

# Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report 2025

Together for Children, Sunderland



## Contents

3	<u>Overview of Childcare Sufficiency in our city</u>
4	<u>Number and Type of Childcare Providers in Sunderland</u>
5	<u>Overview of Childcare Sufficiency by Locality and Age</u>
6	<u>0–2-Year-Old Places and Vacancies</u>
7	<u>2–3-Year-Old Places and Vacancies</u>
8	<u>3–5-Year-Old Places and Vacancies</u>
9	<u>Early Years Funded Places</u>
12	<u>Prices</u>
13	<u>Quality</u>
15	<u>Wraparound Childcare Provision in Schools</u>
16	<u>PVI Out of School Providers and Holiday Provision</u>
17	<u>SEND</u>
19	<u>Recruitment and Retention</u>
20	<u>Support for Childcare Providers in our City</u>
21	<u>Looking forward to September 2025</u>
22	<u>Summary</u>
23	<u>Contact details</u>

## Overview of Childcare Sufficiency in our City

### Childcare Sufficiency Duty

Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006, placed a duty on all local authorities to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA). Childcare sufficiency is about ensuring that the city of Sunderland has enough places and vacancies for all families who require it from birth to 18 (or 25 for those with additional needs). In Sunderland, we have a diverse market of childcare provision including schools, PVI day nurseries, childminders and preschools which is beneficial to meeting the differing needs of all families in the city.

Through undertaking the CSA, Together for Children, working on behalf of Sunderland Council, will be able to identify gaps in childcare provision and begin to develop a strategy to understand and meet the childcare demands of working parents so far as is reasonably practicable in order to fulfil the Section 6 Childcare Sufficiency Duty.

### Our City

The population of Sunderland is 277,354 according to mid-2022 population figures published by the ONS. In the year between mid-2021 and mid-2022, the population in Sunderland grew by an estimated 2,976 people, and in the ten years prior to mid-2022, the population grew by 1,265. The population growth rate between mid-2021 and mid-2022 was 1.1%. If the population continues to grow at current rate, the 2025 population estimate would be approximately 280,000.

Sunderland Population | Historic, forecast, migration  
([varbes.com](https://varbes.com))

### Localities

Our city is divided into five localities; Coalfields, East, North, Washington and West. We review locality as well as city wide occupancy to highlight if there are any gaps or unmet needs in specific areas of the city.

The data in each of the five localities is based upon the information provided by those childminders, day nurseries, nursery schools and schools when submitting their childcare sufficiency return in May 2025.

### Number of providers completing the childcare sufficiency return

143/182 (79%) all providers

31/35 (89%) PVI daycare

36/68 (52%) Childminders

7/7 (100%) Maintained nursery schools

70/77 (90%) schools that offer early years provision

## Number and Type of Childcare Providers in Sunderland

### Breakdown of Childcare Providers in Sunderland

There is a diverse mixture of different types of providers across Sunderland.

We have 35 PVI Daycare Providers in the city.

In addition, there are 3 maintained Daycare Providers attached to schools who care for children from birth.

All 7 Maintained Nursery Schools have provision from 2 year old. 5 out of 7 Maintained Nursery Schools also have Childcare Provision from birth

There are 70 registered Childminders in the city; 2 of whom are currently inactive.

There are 84 schools in the city. 1 of these is an independent school with provision from 2 years 9 months old.

22 schools (26%) offer 2 year old provision 4% of this is provided by daycare on school site.

42 schools (50%), have nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds only.

### Number and type of early years and childcare providers operating in the city 2025

Type of Provider	Coalfields	East	North	Washington	West	Total
Childminder	12	11	17	18	10	68
Maintained Nursery School (MNS)	2	1	1	2	1	7
MNS Daycare	2	1	1	0	1	5
Private, Voluntry and Independent (PVI)	4	9	7	7	8	35
PVI Out Of School Club (PVI OOSC)	0	1	1	3	2	7
PVI Holiday provision	0	0	1	1	2	4
School with daycare onsite	2	0	1	0	0	3
School 2+	2	5	3	3	6	19
School 3+	8	6	10	11	7	42
School Reception only	3	2	1	3	3	12
Junior schools	0	3	1	0	3	7
Independent schools	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total Schools</b>	13	16	15	17	19	84

### Movement in the Childcare Sector

The number of daycare provisions and maintained nursery schools have remained stable. One PVI provider is due to close in Summer 25. There have been 2 new PVI providers registered since the previous report.

Since June 2024, 3 PVI Out of school providers have registered with Ofsted or expanded their registrations, PVI holiday provision has increased with 3 of the new providers registering since June 2024 offering this service. 1 PVI out of school club and 1 PVI out of school club and holiday care have deregistered with Ofsted.

5 Childminders have deregistered from Ofsted and 1 has deregistered from a childminder agency in the last year. There has been 3 new childminders registering with Ofsted.

## Overview of Childcare Sufficiency by locality and age

City Wide			
Locality	0-2 year old places	0-2 year old vacancies	Occupancy %
Coalfields	98	3	97%
East	219	32	85%
North	84	10	88%
Washington	133	8	94%
West	81	23	72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>88%</b>

City Wide			
Locality	2 year old places	2 year old vacancies	Occupancy %
Coalfields	169	9	95%
East	336	70	79%
North	180	15	92%
Washington	236	36	85%
West	213	21	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>87%</b>

City Wide			
Locality	3-5 year old places	3-5 year old vacancies	Occupancy %
Coalfields	602	62	90%
East	811	84	90%
North	756	89	88%
Washington	824	113	86%
West	773	50	94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3766</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>89%</b>

### When do Sunderland Childcare Service operate?

Most childminders are open all day, five days a week, 91% of childminders operate all year round.

