

Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report

Spring 2024

Version 1

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Spring 2024 update of the Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report. This paper takes into consideration the current Early Years landscape within B&NES following the announcements made in the Spring 2023 budget. This report will review the number of children residing across the wards within the county, the number of places within our Early Years Providers and a review of demand and supply of places within the Early Years Sector within B&NES. Please note that further information and analysis on the Wraparound Care Programme for school aged children will follow in due course.

When reading this report, it must be noted that the data included within is assumed and may not always represent the current occupancy of Early Years places and spaces. When the data is published and made available it can be up to 12-months out of date. The data provides a snapshot and does not consider other variables which may increase demand and reduce the capacity for Early Years providers to accommodate children, such as working patterns, parental choice, and attending settings across wards and/or neighbouring council areas.

Within this report the term 'places' refers to the number of registered places within a childcare provision which keep within ratios, the term 'spaces' refers to the total number of children accessing the registered places in total, not the number of available spaces within each setting. For example, if a child attended a setting for 2 days, and then another child attended the same setting for 3 days. This would total 1 place within the setting but 2 spaces in total.

To increase the accuracy of the figures provided in this report B&NES Early Years Providers have been contacted to get an understanding of their demand, places, and occupancy of spaces. Early Years places can be difficult to determine with many children attending for a variety of sessions or days across providers. It is also fast moving, with demand changing throughout the course of the year.

2. Number of children aged 0 – 4 years old children within B&NES

The county of B&NES is classed as being 'urban with significant rural areas'¹. According to ONS data between 26% to 49% of the population reside in rural areas. At the time of writing this report, there were approximately 9000² children aged 0 – 4-years-old living across 33 wards within B&NES. The number of children per age group breaks down into the following:

Age of child:	Approximate number of children within B&NES:
0–12-months-olds	1804
1-year-olds	1794
2-year-olds	1782
3-year-olds	1810
4-year-olds	1901

Appendix A provides a breakdown of the number of children living within each ward across B&NES. From looking at this data, the wards which contain the most children within the age ranges of 0 – 4-years-old are Keynsham South, Twerton, Radstock, Paulton and Combe Down. There are approximately just over 2200 children living within these five wards. The wards which house the least number of children aged 0 – 4-years-old within B&NES are Mendip, Timsbury, Oldfield Park, High Littleton and Bathwick. In comparison, there are approximately only 700 children living within these five wards. The disparity between these figures could be due to a variety of factors such as: students living within Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), areas with greater employment opportunities and rural areas with a smaller percentage of housing.

3. Providers within B&NES

Within B&NES there are approximately 168³ registered Early Years Education and Childcare Providers. This number is made up of Childminders, Private, Voluntary, or Independent (PVI) settings and Schools who offer a nursery class predominantly within the school grounds.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

