer term 2024 and the numbers offering each type of funded place.

**Table 11: Providers offering funded early years places**

<i>Type of provision</i>	<i>Number of providers</i>	<i>Targeted 2-year-olds</i>	<i>Universal 15 hours</i>	<i>Working Parent</i>
Childminders	119	119	119	119
Nursery classes in schools	17	0	17	17
PVI providers	41	41	41	41

Source: Bracknell Forest Council funding data, summer term 2025

## 5. Prices

### 5.1. Prices of early years childcare

For early years childcare outside the funded entitlements, we report on average prices per hour, reported to us by settings, provided on the Bracknell Forest Local Directory and advertised on providers websites.<sup>5</sup> There may be variations to prices based on the number of hours a family uses, with reductions for longer hours, or discounts for sibling groups. There may be additional payments for additional services, e.g., lunch and other meals which are not included in these prices.

**Table 12: Average childcare prices – early years**

<i>Price per hour</i>	<i>Private, voluntary and independent nurseries</i>	<i>Nursery classes in schools</i>	<i>Childminders</i>
9 months to 2 years old	£9.50	n/a	£6.58
2-year-olds	£8.72	n/a	£6.58
3- and 4-year-olds	£8.35	£5.41	£6.61

Source: Cost data supplied by EY providers – summer 2025

### 5.2. Prices of school age childcare

The average costs per hour for before and after school clubs and holiday childcare have been calculated using data available on provider websites. Insufficient data was available for the cost of school age childcare provided by childminders.

**Table 13: Average childcare prices – school age**

<i>Setting and price unit</i>	<i>Price</i>
Breakfast clubs	£5.04
After-school clubs	£5.23
Holiday club per hour	£4.17

Source: Cost data as per provider websites – Autumn term 2025

<sup>5</sup> Details of how we collect this data is provided in section 10: Methodology

## 6. Quality of childcare in our area

Childcare providers offering the funded entitlements must be registered with and be inspected by the appropriate regulatory body, OFSTED or the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

OFSTED graded outcomes are: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate.<sup>6</sup> The Independent Schools Inspectorate graded outcomes are: Excellent, Good, Sound or Unsatisfactory.

Schools with nursery classes have an overall inspection grade for the school and most also have a separate early year's grade.

Childminders who do not have early years children when they were inspected will receive a grade of Met or Not Met.

As detailed in table 17 below, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025, 138 of 139 early years registered providers in Bracknell Forest with an early years OFSTED rating, equivalent to 98%, had achieved a good or outstanding OFSTED rating in their last inspection. Some providers do not have a grade as they are new and awaiting their first full inspection, not Early Years active or a childminder who is part of an agency, these providers are calculated above, currently 5 childminders are registered with an agency. Nationally as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection was 98%.

From 10 November 2025, Ofsted will implement a revised Education Inspection Framework for early years providers in England. Key changes include:

- A new five-point grading scale replacing the previous four-point scale. The new grades are: Exceptional, Strong Standard, Expected Standard, Needs Attention, and Urgent Improvement.
- Safeguarding will be graded separately on a 'Met' or 'Not Met' basis.
- Inspections will focus on seven evaluation areas for early years: Safeguarding, Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement, Behaviour and Routines, Children's Welfare and Well-being, and Leadership and Governance.
- The framework removes the single "overall effectiveness" grade, allowing for more nuanced reporting across different areas of provision.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsteds-inspection-of-early-years-providers>

Bracknell Forest will continue to support its early years providers by sharing the relevant and required information regarding the Ofsted framework changes.

**Table 14: OFSTED inspection grades by type of provision – August 2025**

<i>Number of PVI settings registered with Ofsted</i>	<i>PVI settings with graded inspection outcome</i>	<i>PVI rated Good or better</i>	<i>Childminders registered with Ofsted or an Agency</i>	<i>Childminders with a graded inspection outcome</i>	<i>Childminders rated good or better</i>
44	40	39	132	108	108

Source: OFSTED

\* early years grade if available, otherwise overall school grade

## 7. Parent Survey

Since May 2024, an ongoing parental survey has been gathering insights into childcare needs and experiences across Bracknell Forest. The survey was designed to capture the views of families currently accessing or seeking childcare, with a particular focus on understanding evolving patterns in demand, preferences, and challenges. A targeted push for new responses was initiated at the start of the academic year, resulting in a further 135 responses since September 2025. This brings the total number of responses to 566, representing a broad cross-section of local families.

The September 2025 cohort consisted almost entirely of residents (with only one non-resident), and their feedback reinforced previously identified themes. The data continues to highlight the need for flexible, full-day, all-year-round childcare, and the importance of multi-aged care solutions that accommodate families with children across different age groups. Below is a summary of key findings from both the original and updated

**Parental demand for multi-aged care in one location** remains strong, enabling families to drop off and collect children of different ages (e.g., nursery and Year 1) at the same site.

**Need for extended hours and year-round care** continues to be a priority:

- 76% of families do not require term-time-only childcare.
- Parents are seeking full-day care (8am–6pm) across 48 weeks of the year.

**Flexibility in childcare arrangements** is a recurring theme:

- Parents prefer a mixed offer—some full days, some part days, or combinations of morning and afternoon sessions—to suit varied working patterns.

**Parental preferences for childcare locations** remain consistent with a slight change with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> place which has continued to change with additional responses:

- 1st: Sandhurst
- 2nd: Warfield
- 3rd: Binfield
- 4<sup>th</sup> Birch Hill
- 5<sup>th</sup> Easthampstead

**Work status of respondents (September 2025 response):**

- 78 parents work part-time.
- 37 work full-time.
- 11 are full-time parents or on maternity leave.