All PVIs are open five days a week with the average opening times being 7.30am – 6pm. 97% of PVI providers operate all year round. Schools are generally open for less hours per week, with 59% of breakfast club opening between 7.30 and 8am and 60% of after school club closing between 5.30 and 6pm.

### City Wide Occupancy Summary:

88% of available 0-2 year old places are currently occupied.

87% of available 2-3 year old places are currently occupied.

89% of available 3-5 year old places are currently occupied.

79% of school places for primary age children are occupied.

## 0-2-year-old Places and Vacancies

Coal Fields			
Ward	0-2 places	0-2 vacancies	Occupancy
Copt Hill	27	0	100%
Hetton	31	2	94%
Houghton	34	1	97%
Shiney Row	6	0	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>97%</b>

Washington			
Ward	0-2 places	0-2 vacancies	Occupancy
Washington Central	6	0	100%
Washington East	34	3	91%
Washington North	55	0	100%
Washington South	4	0	100%
Washington West	34	5	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>94%</b>

East			
Ward	0-2 places	0-2 vacancies	Occupancy
Doxford	47	1	98%
Hendon	46	5	89%
Millfield	3	3	0%
Ryhope	44	0	100%
St Michael's	79	23	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>85%</b>

West			
Ward	0-2 places	0-2 vacancies	Occupancy
Barnes	42	20	52%
Pallion	12	2	83%
Sandhill	9	0	100%
Silksworth	2	1	50%
St Anne's	14	0	100%
St Chad's	2	0	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>72%</b>

North			
Ward	0-2 places	0-2 vacancies	Occupancy
Castle	25	9	64%
Fulwell	3	0	100%
Redhill	0	0	0%
Southwick	56	1	98%
St Peter's	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>88%</b>

### Wards currently with no capacity for 0-2 year old places

*Coalfields- Copt Hill and Shiney Row*

*East- Ryhope*

*North- Fulwell, Redhill and St Peters*

*Washington- Washington Central, North and South*

*West – Sandhill, St Anne's and St Chad's*

## 2-3 -year-old Places and Vacancies

Coal Fields			
Ward	2-3 places	2-3 vacancies	Occupancy
Copt Hill	42	0	100%
Hetton	79	9	89%
Houghton	33	0	100%
Shiney Row	15	0	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>95%</b>

Washington			
Ward	2-3 places	2-3 vacancies	Occupancy
Washington Central	16	0	100%
Washington East	41	16	61%
Washington North	107	18	83%
Washington South	24	0	100%
Washington West	47	2	96%
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>85%</b>

East			
Ward	2-3 places	2-3 vacancies	Occupancy
Doxford	53	1	98%
Hendon	136	49	64%
Millfield	6	3	50%
Ryhope	61	3	95%
St Michael's	80	14	83%
<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>79%</b>

West			
Ward	2-3 places	2-3 vacancies	Occupancy
Barnes	55	11	80%
Pallion	30	6	80%
Sandhill	66	0	100%
Silksworth	17	4	76%
St Anne's	43	0	100%
St Chad's	2	0	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>90%</b>

North			
Ward	2-3 places	2-3 vacancies	Occupancy
Castle	77	10	87%
Fulwell	3	1	67%
Redhill	36	0	100%
Southwick	63	4	94%
St Peter's	1	0	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>92%</b>

### Wards currently with no capacity for 2-3 year old places

Coalfields- Copt Hill, Houghton and Shiney Row

North- Redhill and St Peter's

Washington- Washington Central and South

West – Sandhill, St Anne's and St Chad's

## 3-5 -year-old Places and Vacancies

Coal Fields			
Ward	3-5 places	3-5 vacancies	Occupancy
Copt Hill	154	2	99%
Hetton	187	29	84%
Houghton	137	15	89%
Shiney Row	124	16	87%
<b>Total</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>90%</b>

Washington			
Ward	3-5 places	3-5 vacancies	Occupancy
Washington Central	122	1	99%
Washington East	96	51	47%
Washington North	236	42	82%
Washington South	214	4	98%
Washington West	156	15	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>86%</b>

East			
Ward	3-5 places	3-5 vacancies	Occupancy
Doxford	142	1	99%
Hendon	215	60	72%
Millfield	68	4	94%
Ryhope	243	4	98%
St Michael's	143	15	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>90%</b>

West			
Ward	3-5 places	3-5 vacancies	Occupancy
Barnes	221	25	89%
Pallion	51	6	88%
Sandhill	162	1	99%
Silksworth	41	3	93%
St Anne's	176	0	100%
St Chad's	122	15	88%
<b>Total</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>94%</b>

North			
Ward	3-5 places	3-5 vacancies	Occupancy
Castle	214	32	85%
Fulwell	118	0	100%
Redhill	178	27	85%
Southwick	160	24	85%
St Peter's	86	6	93%
<b>Total</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>88%</b>

**Wards currently with no capacity for 3-5 year old places**

*North- Fulwell*

*West – St Anne's*



## Early Years Funded Places

### The majority of early years providers in Sunderland offer Early Education Funding. This includes:

- Up to 15 hours per week/570 hours per year, (introduced from September 2024), for children aged from nine months from eligible working families.
- Up to 15 hours per week/570 hours per year for eligible disadvantaged children aged two years.
- Up to 15 hours per week/570 hours per year, for children aged two years from eligible working families.
- Up to 15 hours per week/570 hours per year for all children aged three and four.
- Up to 30 hours per week/1,140 hours per year for children aged three and four years from eligible working families.
- From September 2025, eligible working families will be able to apply for up to 30 hours per week/1,140 hours per year for children aged from nine months to 4 years.

