

Croydon's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022

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1. Summary

Croydon Council is required by law to 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents'. We have prepared this report in order to meet this duty.

Having sufficient childcare means that families are able to find childcare that meets their child's learning needs and enables parents to make a real choice about work and training. This applies to all children from birth to age 14, and to children with disabilities. Sufficiency is assessed for different groups, rather than for all children in the local authority.

In this report, we have made an assessment of sufficiency using data about the need for childcare and the amount of childcare available, and feedback from local parents about how easy or difficult it has been for them to find suitable childcare. We use information about childcare sufficiency to plan our work supporting the local childcare economy.

This report was compiled using data from the Office for National Statistics; Ofsted; the Croydon Observatory; and the Early Years Sufficiency Team. Parent/carer views and views from childcare providers were gathered using surveys on the Council's 'Get Involved' online platform.

At this point in time, we believe we have sufficient childcare available across the borough. However, the recent pandemic and on-going national economic situation is impacting on settings. Many settings are finding it difficult to recruit qualified staff and rising costs (minimum wage, fuel charges, rates etc.) mean that settings are re-evaluating their viability.

Early education is not statutory and, while there is a wealth of research about the benefits of early education, ultimately it is still a parental choice. The rising cost of childcare and availability of hours to suit parents/carers needs ultimately determine whether places are taken up in early years settings. The gap between the hourly government funding rate and what settings *need* in order to continue to offer childcare is widening. The shortfall is then passed on to parents/carers.

A large number of respondents to the parent/carer survey stated that they did not use Croydon's Family Information Service (FIS) which is available as an online service only. We will look at how we can ensure that this service better meets the needs of parents/carers.

There is a growing number of young children being identified as having additional Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Croydon. The Early Years SEND team work to support settings to meet children's needs and ensure that they make good progress.

The Council's Early Learning Team continue to work to support settings in offering high quality early education and childcare to all of Croydon's very young children. Croydon is also developing the Family Hub model with foci on early health and education for under 5s.

2 Demand for childcare

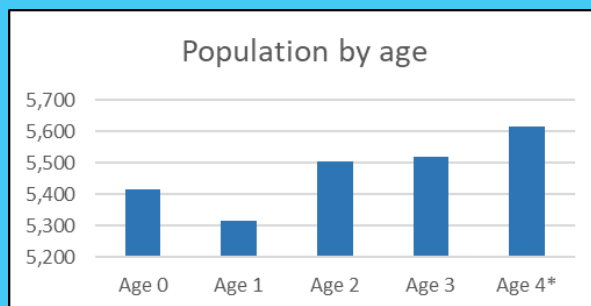
2.1 Population of early years children

In total, there are 25,200 children under the age of five living in Croydon¹. These children may require early years childcare.

Table 1. Numbers by age²

Age	Number of children
Age 0	5,416
Age 1	5,318
Age 2	5,503
Age 3	5,518
Age 4*	5,617

* Some four-year-olds will have started reception



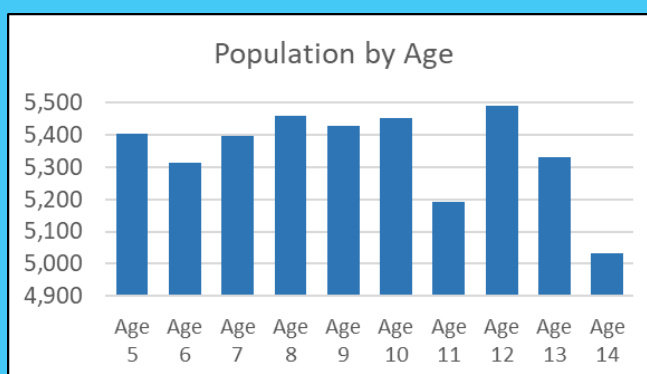
Graph 1.

2.2 Population of school age children

In total there are 37,644 children aged 5-11, and 15,855 children aged 12-14 living in our local authority. These children may require childcare before and after school, and/or during the school holidays.

Table 2. Numbers by age

Age	Number of children
Age 5	5,402
Age 6	5,315
Age 7	5,395
Age 8	5,459
Age 9	5,427
Age 10	5,453
Age 11	5,193
Age 12	5,491
Age 13	5,331
Age 14	5,033



Graph 2.

2.3 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/young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan in our local authority is: 3,993*

Age	Number of children
Birth to school age	11*
Primary school (reception to year 6)	1411
Secondary school (year 7 to 13)	1882
Post secondary school (ages 18-25)	689

Table 3. *as at October 2022.

