

Essex County Council
Schools, Children & Families Directorate
Early Years and Childcare

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2008

District Report: Colchester

Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 places a range of duties on local authorities in regard to the provision of sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs. Local authorities are required to play a lead role in facilitating the childcare market within the broader framework of shaping children's services, in partnership with the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.

Sufficient childcare is defined as '*sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in [the local authority's] area who require childcare in order to enable them to*

- *take up, or remain in, work, or*
- *undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.*
(Section 6, Childcare Act 2006)

There is also an additional duty '*to secure free early years provision for pre-school children of a prescribed age.*
(Section 7, Childcare Act 2006)

The full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report sets out the assessment of sufficiency regarding the supply of childcare and parental demand for childcare within Essex and has been carried out by Essex County Council. The parental needs aspect of the assessment was conducted by Coda Consultants.

This district report has been informed by findings from the county parents' survey, focus groups and data concerning childcare provision and occupancy. It is being made available to enable childcare providers, families and members of the local community to comment on the findings to date. All this information will support future planning ensuring that Essex County Council is able to make best use of available resources and will further inform the county's Children and Young People's Plan.

Borough Profile - Colchester

Colchester is located in north east of Essex and is the county's second largest borough in population terms. The borough itself is centred on the town of Colchester but also covers the town's large rural hinterland. Around 67% of the borough's 163,400 strong population live in urban areas, and more than nine out of ten of these urban dwellers live in the town of Colchester itself. The remaining 33% are dispersed throughout the rural and semi-rural parishes.

The population profile of Colchester is skewed towards those of working age. Children under-16 account for less than one in five residents as do over-65s. Local ethnic diversity is in line with county averages – BME groups make up around 5% of the borough population. The 0-17 age population is estimated at 35,151, of which 9,148 are 0-4 age group.

Colchester's population has grown faster than in many neighbouring districts since the 1970s. Forecasts suggest that population will continue to grow at a rate above national averages. Indeed the borough has been awarded growth point funds to support sustainable development, including the accelerating house building programmes. The Essex School Organisation Plan 2007-2012 states that across Colchester District the average annual build of new homes is predicted to be 855.

Colchester is relatively prosperous, but faces a number of challenges. Levels of economic participation are in line with national and regional averages with levels of employment – and particularly self-employment – significantly greater. Unemployment is correspondingly low. Local residents are more likely to work in customer service or personal service roles (particularly in the public sector, retail or hospitality industry) and this is reflected in incomes below the regional average. This perhaps also reflects the borough's low skills base – over one-fifth of the working-age has no qualifications at all (7% higher than across the East).

Colchester has no large concentrations of multiple deprivation, although many areas of Colchester Town are being targeted under Essex's local area agreement. Compared to England, Colchester has high attainment at GCSE, and relatively few teenage pregnancies. The borough has low levels of violent crime, and a high proportion of older people are supported in their own homes. Local health is generally good.

Childcare Audit – Colchester Borough Profile Overview

The following data has been supplied by the local Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices. The supply and take up data is collected on a termly basis.

Table 1: Formal childcare provision and take up by type at April 2008

Colchester	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	1492	995	729	391	299	328
Take-up of Places	1282	958	565	269	210	246

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Colchester District on childcare issues, 95 childcare users and 93 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was day nursery (23% of the respondents) with pre-school used by 15% of the families. Childminders were used by 10% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare such as after school clubs, holiday playschemes and Children's Centres used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by nearly half of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by nearly 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by a similar percentage.

Demand for alternative or additional care

It was found that just over 80% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements; however the remaining 19% wanted to use alternative childcare.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were day nursery provision, followed by pre-school, then holiday playschemes, and wrap-around care. There was little interest expressed in child-minder provision or breakfast clubs by this group.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 95 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for approximately one fifth of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Current non-users of childcare**Use of informal childcare**

The 93 non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with 35% getting help from grandparents, 9% from other family and 8% from friends.

Demand for childcare

54% of the non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows: After school club (21%), day nursery (17%), Pre-school (16%)

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 93 non-childcare users in the Colchester district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns particularly around flexibility of opening hours, trusting the childcare providers and quality were also expressed by a smaller number of respondents.

Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan – Colchester

This local action plan is based on all available supply and take-up data of childcare provision in Colchester. It has been further informed by information and intelligence from those working in the local early years' sector.

Action is provided for the geographical areas where there are gaps in provision, and to address barriers to the take up of childcare both through local and county strategies.