### Providers offering the 9 month old Working Parent Entitlement

71 % MNS

97 % PVI

88 % Childminders

4 % Schools (with daycare onsite)

### Providers offering the 2 year Working Parent Entitlement

100 % MNS

97 % PVI

88 % Childminders

26 % Schools

### Providers offering the 30 hours Working Parent Entitlement

100 % MNS

97 % PVI

88 % Childminders

66 % Schools

Providers are paid directly by government for delivering funded early education. It is parents' choice where they decide to take up their funded childcare place. Some providers may not offer this, and parents may decide to pay privately for a childcare provider of their choice. Some providers may also offer a restricted number of funded places.

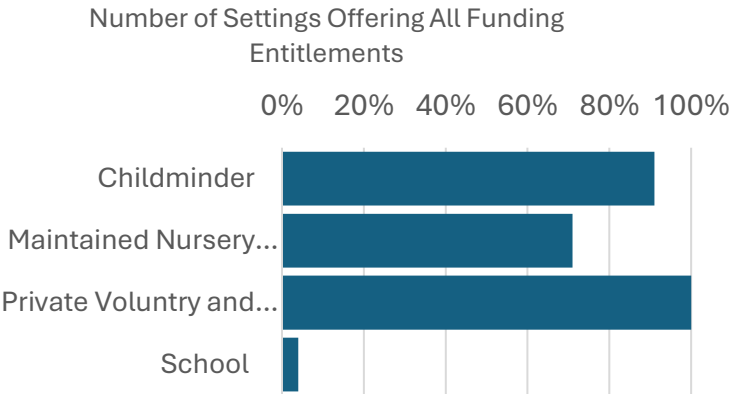
Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement. They may choose to split them between providers. With the agreement of their provider, parents may also spread them across the year – for example, rather than taking 15 hours for 38 weeks a year, they could take just under 12 hours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

Early Years Funded Places

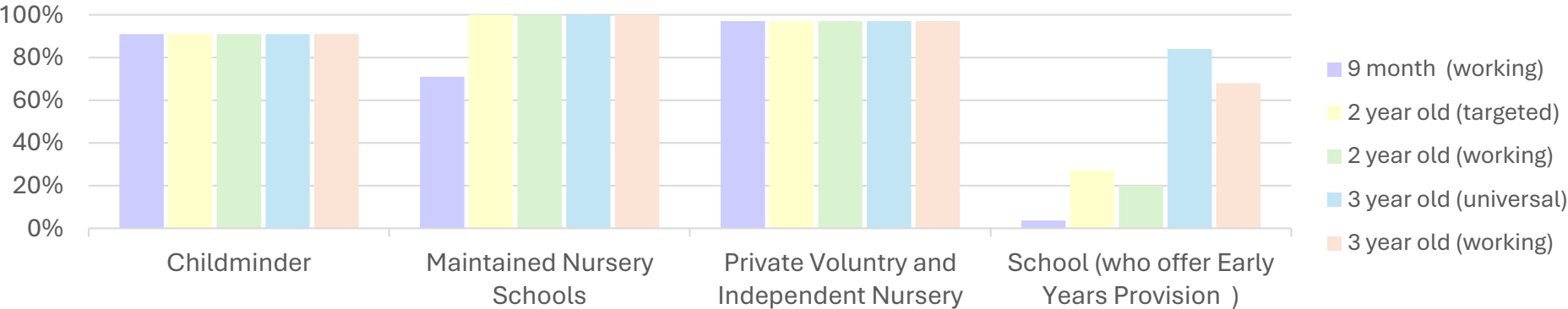
Settings who offer working parent entitlement

In our local authority, 100% of PVI providers, 71% of Maintained Nursery Schools (100% of those with day care onsite), 91% of childminders and 4% of schools (100% of those with a daycare onsite) offer both working parent entitlements and targeted funding from 9 months old.

