

# Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011



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# **1. Executive summary**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Barnet Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) provides a comprehensive picture of childcare in Barnet in 2011. It is an analysis of the supply and demand of childcare services and how parents' needs are being met. Under the Childcare Act 2006 it is the statutory duty of all English local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for local parents who need it, and to measure this sufficiency by conducting a CSA every three years.

This is the second CSA that Barnet has produced; the first being published in 2008. In the intervening period the data in the 2008 CSA has been kept under review and its action plan monitored and implemented. This second CSA shows the extent to which issues from 2008 have changed in the intervening years.

The CSA includes data from a range of sources, and the analysis includes many different factors that have an influence on childcare and other services for families in Barnet. The aim of the document is to show the effectiveness of the borough's childcare market in meeting the needs of resident families, and to identify any gaps in sufficiency so that the council can plan how to address these.

A glossary of terms used in the report can be found in the full report on page 74.

Coda Consultants Ltd was commissioned to undertake the CSA 2011.

## **1.2 Methodology**

### **1.21 Consultation with parents**

During the summer of 2010 a total of 1,297 parents were consulted through a survey for the CSA. 1,042 parents were interviewed, either by telephone or face-to-face, and a further 255 responded to the survey online. The survey captured in-depth information about parents' childcare usage and preferences, and their views on the provision of services for families.

A series of focus groups was also held with parents from specific backgrounds and circumstances, including parents of children with additional needs, parents from ethnic minority communities and young parents.

### **1.22 Consultation with other stakeholders**

Coda also interviewed a sample of childcare providers, as well as representatives of several local organisations that work with families.

### **1.23 Data on childcare supply**

Up to date information about current childcare provision has been supplied by FYi (Barnet's family information service). This has been mapped by ward to show the distribution of provision across the borough.

### **1.24 Demographics**

Data on the demographics of the borough is vital to the sufficiency assessment. It provides context to the data on childcare supply and demand and enables the analysis of the various factors that can influence the childcare market.

Barnet has a growing population and recently became the most populous borough in London. Several major regeneration projects are planned that will create thousands of additional homes over the next ten years. The CSA has tried to anticipate future demand for childcare and whether this can be met by current supply.

While generally affluent, Barnet has several small areas of quite severe deprivation. In many cases these are also the most densely populated parts of the borough. Pressure on service provision is felt most keenly in these communities and the CSA has given special focus to this.

### **1.25 Analysis of gaps**

The issues reported by parents and stakeholders have been analysed against data on the supply of childcare provision in Barnet. Other demographic and socioeconomic factors have also been included in the analysis. From this a series of key issues has been produced, with a series of recommendations for how Barnet should work to address them.

Throughout the analysis the borough has been divided geographically into four locality networks, in order to compare the picture in these different areas of Barnet. A particular focus has also been given to Barnet's pockets of deprivation - the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that rank in the 30 per cent most deprived in England.

## **1.3 Key issues and recommendations**

Both the national and local contexts have changed significantly since 2008, with the country having experienced an economic recession. Despite this, the CSA 2011 finds the childcare market in Barnet to be in good health. In certain sectors provision has grown significantly since 2008. For example, 368 full daycare places for under-fives have been created since November 2009.

In many areas the CSA 2011 shows positive progress since 2008. Take up of the free entitlement to nursery education has increased from 96 per cent in 2008 to 98.5 per cent. Awareness of the help available through the Working Tax Credit has also improved.

The CSA has found several key issues that currently affect childcare sufficiency in Barnet. These are highlighted throughout the report and brought together in the gaps analysis of the full report in section 8. The issue and their recommendations are grouped into six themes.

### **1.31 Theme 1. Increasing access to early years education and childcare settings**

Data collected through the parents' survey suggests that there is insufficient nursery provision in the East and Central areas of Barnet, and in the deprived neighbourhoods of the South. Demand in the West locality looks very likely to outstrip demand in the coming years if it is not already doing so.

The Schools Census of May 2010 found spare capacity in the maintained sector for nursery places – particularly in the East locality. Data also indicates that one ward in the South (Hendon) has over provision of childcare for under-fives.