¹ Census 2021 first results England and Wales

² ONS, Mid Year Population Estimates, 2020, Released June 2021.

- 2.4 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 a setting or school, and it can take some time from needs being identified to an EHC plan being issued. Currently there are 120 children being assessed for an EHCP in the 0-4 age group.
- 2.5 The portage team support pre-school children with complex needs both at home and in settings. Currently 46 children with highly complex needs are being supported in the home and 35 are being supported in settings. This is an increase from last year (2021-22) when 17 children with complex needs were supported in settings).
- 2.6 The Early Years SEND Team also support children with Medical Needs Care Plans (MNCP). These children have complex medical needs (i.e. more than one health need). There are currently 27 children with MNCPs in settings with a further 15 becoming entitled to the Nursery Education Grant funding during the academic year 2022-23.
- 2.7 Many children have SEND but do not have an EHC plan. Pre-school settings apply to the LA for Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) to support children with additional needs. Last year (2021-22), settings received SENIF for 178 children. 124 children have now moved into schools and 54 are still in their settings. 45 children were considered at the October SENIF panel, in 2021-22, the figure for the October panel was 9. This indicates a huge rise in the number of children with SEND in our pre-school settings from the previous year.

3 Supply of childcare

3.1 Number of early years providers and places

There are a number of different types of Early Education and Childcare providers, each offering a variety of options for families:

Table 4

	Provision	Description of offer	Ofsted
PVI's	Day Nursery	Generally open all year round; usual core hours 8am – 6pm; registered with Ofsted to take children from 3 months – 5 years; can be a stand-alone setting or part of a chain of nurseries; often privately run with a single proprietor	Must join the Early Years register if caring for children aged from birth to 31 August after their fifth birthday.
	Pre-school	Usually operate in line with school hours so open term time only, 9am – 3.30pm; often run from church/community halls; often “pack-away” (need to clear rooms on a daily or weekly basis to allow for other uses); Often committee run	Need to meet all the safeguarding and welfare and the learning and development requirements of the Statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage.
	Independent	Operate as part of an independent school; term-time only; hours based on the school day	Not required to register on early years register unless taking children under 2 years
	Childminder	Most commonly a lone practitioner working from own home; all year round provision; usually core hours 8am-6pm;	Must join the Early Years register if caring for children

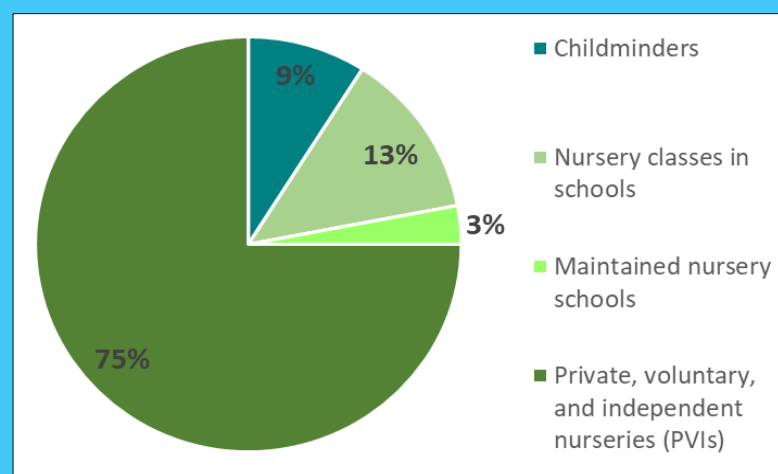
		able to work with assistants; several now affiliated to a Childminding Agency	aged from birth to 31 August after their fifth birthday. Need to meet all the safeguarding and welfare and the learning and development requirements of the Statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage.
School	Maintained Nursery School	Stand-alone nursery school with head teacher and at least one Qualified Teacher Status staff member; qualified school SENDCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator); term-time only; usual hours 9am-3.30pm	Not required to register on early years register unless taking children under 2 years
	Nursery Class	Operate as part of a school or academy, led by school headteacher/principal; term-time only; usual hours 9am-3.30pm	
	Nanny/Au pair	Also known as 'home childcarers'; look after children of any age in the child's own home. Can look after children from 2 different families at the home of one of the families.	Only need to register on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register if want parents to be able to get help with childcare costs.

In total, there are 576 early years childcare providers in our local authority, offering a *maximum* of 10,165 full time equivalent³ early years childcare places:

Table 5. The data in this table was correct in November 2022

Type of provision	Number of providers	Number of registered places
Childminders*	360	900
Nursery classes in schools	43	1297
Maintained nursery schools	5	281
Private, voluntary, and independent nurseries (PVI's)	168	7,687

*Childminders usually have 2 or 3 early years aged children. For the purpose of this table, an average of 2.5 children has been assumed.