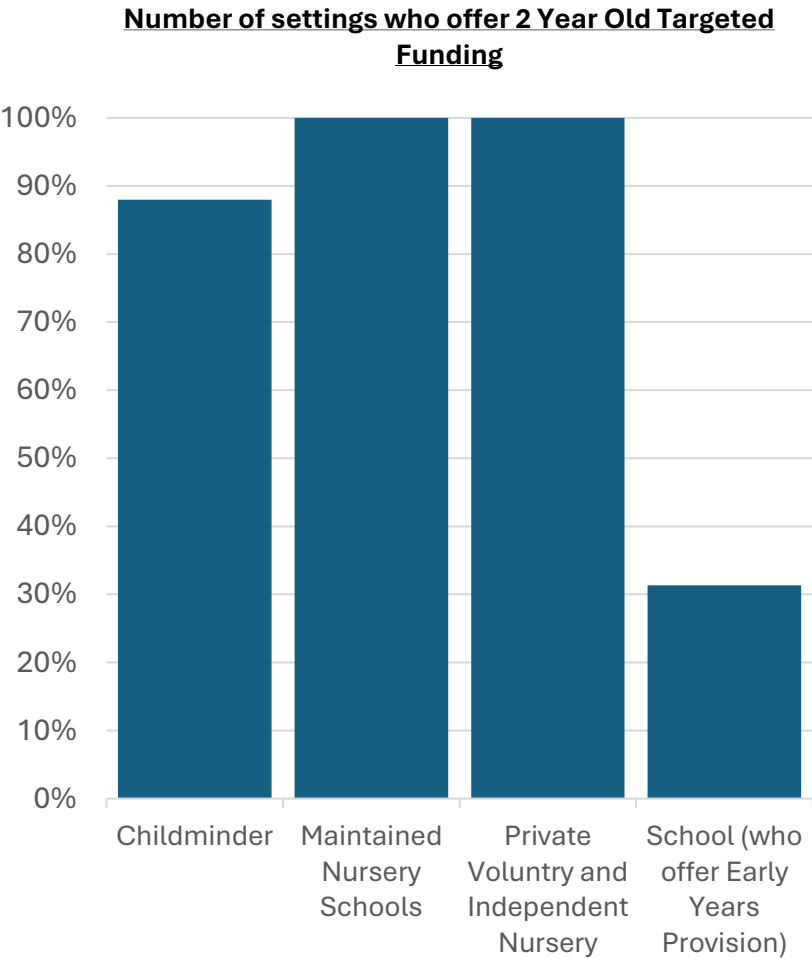
99% of 3 and 4 year olds took up their funded universal and/or extended funded hours in Sunderland in 2025. This is an increase from 95% in 2024.  
(Data Source: [Create your own tables explore education statistics service gov.uk](#))



Number of settings who offer Funded Childcare by funding entitlement



Early Years 2-year-old Targeted Funded Places



2-year-old Children Entitled to Funded Early Education (Targeted)

In our local authority, in 2025, 962 2-year-olds are entitled to 2-year-old targeted funded early education. Across the city, 100% of PVI providers, 100% of Maintained Nursery Schools offer this funding, as well as 88% of childminders and 31% of schools.

Take up of Funded Early Education

Out of the eligible 2 year olds in our local authority, 608 children took up their 2 year targeted funded place (for at least some of the available hours) in 2025. This equates to 63% take up which is slightly lower than the national take up rate of 65%. Although this is a 16% decrease in take up rate since 2024 in Sunderland, it is lower than the percentage decrease of take up nationally which is a decrease of 17%.

It is possible, that the extension of the working parent entitlement from age 9 months may have influenced this decrease in take up of 2 year old targeted funding.

(Data Source: [Step 6: Explore data - Create your own tables \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#))

## Prices

### Prices of early years childcare

For early years childcare outside the funded entitlements, we use the average cost of childcare reported to us by settings. 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.

The overall, average cost of childcare in Sunderland is below the overall, national average cost.\*

### The Average Cost for 25hrs of Childcare per week

	Sunderland*		England	
	Under Two Years	Two- to Three- Years	Under Two Years	Two- to Three- Years
<b>Childminder</b>	£126.60	£126.60	£149.41	£144.37
<b>Private Day Nursery</b>	£188.48	£181.97	£176.27	£165.85

### Average Cost of Holiday Care per Session

	Sunderland	England
<b>Average Cost per Session</b>		
<b>Breakfast club</b>	£3.14	No data available
<b>After-school club</b>	£7.53	No data available
<b>Childminder (per hour)</b>	£5.04	£5.77
<b>PVI Holiday club (Full day)</b>	£48.50	£35.69

### Prices of school age childcare

For school age children during term time, we report on average prices before school per day, after school per day, and for childminding per hour. For holiday childcare, we report on holiday club prices per day.

The prices across the city vary from locality to locality. Some provisions offer free sessions with the maximum for breakfast club is £10 and for after school care it is £15. PVI Holiday provisions also vary in price from Free – £65 a day. However, the length of session offered by different providers of holiday care varies from 4 -9 hours.

### Support with the Cost of Childcare

Tax-Free Childcare provides help with childcare costs for working parents. For every £8 a parent pays into their Tax-Free Childcare account the government will add an extra £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year. For disabled children the maximum is £4,000 per year. Tax-Free Childcare replaced the childcare voucher and directly contracted childcare schemes, which closed to new entrants in October 2018. Since the last report, the number of families using Tax-Free Childcare accounts increased by 245.

## Quality

### Provider registration and inspection

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who give them an overall grade for the quality of their provision: 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement', and 'inadequate'. Childminders may also register with an Ofsted registered Childminder Agency. Currently, all childminders in Sunderland are registered with Ofsted. There are currently no childminders registered with a Childminder Agency.

There are three registers for Childminders and private and voluntary providers (PVI); the Early Years, Childcare and Voluntary Registers. The majority of providers are on all three registers. 4 Childminders are on the Childcare Register only.

Childcare providers who are not on the Early Years Register or have 'no children on roll' only get a compliance visit with a 'met' or 'not met' requirements outcome.