³ <https://livewell.bathnes.gov.uk/search-childcare-providers>

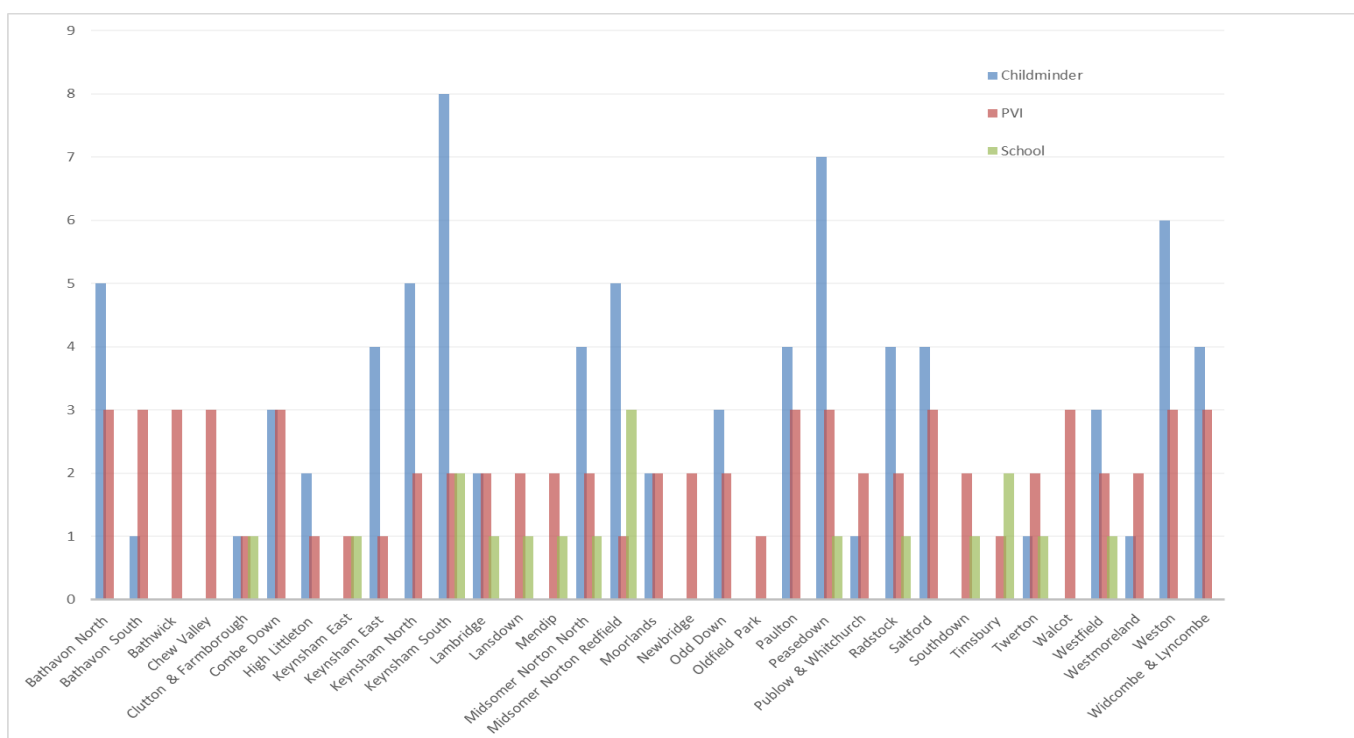
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The breakdown of these settings is as follows:

Type of setting:	Approximate number of providers:
Childminder	80
PVI Settings	70
Schools	18

These Early Years Education and Childcare Providers are spread across the wards within B&NES, there are some wards where there are more providers compared to others. The wards with the highest number of childcare providers are Keynsham South, Peasedown, Weston and Midsomer Norton Redfield. The wards with the lowest number of Early Years Providers are Kingsmead, Oldfield Park, Chew Valley, Clutton and Farmborough and Southdown.

The graph below shows the different wards and where Early Years Education and Childcare Providers are located across the wards within B&NES.



From the 168 registered providers considered above, 58% of the providers are open all year round which equates to roughly 51 weeks of the year and 42% of the providers considered above are open term-time only, which equates to 38 weeks of the year.

All 168 settings are registered with Ofsted and 63% of settings have attained an Ofsted rating of “Good”, 15% of settings have attained the Ofsted rating of “Outstanding” and

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only 1% have the rating of “Requires Improvement”. The last 22% of providers are either new or have not yet had a rating provided by Ofsted due having no children registered within their setting at the time of their Ofsted inspection.

Out of the Early Years settings included above, 63% of providers offer places to children aged 0- to 23-months, 89% of providers offer places to children aged 2 and 97% of providers offer places to children aged 3 and 4. The remaining 3% of providers not included in this figure include a baby-only unit and providers who did not disclose if they offer places to 3- and 4-year-old children.

Within a setting, each space may have more than one child taking the place if that child is only attending the setting part-time. Therefore, a formula can be applied which estimates how many children are utilising each place and provides an estimated number of spaces within a childcare provider. Naturally, this number will vary over time and additional factors should be taken into consideration such as staffing, keeping within ratio numbers and popularity of days. Looking across all registered providers with B&NES there are approximately 5200 childcare spaces being offered across the 168 providers. From the individualised information that we know B&NES estimates that there are approximately 770 spaces for babies aged 0–2-year-olds, 1430 spaces for toddlers aged 2-years-old and 2930 spaces for children aged 3-4-years-old.