Graph 3.

³ Full time places record children who attend for as many hours as a setting is open on a daily basis. In many cases two children may attend part time, taking up a full time equivalent place.

3.2 For private, voluntary and independent nurseries and childminders, the number of registered places represents the maximum number of children who can be on the premises at any given time. In practice, many providers choose to operate below their number of registered places.

3.3 Early years vacancies

In Croydon we ask providers to report vacancies to us so we can help promote them. Not all choose to do this and therefore we do not have current data on the number of vacancies each setting type has. In general, vacancy rates are higher in the autumn, after older children have moved to school. As stated above, many providers do not operate at capacity numbers to ensure a lower adult:child ratio.

3.4 Early years atypical hours

Childcare is most commonly delivered during the typical working day – between 8am and 6pm on weekdays. Some parents require childcare outside these times in order to fit with their work or other responsibilities.

63 childcare providers in Croydon offer atypical hours on weekdays, with the majority of these settings operating from 7.30/7.45am and/or until 6.30pm. All these settings are day nurseries. There are no known settings operating at weekends. It is unknown how many childminders offer childcare outside of the typical hours or at weekends.

3.5 Number of school age providers and places

In total, there are 58 providers of childcare for primary school age children during term time, and 23 providers of childcare for primary school age children during the holidays.

<i>Type of provision</i>	<i>Number of providers</i>	<i>Number of registered places</i>
Breakfast club – primary school	57	2,681
After-school club – primary school	58	2,940
Holiday club	23	1406
Childminders	360	900

Table 6 . *Childminders usually have 2 or 3 early years aged children. For the purpose of this table, an average of 2.5 children has been assumed.

3.6 Other Ofsted registered provision for school aged children include tuition centres and drama clubs. In Croydon there are 21 settings in this category, with capacity for 683 places for after school provision.

4 Funded early education

4.1 Introduction to funded early education

- ❖ All children aged 3⁴ and 4 are entitled to 15 funded hours per week over 38 weeks (570 hours) until they start reception class in a maintained school or academy. This is known as the ‘universal offer’. Parents can access these 570 hours over more weeks, with less hours per week, depending on each setting’s offer. This is known as a ‘stretched offer’.

⁴ From the term after a child’s 3rd birthday

- ❖ Children aged 3 and 4, where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to an additional 15 funded hours per week (1140 hours) until they start reception class in school
- ❖ Some children aged 2 are entitled to 15 hours per week, over 38 weeks per academic year. The criteria for these funded hours is:
 - Families are in receipt of certain benefits (including low income families in receipt of in-work benefits)
 - Child is looked after by a local authority
 - Child has an education, health and care (EHC) plan
 - Child gets Disability Living Allowance
 - Child has left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order
 - Some families who have 'no recourse to public funds' linked to an economic criteria

4.2 Nationally, about 40% of 2 year olds are entitled to this offer, but the proportion varies by area.

4.3 Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement. They may also choose to split them between providers.

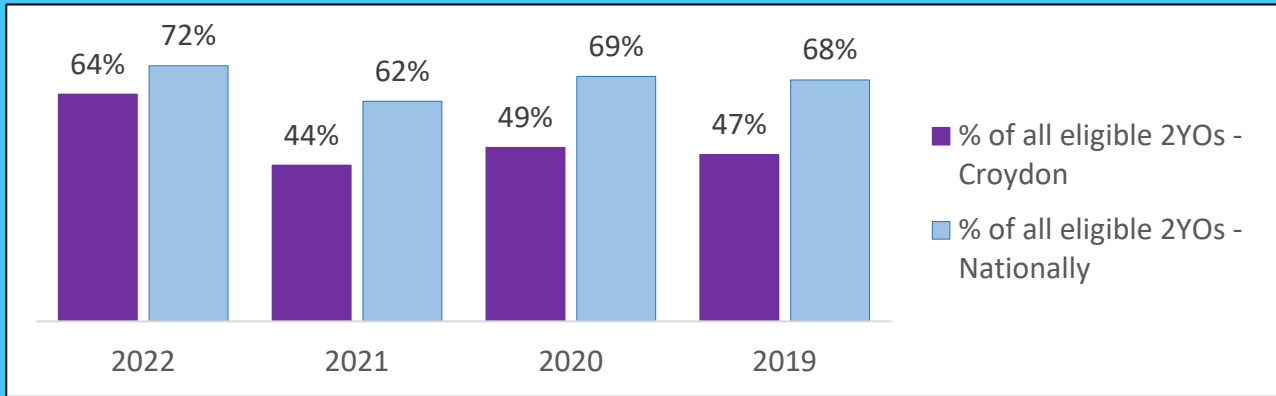
4.4 **Take up of funded early education - 2 year olds (2YOs)**