	Area: St Anne's, Stanway and Tiptree Wards
Identified Gap in Provision	Accommodation of 3 Pre-schools needs replacing in order to ensure continuity
Action	Work with Pre-school providers and local partners to identify alternative accommodation and/or funding opportunities
Outcome	Pre-school provision is secured in buildings that are fit for purpose
	Area: St Andrews ward
Identified Gap in Provision	Lack of after school provision in St Andrews ward
Action	Work with potential providers to develop clubs at St Andrews Junior School and Hazelmere School.
Outcome	After school provision developed to meet identified parental demand in this ward.
	Area: St Anne's & St John's wards
Identified Gap in Provision	Lack of out of school provision in St Anne's & St John's wards
Action	Initiate consultation with parents Identify suitable premises Initiate work to develop clubs to serve Willowbrook, Roach Vale and St John's schools
Outcome	Out of school provision developed to meet identified parental demand
	Area: Birch and Pyefleet wards
Identified Gap in Provision	Lack of pre-school provision in Birch and Pyefleet wards
Action	Site identified and to be developed at Birch Primary School site. Work with identified potential provider to develop new Pre-school provision Initiate work for possible development at Langenhoe Primary
Outcome	New pre-school developed at Birch Primary School Further research undertaken to assess need for additional pre-school in Langenhoe

	Area: Fordham , Boxted and West Mersea
Identified Gap in Provision	Lack of childminding provision in Fordham & Stour and West Mersea wards
Action	More childminders to be recruited in Boxted, Fordham and West Mersea areas Profile of childminding as a career choice to be promoted in these areas through collaborative events with partner organisations/schools
Outcome	Profile of childminding raised and increased number of registered childminders
	Area: Mile End and St Andrews wards
Potential Gap in Provision	Explore the need for expansion of full day care places in Mile End and St Andrews wards
Action	Explore the need to increase capacity of settings to meet potential demand. Identify number of childcare places available in wards and level of take up. Research and review need for more childcare places. If appropriate, support provision to expand places
Outcome	Action plan for developing additional provision if required
	Area: Highwoods ward
Identified Gap in Provision	Expansion of existing pre-schools in Highwoods ward required
Action	Develop action plan with existing pre-schools to expand their provision
Outcome	Additional pre-school places available in this ward.
	Area: District wide
Identified Barrier:	Lack of knowledge and awareness amongst some parents about choice in local childcare.
Action	Improved promotion and marketing of local childcare options for families, with an emphasis on choice and quality. Information signposting routes will also be improved and made clearer through Schools and Children's Centres. Increased promotion of Children's Centres' role in providing information and signposting.
Outcome	Increased volume of childcare enquiries through FIS and Children's Centres

	Area: District wide
Identified Barrier:	Sustainability of some existing childcare provisions
Action	<p>Raise awareness of long term sustainability and knowledge of childcare capacity.</p> <p>To provide support each term on sustainability issues of existing childcare provision through individual and group provider support.</p> <p>Promote Early Years Business Support and Recruitment services.</p> <p>Development Officers to continue to provide support and information for early years grant applications</p>
Outcome	<p>Business capacity of childcare provision improved</p> <p>Fewer childcare settings being referred for acute Business Support services</p>
	Area: District and County wide
Identified Barrier:	Lack of knowledge and awareness amongst some parents about the financial support available for the cost of childcare
Action	<p>Tie in with the countywide campaign to promote available financial support, including Childcare Tax credits.</p> <p>The FSA Parents Guide To Money will be supplied to all Children's Centres and accompanied by staff training.</p> <p>Development Officers and Outreach Workers will drive the local promotional activity to raise awareness of Childcare Tax Credits.</p>
Outcome	Increased take up of the Childcare element of the Working Family Tax Credit

Appendices

Supply of Formal Childcare Provision by Ward

Ward: Berechurch	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	0	36	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places			28			
Ward: Birch & Winstree	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	48	25	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places		48	20			
Ward: Castle	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	164	24	28	16	0	64
Take Up Of Existing Places	153	24	19	14		60
Ward: Christchurch	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	34	24	34	0	30	30
Take Up Of Existing Places	28	24	26		22	16
Ward: Copford & West Stanway	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	119	0	6	32	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	110		0	8		
Ward: Dedham/Langham	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	10	44	5	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	10	42	3			

Ward: East Donyland	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	46	6	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places		39	4			
Ward: Fordham/Stour	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	64	39	10	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	30	39	6	0	0	0
Ward: Great Tey	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	30	25	0	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	4	16				
Ward: Harbour	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	50	40	32	16	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	49	40	31	12		
Ward: Highwoods	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	106	48	23	64	64	64
Take Up Of Existing Places	96	48	17	48	52	58
Ward: Lexden	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	133	0	18	12	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	131		18	10		
Ward: Marks Tey	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	72	24	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places		64	19			