The number of spaces offered by the Early Years providers differs depending on the type of setting and the facilities that they can offer. Childminders on average can offer a capacity of 6 spaces daily, whereas some PVIs can offer up to 160 spaces per day across the age groups. Naturally, these places and the number of children accessing the different age brackets will vary due to parent's working patterns, demand for certain days and part-time attendance patterns amongst other factors.

Please see Appendix B which details a breakdown of where these childcare spaces are located across B&NES. The spaces detailed do not refer to spaces being available, but in fact the total number of spaces available in a setting which children are utilising.

4. Early Years Entitlement Funding

The Early Years Entitlement (EYE) funding has been available since the 1990s and has been expanded over the subsequent decades to a point when all 3- and 4- year-old children were universally able to access 15 funded hours of childcare across England. This was then later expanded in 2017, to include the funding for Working Families. A child could then access an additional 15 funded hours if the family met the eligibility criteria, therefore providing these families with a total 30 funded hours per week.

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In the 2023 Spring Budget, it was announced that Early Years Childcare Entitlements would be expanded to children aged 9 months over the following three stages:

- from April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds were able to access 15 hours of Early Years Entitlement per week (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's birthday,
- this offer is then extended from September 2024 to parents who have children aged 9-months and above. This funding will be accessible from the term after their child turns 9-months-old; and
- finally, from September 2025, working parents will be able to access 30 funded hours per week (over 38 weeks a year) for children aged 9-months to 4-years-old.

4.1 Early Years Entitlement for 3-and 4-year-olds

B&NES have been offering children and their families the universal hours and the extended 30-hours since both schemes were launched.

Currently B&NES have approximately just over 3100 3- and 4-year-old children accessing Early Years Entitlement across the wards. This number can be broken down to identify approximately 1400 are accessing their universal entitlement and 1700 of these children are accessing their universal entitlement and the Working Families Entitlements.

From looking at the approximate number of children via the birth data and using the latest figures from the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), these figures would indicate that 93% of 3- and 4-year-olds within B&NES are accessing and attending a registered Early Years Setting. It is worth noting that this percentage of 3- and 4-year-old children accessing funded early education has been decreasing over the last few years. This can be attributed to many factors such as the pandemic, an increase in flexible working patterns, hybrid working models and parents choosing to send their children to settings closer to home rather than on their commuter route.

4.2 Early Years Pupil Premium

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) has been available for children aged 3- and 4-years-old since April 2015.

From April 2024, EYPP is now payable for all EYE children aged 2-years-old and upwards and from September 2024, EYPP will be payable for all EYE children aged 9 months to 4-years-old.

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EYPP is usually paid for families on low income and other income related benefits. It is also payable for children who are currently looked after, adopted or with a Special Guardianship Order and are being looked after by the Local Authority.

The EYPP funding is targeted to help narrow the gap in attainment between the children in low-income families whose learning outcomes from pre-school through into school and beyond are typically lower than the rest of their peer cohort.

Since the expansion of the Early Years Entitlements, B&NES have seen the number of children claiming EYPP increase to just over 350 children. B&NES continue to promote the EYPP funding to all providers to ensure that all children who may be entitled to this additional funding are in receipt of it.

4.3 Disadvantage funding for 2-year-olds

In 2013, the DfE extended the Early Years Entitlement to include 2-year-olds from disadvantaged families to access 15 funded hours. This funded childcare can be taken in playgroups and pre-schools, nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools, in children's centres or with childminders.

Currently B&NES supports and provides funding to just under 300 disadvantaged 2-year-olds. These children are currently accessing places in PVI settings, childminders, and a proportion of school settings.

There are still a percentage of children who are recognised as being disadvantaged within B&NES and who are not accessing funding that they are deemed eligible for.

Engagement with these families takes place regularly and correspondence is sent out to the prospective families informing them of the funding options that are available. From reviewing our internal data, the number of children B&NES who are entitled to the 2-year-old disadvantaged funding is decreasing which means that more parents may be working and will start to be able to access the new Working Families Early Years Entitlement funding for their children within early years settings.

4.4 Early Years Entitlement Funding for 2-year-olds

From the 1st April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds have been able access 15 hours of Early Years Entitlement per week (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's birthday.

From looking at and reviewing our internal data at the time of writing this report, a total of 896 codes were provided to B&NES to claim the Early Years Entitlement from the

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1st April. This translates to 94% of codes applied for being used within childcare settings.