The majority of schools and maintained nursery schools are registered with Ofsted and inspected under the Ofsted Schools Inspection framework. Schools undergoing 'graded' (Section 5) inspections receive a grade for each of the main judgement areas. Early years provision also receive a grade. 1 Independent school in Sunderland are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Overall Effectiveness of Full Early Years Ofsted Inspections in Sunderland 1st September 2023 to 31st March 2025						
Total Number and Type of Provision		Total number inspected	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Childminder	71	11	1 (9%)	10 (91%)	0	0
Childcare on Non-Domestic Premises	41	9	1 (11%)	6 (67%)	0	2 (22%)

### School and Maintained Nursery School inspections

Of the 83 primary schools registered with Ofsted 28 were inspected, 20 of which were graded inspections, since the last report. All schools were graded either Good or Outstanding in all 5 areas of the inspection. Of the 7 Maintained Nursery Schools 2 were inspected, both of which were outstanding in all areas.

Quality of Childcare Provision

The National Picture:

The picture nationally shows that, between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 90% of providers are judged to be either good or outstanding.

87% of Childcare on Non- Domestic Premises are good or outstanding. 11% are outstanding and 76% are good.

94% of childminders are good or outstanding. 9% are outstanding and 85% are good.

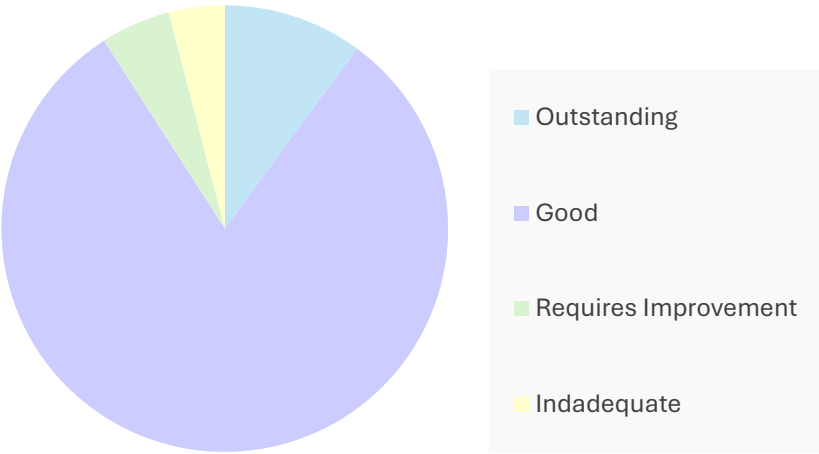
The Picture in Sunderland:

The picture in Sunderland shows that , between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 90% of providers in Sunderland are judged to be either good or outstanding at their last inspection.

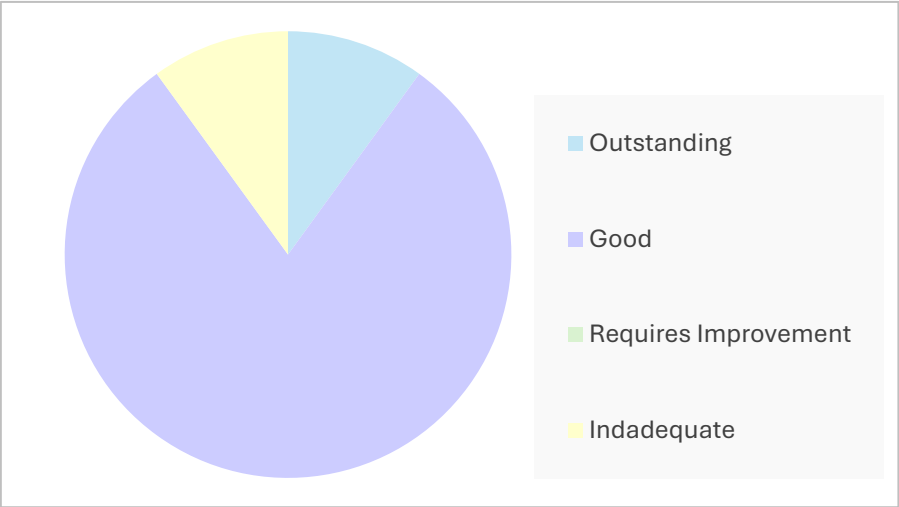
78% of Childcare on Non- Domestic Premises are good or outstanding by Ofsted. 11% are outstanding and 67% good.

100% of childminders are good or outstanding. 9% are outstanding and 91% are good, which is higher than the national figure of 85%.

Percentage of Childcare Provision in England by Ofsted Grading  
1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



Percentage of Childcare Provision in Sunderland Ofsted Grading  
1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



## Wraparound Childcare Provision in Schools

Number of Schools in the Locality		Schools with full wraparound (8am-6pm or 7.30am-5.30pm)	Schools with Breakfast Club and Activity Clubs or provision until 5pm	Schools with Breakfast Club only	Schools with No Before or After school care
Coalfields	15	10	2	2	1
East	17	13	4	0	0
North	16	6	5	4	0
Washington	18	13	2	3	0
West	18	10	4	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>

### Term Time Out of School Provision in Sunderland

In June 2025, 82% of schools in Sunderland have wraparound childcare provision until 5pm. 63% offer full wraparound care during term time, this includes provision 7.30-17.30 or 8.00-18.00. 19% have a breakfast club and afterschool clubs but do not meet the full wraparound hours.