Wraparound care needs are prominent, especially for nursery-aged children, with demand for extended day provision from 8am to 6pm.

**Ease of finding early years childcare (September 2025 responses):**

- 13% found it *very difficult*.
- 18% found it *difficult*.
- 17% found it *easy*.
- 11% found it *very easy*.
- The remaining 41% were *neutral*.

**Out-of-school care remains essential: (overall responses)**

- 68% of parents require childcare during all school holidays, including half terms, Christmas, Easter, and summer breaks.
- The summer holidays see the greatest demand with 67% of families who responded to this question requiring childcare
- 296 respondents need breakfast and/or after-school clubs for children aged 5–11.

**Childcare for under-5s** is in high demand, with **50%** of families requiring provision for pre-primary aged children.

**SEND representation and access:(overall responses)**

- 20% of respondents have a child with SEND.
- This includes 8 families with a child/ren aged 0–4/5 and 28 families with a child aged 5–11.
- 17% of families with a child with SEND reported it was *very easy* to source childcare.

For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/childcare-providers-and-inspections-management-information>

## Current childcare

Parents and carers were asked what childcare they currently used for their children. Where the response was 'Other' respondents were asked to provide additional details. Multiple responses were possible, and percentages indicate the frequency of that response.

**Table 15: Childcare used – children below school age (overall responses)**

<i>Type of childcare</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Nursery class in school	108	19%
Nursery/Pre-school	246	43%
Childminder	125	22%
Other	13	2%
None	68	12%
No response	167	29%

**Table 16: Childcare used - school age children (overall responses)**

<i>Type of childcare</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Breakfast Club	271	48%
After School Club/Activities	344	61%
Childminder	76	13%
None	118	21%
Other	40	7%
No response	52	9%

## Location

Over the course of the survey being open for parents and carers to share feedback on their childcare needs and preferred locations we have seen the top three preferences remain; however, we have seen changes within the localities in fourth and fifth place following a further 135 responses since September 2025.

## Holiday provision

A total 91% of all respondents indicated they needed childcare during some of the school holidays.

## Difficulties finding childcare

Parental survey responses continue to reflect a strong and consistent demand for full-day, year-round early years childcare, specifically care from 8am to 6pm across 48 weeks of the year. However, while this demand is clearly articulated in the data, some of the provisions that have expanded to meet these needs have experienced slower-than-expected uptake following expansion in the summer term of 2024-25 and start of the new academic year 2025-26. This discrepancy suggests a more complex picture, with anecdotal feedback from providers and parent conversations indicating that financial considerations, such

as additional charges outside of funded entitlement hours, may be influencing parental decisions, alongside individual preferences, alternative arrangements being made for childcare and perceived need.

From the September 2025 survey cohort, nearly one-third of families 31% reported difficulty or significant difficulty in finding childcare, while 28% found it easy or very easy, and 41% remained neutral. Despite this, the authority has not seen a notable increase in complaints or concerns specifically related to accessing the expanded entitlements.

Although supply data remains incomplete and limits the ability to fully map provision against demand, the rise in entitlement code validations following parent requests and the absence of widespread negative feedback suggest that sufficient care is broadly available.

The local authority continues to monitor this closely, supporting families through ongoing survey engagement and working with providers to expand places, particularly for children aged two and under and for extended day provision, which remains less readily available across the current early years offer.

## 8. New Provision

During the 2024–25 period, six early years childcare settings closed, with five of these operating from community venues. In response, Bracknell Forest has worked closely with relevant stakeholders to support the reopening of provision in four of these locations, with the fifth currently in progress. A new provider is being onboarded to ensure continued access to early years childcare for the local community.

As part of this recovery and expansion effort, the reopened provisions are now offering enhanced services, including:

- Places for children under 2 years old, where feasible.
- Extended hours of care, aligning with parental demand for 8am–6pm provision.

In addition to these efforts, three local primary schools have either expanded or introduced new early years offers for their communities:

- One school was successful in securing funding to expand via the Department of Education's second phase of the SBN, school-based nursery, grant. This funding has allowed the school to expand provision and increase capacity, whilst also ensuring the space can accommodate younger children from the age of two.
- Two other primary schools worked over the summer holidays to establish new nursery classes for 3–4-year-olds, with both expected to be operational by no later than October half term.

Furthermore, the authority has seen:

- One new PVI (Private, Voluntary, and Independent) provider open during this period.

- One continued expansion project with a new setting within a new community venue planned for opening in early 2026.
- Two additional PVI settings anticipated to open in early 2026.
- Two further proposed PVI provisions currently in the planning permission phase.

All these new and proposed settings intend to offer a full-day, all-year-round childcare model, catering to children from birth up to statutory school age

## 9. Methodology

- Population data:
  - Office for National Statistics: Population Estimates for Electoral Wards in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022
  - Office for National Statistics: Population projections for local authorities by single year and sex; England – mid 2022 based
- Children with an EHC plan: Bracknell Forest Council Internal data as of 31 August 2025
- Supply of childcare: based on data supplied by providers in the summer term 2025 via the Provider Self Update Portal, data provided by OFSTED and supplemented by local intelligence
- Data on take up of funded early education entitlements is based on the data held in the Bracknell Forest payment database for the summer term 2025
- Quality of provision - OFSTED
- Price of childcare: cost data per age group submitted by providers in the summer and autumn term 2025
- Quality of childcare: data on childcare quality is provided by OFSTED
- Data from parents: Online survey using the Objective survey tool on the council website, October 2025. Survey advertised via the Council website, Family Information Service website, social media and via childcare providers and schools
- Household working status - National Online Manpower Information System
- Financial eligibility for additional funding – DWP Data
- Birth rate data provided by local hospital trusts and or registrar.