When looking at the approximate number of 2-year-olds across the whole county alongside the 2-year-old disadvantage funding and new Working Family Entitlement, a total of 67% of 2-year-olds are accessing and attending a place within a registered Early Years Setting.

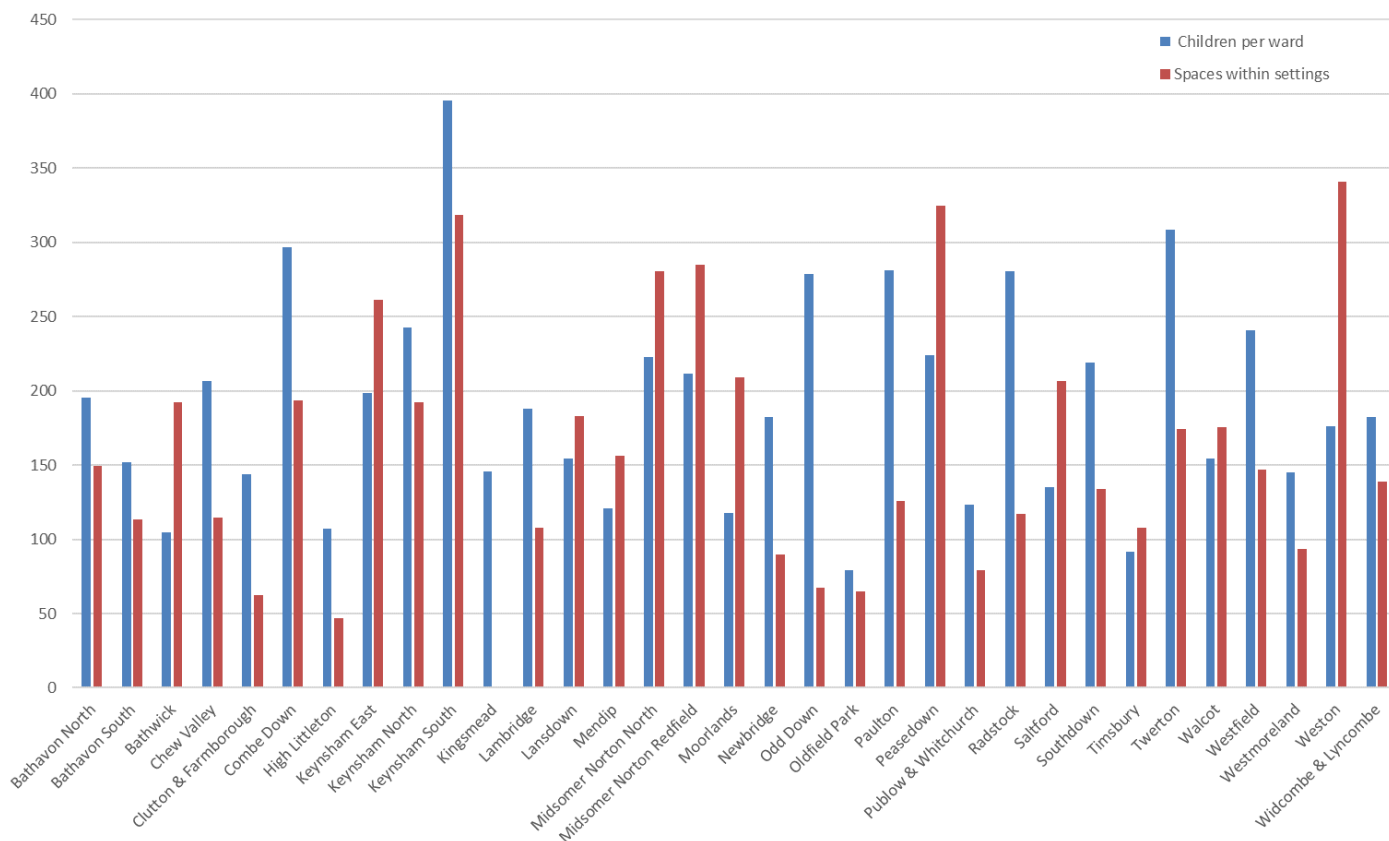
4.5 Early Years Entitlement funding for children aged 9-months-olds

Working parents with children aged 9-months-old and over by the 31st August 2024 can apply for their Early Years Entitlement Code from the 12th May 2024. This will allow these families to access 15 funded hours with a registered childcare provider from 1st September 2024.