99% of schools have a breakfast club. 17% of schools offer breakfast club only with 61% of the breakfast clubs opening before 8am.

There is only 1 school in the city which currently has no out of school provision.

Most childminders offer wraparound or before and after school club for younger and older children. Childminders will usually collect older children from their school.

### The National Wraparound Childcare Programme

Wraparound childcare is defined as 'childcare that 'wraps around' the conventional school day.' The National Wraparound Childcare Programme was introduced in 2023 to provide funding for up to 2 years to support providers.

The programme focuses on primary school-aged children from reception to year 6, Monday to Friday during term time. The expectation is that all wraparound provision is 8am-6pm, enabling parents to work a full day with travel time, unless data shows that local demand is for different hours, for example reflecting local labour market patterns.

The government's ambition is that by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm, so that parents can access employment. (Source: [Page 9: National Wraparound Childcare Programme Handbook](#))

## PVI Out of School Providers and Holiday Provision

Number of Providers in the Locality		Childminder	PVI Out of School Childcare	PVI Holiday Childcare	HAF Provision (Funded City Wide)
Coalfields	62	12	0	0	50
East	12	11	1	1*	
North	19	17	1	1	
Washington	22	18	3	1	
West	14	10	2	2	
Total		68	7	4	50

### Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

Holiday provision is also run through the HAF programme. Together for Children has offered Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme since 2021. The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme - named 'Wear Here 4' in Sunderland is a Department for Education funded programme delivered locally during school holidays.

During 2024 delivery 2084 sessions were offered across spring, summer and winter delivery with 49 providers supporting with delivery.

[Data Source: HAF Annual Report 2024 TfC.pdf](#)

### PVI Out of School, Holiday Provision and Childminders

There are 6 PVI out of school provisions across the city providing wraparound childcare during term time. All provisions are currently active, with 2 of these provisions operating on school sites. 57% of PVI out of school providers also provide holiday care to school age children.

The majority of childminders also offer holiday childcare for early years and school age children. As most private day nurseries operate all year round, most younger children attending will continue to do so.

### Stand Alone Holiday provision

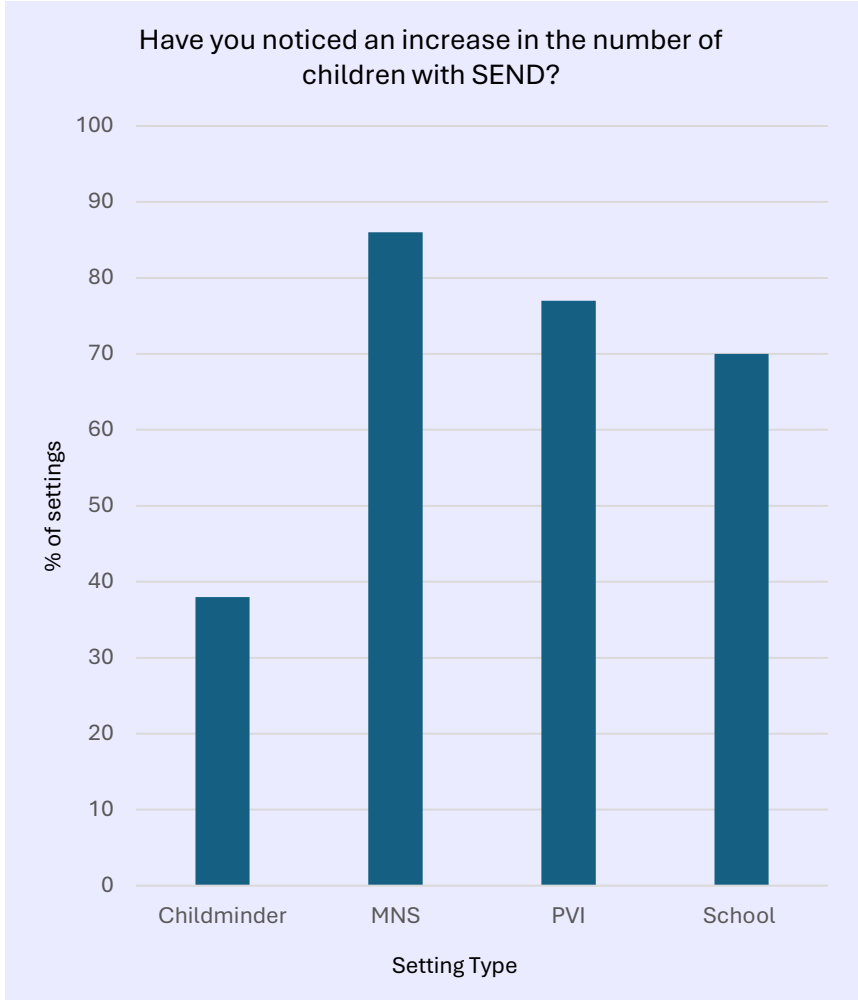
Holiday schemes operate throughout the school holiday period. They can take many forms and may be run for different age groups. Many are operated by local sports or activity groups.

### Movement in the Sector

Since June 2024, 3 PVI Out of school providers have registered with Ofsted or expanded their registrations, PVI holiday provision has increased with 3 of the new providers registering since June 2024 offering this service. 1 PVI out of school club and 1 PVI out of school club and holiday care have deregistered with Ofsted.