Further capacity for nursery places exists in settings that currently don't participate in the free entitlement to nursery education for three and four year olds. The parent survey also found some low awareness of the free entitlement, particularly in deprived areas. Live birth data also shows that birth rates are high in these areas, which could cause demand to rise.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

- some of the evident unmet demand for nursery provision in the East and Central localities could be relieved by utilising the current spare capacity in the maintained sector
- encourage new nursery provision to be developed in the East and Central localities
- raise awareness of the free entitlement in the East locality, concentrating on deprived neighbourhoods
- ensure regeneration plans affecting deprived areas of the South network locality include sufficient childcare provision for the increased demand they are likely to cause
- encourage the development of new early years childcare provision in the West area and ensure that regeneration plans have childcare provision built in
- work to encourage all early years settings to offer the free entitlement.

### **1.32 Theme 2. Increasing access to out of school childcare**

Data collected through the parents survey indicates that there is under-provision of out of school childcare for children over fives. This was also found in the 2008 CSA. Parents reported more issues affecting out of school childcare than any other provider type, yet after school clubs and holiday playschemes are the types of childcare parents said they were most likely to use in the next three years.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

- improved collection of data on 5-14 childcare is needed to ensure maintained provision is counted properly
- Barnet should assess the sustainability of provision in the out of school sector, particularly as the Extended Services budget will cease in August 2011
- providers should be encouraged to price their service fairly and to ensure that parents are aware that they can claim the Working Tax Credit (WTC) Childcare Element to help towards the cost.

### **1.33 Theme 3. Developing the childminding sector to meet sufficiency gaps**

Some of the shortages evident in other types of childcare provision could be addressed by developing the childminding sector. Childminders can provide a flexible and high quality alternative to group provision and can cater for a wider age group. Parents unable to find a nursery or after school club may not think of using a childminder so raising awareness of this group could be considered.

Childminders who were consulted for the CSA were mostly filling their vacancies but more detailed data on capacity with existing childminders is required before decisions are taken to increase numbers.

The parents' survey also investigated the use of informal childcare by parents in Barnet. This was found to be fairly widespread, with many parents using some informal childcare, sometimes in combination with formal provision. Most of this informal childcare was being provided by grandparents.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

- encourage more flexible practice in childminders in terms of their hours of availability and the age range they care for. This should help them to compete with out of school clubs
- Barnet should aim to review the collection of data on vacancy and capacity in the childminding sector to aid the mapping of sufficiency.

### **1.34 Theme 4. Increasing flexibility in the childcare market**

The CSA found that many working parents still find the opening hours of childcare provision to be inconvenient and not flexible enough. Additional demand for childcare calculated through the parents' survey amounted to about 1.5 hours a day, which indicates that some parents would like longer provision.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

- encourage providers to survey their customers to ensure that parents are satisfied with the hours available at the setting, and to act on the findings
- this kind of consultation can be followed up through the provider's audit by asking providers to report on parent satisfaction
- greater flexibility can be a benefit of childminding and this could be part of promotional messages about using childminders.

### **1.35 Theme 5. Increasing affordability in the childcare market**

As in 2008, the cost of childcare is still the biggest barrier for many parents. Average childcare costs in Barnet are higher than the average for greater London, and many parents using childcare stated that they find it difficult to afford.

The survey found that parents with a household income of £20,000-£40,000 were most likely to find cost an issue with childcare. Planned reductions to Working Tax Credit (WTC) and the cutting of benefits to new parents could mean even more parents will struggle to afford childcare in the coming years.

The CSA did find some scope for increasing take up of financial assistance methods for childcare – the free entitlement to nursery education, and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

- increase access to the free entitlement for nursery education both in nurseries and with childminders
- as part of business support advice encourage providers to set their fees realistically and to keep them under review
- continue to promote WTC and consider increasing access to 'better-off' calculations by making these available through Welfare rights and in Children's Centre
- Barnet should consider undertaking research into the impact that benefit cuts will have on parents in the borough.

### **1.36 Theme 6. Increasing access to childcare for children with additional needs**

Consultation was conducted for the CSA with parents of children and young people who have additional needs. These families face many barriers to accessing childcare, but the biggest issue for many was poor coordination and communication from agencies within the local authority.

Better transport provision was identified as something that could increase access to after school childcare for children attending special schools.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

- review systems for assessing and allocating childcare, play and leisure opportunities for children with additional needs
- improved communication for parents.