Based on the take up rate of the 2-year-old Working Families Early Years Entitlement, we are expecting a similar percentage of children aged 9-month-olds to 23-month-old to take up this funding. Over the next few months, the true number of children aged 9-months plus claiming their EYE will become clear and this report will be updated accordingly.

5. Sufficiency of Places Available

The number of total spaces across the wards have been compared with the number of children within each ward who would be looking to utilise a childcare place and inputted into the graph below:



From looking at this graph and the data included 12 out of the 33 wards offer more spaces within their settings than the number of children residing within the wards who are looking to utilise a childcare place. The five wards with largest number of spaces for children within their settings are Weston, Bathwick, Moorlands, Saltford and Peasedown. In contrast, the wards with the lowest number of spaces within settings are High Littleton, Clutton and Farmborough, Radstock, Odd Down and Kingsmead.

Just over half of the wards within B&NES have a larger number of children residing within the area compared to the number of spaces within providers from the same ward. For these families who are requiring childcare, it is most likely that they will need to look further afield into neighbouring wards to access available childcare provision.

Looking at the total spaces available and the number of children across all the wards, theoretically there are enough spaces for the total number of children residing across the wards. Naturally, this data does not consider additional factors such as parent's working patterns, availability of particular days (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday being the most popular and Mondays and Fridays being the least popular), preference of settings and those families commuting into or out of the county. Families may therefore struggle to find a space and location of setting that suits their needs, meaning

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that they are unable to take up a place within their chosen setting or location parameters.

The total number of spaces is also determined by what the Early Years Education and Childcare Providers can offer and accommodate in terms of staffing and ratios, places within rooms and for those children with additional needs. From looking at the numbers earlier on in this report, there are a higher number of babies born than places available and so it is probable that there will be shortage of places and spaces available for baby places within settings.

It must also be noted that most settings have waiting lists, so although the data is showing that the settings have sufficient spaces, many of these spaces are already filled and so the number of actual available spaces will vary across settings and wards. This data will fluctuate regularly as children move into, out and around the settings.

Many waiting lists are for babies who are waiting to start within a setting or babies that are yet to be conceived. Some babies are on more than one waiting list with different providers and so the true number of babies currently waiting for a place is difficult to determine at present. As we continue to work through the Early Years Entitlement Expansion, data will become available of the numbers of working families applying for and accessing the funding for their children aged 9-month-olds plus. This will then provide us with a clearer picture of the demand and how this reflects on the whole landscape.