SEND



Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Disability Access Fund (DAF). DAF is an annual grant of £938 that providers who have children with additional needs can claim if they meet certain criteria. This can be used to help support the child.

Between June 2024 and June 2025, there have been 129 DAF claims approved. This compares with 92 DAF claims approved between June 2023 and June 2024.

Providers have indicated that there has been an increase in the numbers of children with additional needs. This is further confirmed by the current numbers of children being referred for Early Years Additional Fund (EYAF).

77% of PVI settings and have reported an increase in the number of children with SEND. 65% of providers have reported they have noticed an increase in SEND.

SEND

Number of children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) are entitled to support with childcare up to the age of 18 (age 14 for children who do not have a special need or disability). The number of children with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in our local authority is 14 for Early Years and 941 for Primary Schools (Data source: Capita One January 2025).

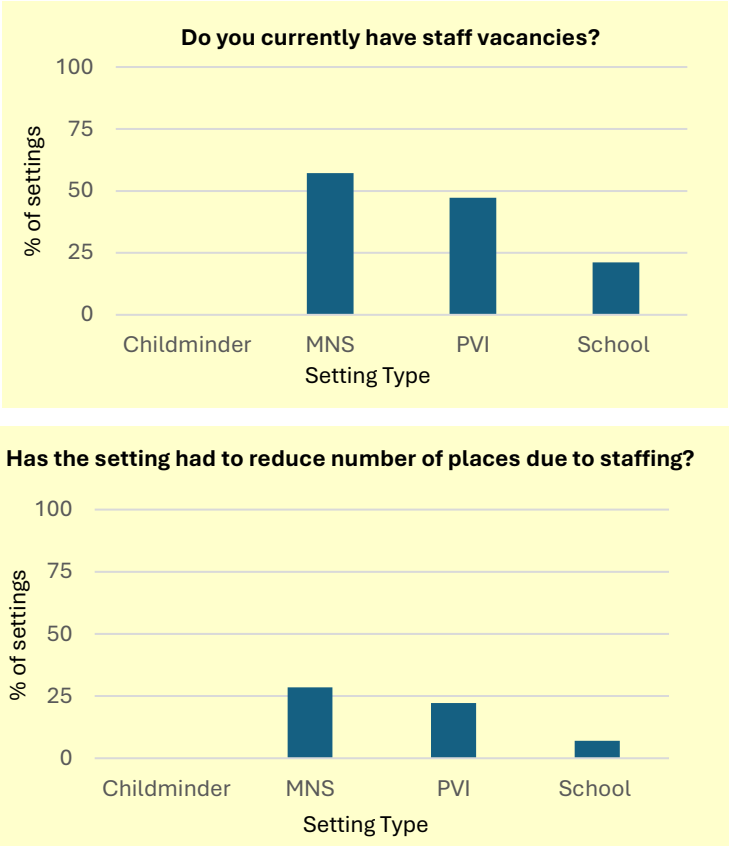
Children’s needs change over time and are identified at different ages. Among the youngest children, SEND may only be identified when they start in childcare or school, and it can take some time from problems being identified to an EHC plan being issued. It is therefore possible that the number of children with SEND aged 0-4 is an underestimate. Some children may have SEN but do not need an EHC plan at that time in their life.

Number of children with EHCP’s in Sunderland

Age	Number of children 2024	Number of children 2025
Birth to school age	23	14
Primary school (reception to year six)	869	941

Recruitment and Retention

Providers continue to report challenges in recruiting sufficiently qualified and experienced staff to fill vacancies in their workforce. This is also a national issue. Over the years, a number of skilled and experienced staff left the profession to either retire or take less responsible jobs or to work from home. The effect on providers are increased vacancies leaving them often struggling to meet the statutory requirements for ratios. The change in ratios introduced in the Early Years Foundation Stage 2024 to 1: 5 for 2 year olds allow providers more flexibility when short staffed.



Challenges Reported by Providers Around Recruitment

22% of PVI's reported that staff shortages have impacted upon their setting compared to 7% of schools reporting this. 64% of PVI's and 71% maintained nursery schools report they have trouble recruiting suitable staff compared to 8% of schools.

The main challenges reported by providers include:

- Not enough/approved qualifications.
- Not turning up for interview.
- Not enough experience.
- Accepting the job and then changing their mind.
- New starters leaving within six months.

Raising the profile of a career in Early Years

To encourage people to work with young children, the government launched their 'Do Something Big Campaign' in February 2024. They have also introduced the Early Years Financial Incentive scheme to help increase capacity, tackle unemployment, and offer more childcare places. Sunderland are part of this National Incentive Scheme to encourage people into the Early Years Workforce to support the sector with recruitment and retention.

## Support for childcare providers in our city

### Early Years Support

Support for the sector has continued over the last year from the Together for Children Early Years Team. The Early Years Team consists of a Childcare Development, Wraparound and Sufficiency Lead, Four Childcare Development Officers, an Early Years School Improvement Officer and an Early Years Advisory Teacher.