Ward: Mile End	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	148	49	32	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	132	44	29			
Ward: New Town	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	138	61	33	0	60	60
Take Up Of Existing Places	92	61	28		40	40
Ward: Prettygate	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	72	62	71	24	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	54	62	55	24		
Ward: Pyefleet	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	25	0	16	16	16
Take Up Of Existing Places		25		10	12	12
Ward: Shrub End	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	54	64	70	24	24	24
Take Up Of Existing Places	44	64	51	12	20	16
Ward: St Andrews	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	50	38	15	36	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	48	36	9	20		
Ward: St Anne's	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	40	40	45	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places		40	29	45		

Ward: St John's	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	25	25	0	15	0
Take Up Of Existing Places		24	21		10	
Ward: Stanway	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	50	46	37	0	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	42	46	29			
Ward: Tiptree	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	47	44	40	20	20	20
Take Up Of Existing Places	39	44	28	10	10	12
Ward: West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	0	62	30	20	20	0
Take Up Of Existing Places		62	27	12	12	
Ward: West Mersea	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	77	24	55	26	26	26
Take Up Of Existing Places	76	21	43	16	16	16
Ward: Wivenhoe Cross	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	120	0	10	24	24	24
Take Up Of Existing Places	118		8	16	16	16

Ward: Wivenhoe Quay	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	Afterschool	Holiday
Total Places Available	26	45	24	16	0	0
Take Up Of Existing Places	26	45	17	12		

Population by District: o-18 years

	0-18	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
UNITED KINGDOM	13,928,844	731,546	715,648	704,955	681,028	663,043	664,318	679,888	700,160	713,336	732,124
EAST	1,294,168	65,975	65,420	65,791	63,528	62,510	63,336	64,182	66,493	67,632	69,129
ESSEX	313,378	15,363	15,283	15,485	15,058	14,878	15,455	15,824	16,287	16,687	16,874
BASILDON	41,436	2,293	2,215	2,200	2,138	2,129	2,033	2,055	2,116	2,194	2,146
BRAINTREE	33,521	1,672	1,698	1,721	1,690	1,657	1,785	1,755	1,754	1,774	1,827
BRENTWOOD	16,399	717	765	813	748	784	733	804	830	851	916
CASTLE POINT	19,812	859	849	921	883	872	917	936	1,017	1,057	1,052
CHELMSFORD	37,539	1,933	1,822	1,874	1,884	1,758	1,796	1,868	1,882	1,906	1,942
COLCHESTER	37,494	1,917	1,928	1,874	1,712	1,717	1,900	1,897	1,989	1,996	2,017
EPPING FOREST	28,391	1,362	1,457	1,403	1,358	1,371	1,492	1,478	1,484	1,524	1,548
HARLOW	19,071	1,132	1,065	1,051	973	952	962	957	998	964	1,011
MALDON	14,280	609	680	617	716	654	716	725	781	782	802
ROCHFORD	18,660	827	823	867	834	862	881	940	971	1,055	1,058
TENDRING	29,280	1,220	1,225	1,350	1,322	1,293	1,410	1,477	1,536	1,593	1,620
UTTLESFORD	17,495	822	756	794	800	829	830	932	929	991	935
	0-18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
UNITED KINGDOM	13,928,844	727,571	731,740	748,503	758,987	784,559	799,738	791,348	791,162	809,190	
EAST	1,294,168	68,987	69,248	70,694	70,295	71,581	72,913	72,167	71,997	72,290	
ESSEX	313,378	16,789	16,865	17,306	17,077	17,670	17,964	17,564	17,569	17,380	
BASILDON	41,436	2,225	2,150	2,173	2,096	2,287	2,269	2,224	2,279	2,214	
BRAINTREE	33,521	1,776	1,700	1,778	1,835	1,865	1,886	1,814	1,811	1,723	
BRENTWOOD	16,399	843	919	966	937	975	1,002	915	963	918	
CASTLE POINT	19,812	1,041	1,128	1,219	1,137	1,244	1,177	1,187	1,165	1,151	
CHELMSFORD	37,539	1,960	2,008	2,127	2,109	2,130	2,231	2,120	2,079	2,110	
COLCHESTER	37,494	1,994	1,930	1,998	2,057	2,018	2,074	1,984	2,149	2,343	
EPPING FOREST	28,391	1,503	1,519	1,470	1,517	1,493	1,625	1,693	1,544	1,550	
HARLOW	19,071	982	958	1,013	932	976	1,057	1,031	1,051	1,006	
MALDON	14,280	827	773	843	778	778	792	792	821	794	
ROCHFORD	18,660	1,049	1,087	1,121	1,057	1,082	1,100	1,040	1,039	967	
TENDRING	29,280	1,591	1,621	1,640	1,672	1,843	1,769	1,725	1,697	1,676	
UTTLESFORD	17,495	998	1,072	958	950	979	982	1,039	971	928	