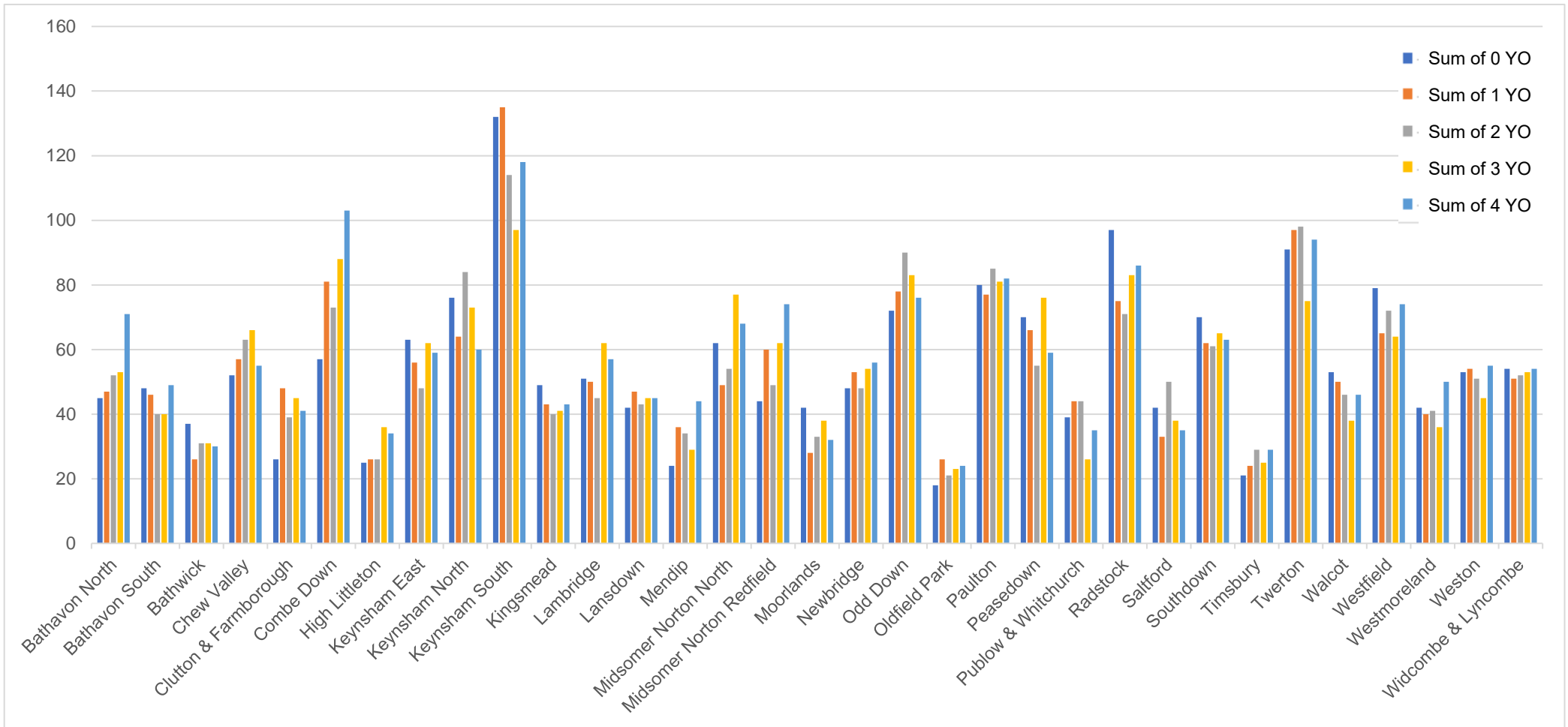
The Department for Education (DfE) have also provided data and a forecast on the supply and demand of childcare places. This information is located within Appendix C.