Support offered includes:

- Termly Daycare Network Meetings - These provide regular up-dates from the Early Years Team, Funding, Regulatory updates and other relevant updates and topics from the sector.
- Weekly childminder playgroups in each of the locality Family Hubs and monthly outdoor playgroups.
- Early Years Quality Framework and Audits - audits are offered on an annual basis.
- The majority of training is being delivered face-to-face as well as virtually. Bespoke, whole team training is also being delivered on a more regular basis as well as to groups of childminders in their own homes.
- Priority support is allocated where more intensive support is required.
- 1-minute guides on a variety of topics, support providers to keep their knowledge up to date and refreshed.
- An online Early Years Hub and Facebook page has been produced to provide further advice and support.
- Business and sustainability support and guidance

## Looking forward to September 2025

From September 2025, eligible working families can apply for 30 hours of childcare to use from the term after their child turns 9 months until they reach school age.

The Department for Education estimates around 70,000 new childcare places and 35,000 additional staff (headcount) will be required by autumn 2025 nation wide (compared to a December 2023 baseline) to meet the additional demand created by the expansion.

[Expanding government-funded childcare in England - House of Commons Library](#)

Providers in Sunderland who completed the Childcare Sufficiency reported the following concerns around meeting the demand for funded places.

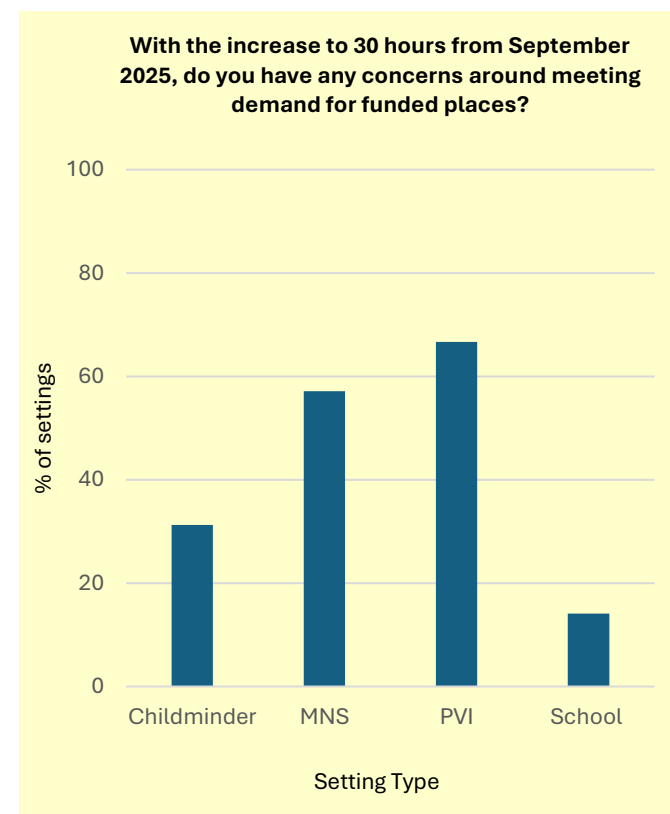
- Already being at capacity
- Physical space within the provision
- Recruitment and retention of qualified staff
- Staffing of lunchtimes
- Increasing numbers of children with SEND

### Best Start in Life

In July 2025, the government announced the Best Start in Life strategy for improving child development and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5 year olds in Britain, have a good level of development by 2028.

The strategy includes steps that the government have already taken including the 30 hours funded childcare roll out for working parents, an uplift to early years pupil premium, new free breakfast clubs and school-based nurseries.

The strategy also sets out its ambition to build on the commitments made in the Plan for Change and lays the foundations for further reform including spending close to £1.5 billion over the next three years on improving family services and early years education.



## Summary

### How well is Sunderland meeting the Childcare needs of families across the city?

The overall occupancy of 0-5 year old places is 89%. Therefore, there are currently sufficient places to meet demand across the age groups.

Some wards currently have no capacity, however, demand is generally highest in summer term.

There is high demand for 0-2 year old places with 12 wards across all localities currently having no capacity for 0-2 year old places.

This is followed by 2 year old places with 3 wards in the Coalfields, 2 wards in the North, 3 wards in the West and 2 in Washington who currently have no capacity for 2 year old places.

These areas are being kept under review via a termly sufficiency data review in each locality/city wide. There is capacity in most wards across all localities for 3-5 year old places, with 2 wards across all localities currently having no capacity for 3-5 year old places.

The vast majority of providers deliver early education entitlements offering flexibility and choice for parents. Our take up of 2 year disadvantaged places has decreased since last year and is 2% lower than the national take up figure.

Although childcare costs have increased over the past year, the average cost in our city remains in line with the national average. Starting in September 2025, eligible working families with children aged 9 months up to school age, will be able to access 30 hours of funded childcare, helping to ease the financial burden and support families more effectively.

The number of children with SEND has continued to increase in Sunderland, as it has nationally. Support for children with SEND in Sunderland is regularly reviewed as a priority.

The quality of early years and childcare provision in Sunderland is high and all providers have access to a wide range of training, support and advice.

We will continue to monitor the childcare market through termly sufficiency surveys and work with providers following the governments strategy and legislation to ensure there are sufficient, high quality childcare places to enable parents to work and to support our most vulnerable families.

## Contact details

For further information please contact:

**Nicola Wardropper, Childcare Development, Wraparound and Sufficiency Lead**

Together for Children, Bunny Hill Primary Care Centre, Hylton Lane,  
Sunderland, SR5 4BW

Email [nicola.wardropper@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:nicola.wardropper@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

Go to our website to find out all the latest information:

<https://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/>

Information for families in Sunderland:

<https://www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/home.page>