6. Future Prospective Places and New Settings

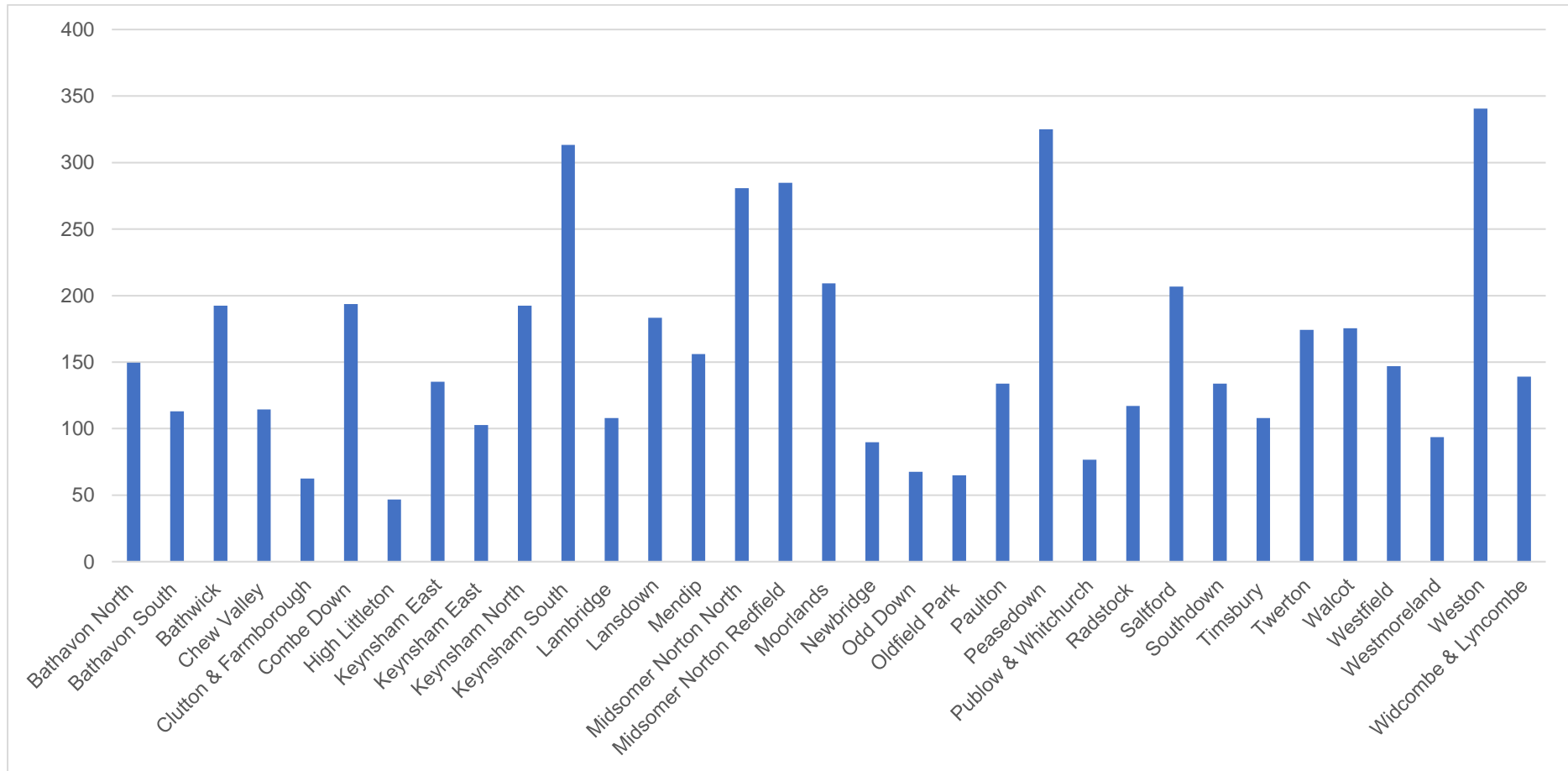
Looking to the future, B&NES have recently received enquiries from current providers investigating the expansion of new spaces in current settings, looking to open a second setting, and new settings putting in planning applications to create brand new settings.

All these proposals are in the early stages and B&NES are hopeful that they will come to fruition. This report highlights the areas where it may be better for perspective providers to consider. The DFE have allocated councils with a limited amount of capital funding to help stimulate additional provision which will be allocated in 2024 and 2025 which will help to address some of the deficits discussed in this report.

Appendix A: Number of children per B&NES Ward



Appendix B: Total number of childcare spaces across B&NES



Appendix C: DfE Data

DfE have provided B&NES with a data forecast of the current Supply and Demand across the 33 wards. This information and evidence provides an indicative view of the level of demand in B&NES and is intended to support local data.

The DfE has made estimates of the number of children expected to take up the expanded Early Years Entitlement at each of the roll out milestones.

The table below summarises the top 5 wards where DfE predict there will be the highest and lowest demand for childcare places by September 2025:

	Highest Level of Demand per Ward:	Lowest Level of Demand per Ward:
1)	Keynsham South	Timsbury
2)	Midsomer Norton North	Midsomer Norton Redfield
3)	Saltford	Oldfield Park
4)	Combe Down	Lambridge
5)	Weston	Publow and Whitchurch

The table below summarises the top 5 wards where the DfE believe there will be the highest and lowest supply of childcare places by September 2025:

	Highest Level of Supply per Ward:	Lowest Level of Supply per Ward:
1)	Keynsham East	Odd Down
2)	Combe Down	Timsbury
3)	Saltford	High Littleton
4)	Weston	Radstock
5)	Walcot	Lansdown

Therefore, from looking at the DfE Data and their results of calculating the difference between demand and supply of childcare places verses the number of children eligible for those places leaves the following areas with shortfall: Keynsham South, Odd Down, Midsomer Norton, Lansdown and High Littleton and the following areas with a surplus of childcare hours and places: Keynsham East, Newbridge, Bathavon South, Bathavon North and Chew Valley. Consideration should be given that some of these wards neighbour one another, therefore families will be able to access childcare places across wards.