In Croydon, the number of eligible 2 year olds who take up a funded place decreased dramatically in 2019 and remained low during the pandemic years 2020 and 2021. It is worth noting that the 2022 numbers were recorded from July and do, therefore, not include children who became eligible in September 2022 or those who took up their funded places since July. The uptake of 2YO funded places is shown in the table below:

Year	No of 2YOs eligible for funding - Croydon	No. of funded 2YOs - Croydon	% of all eligible 2YOs - Croydon	% of all eligible 2YOs - Nationally	% of all eligible 2YOs - London
2022*	1410	903	64%	72%	72%
2021	1825	803	44%	62%	50%
2020	2069	1014	49%	69%	59%
2019	2172	1021	47%	68%	56%

Table 7. *Numbers as of July 2022

[https:// explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-provision-children-under-5](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-provision-children-under-5)

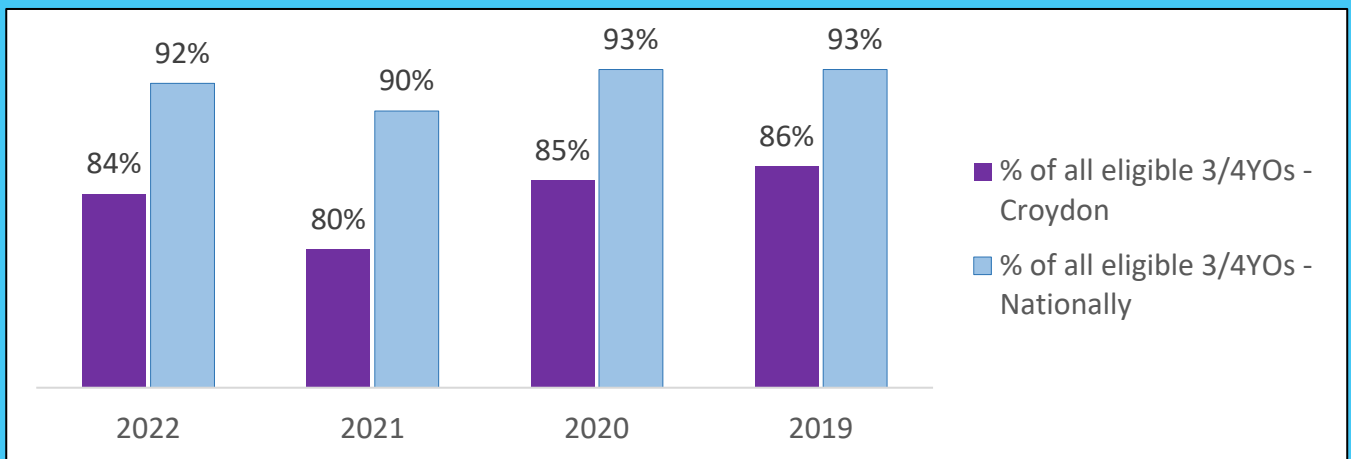


Graph 4.

Take up of funded early education - 3 and 4 year olds – universal offer (15 hours p.w)

Year	No. of funded 3/4YOs - Croydon	% of all eligible 3/4YOs - Croydon	% of all eligible 3/4YOs - Nationally
2022	8,915	84%	92%
2021	8,935	80%	90%
2020	9,624	85%	93%
2019	9,507	86%	93%

Table 8. This data is based on Department for Education data released June 2022



Graph 5. Take up of 3/4 year old funding by year.

4.5 3 and 4-year-old funded entitlement applications (extended hours, 30 hours p.w)

Parents who think they are entitled to a 30 hour extended hours place apply for this online through the Government's Childcare Support website. The same website is used to apply for tax free childcare and parents can apply for either or both. If a parent is eligible, the system creates a code which they can use with their chosen childcare provider. If they are ineligible, they will still be entitled to the universal 15 hours of early education and childcare.

Year	Number of Children Accessing Extended Hours Funding - Croydon
2022	2,092
2021	2,115
2020	2,248
2019	1,986

Table 9. This data is based on Department for Education data released June 2022

4.6 Providers offering funded early education places

Providers are paid directly by government for delivering funded early education. They are not required to offer funded places to parents, but of course parents may choose to use a different provider if they do not. Some providers offer a restricted number of funded places.

5 Prices

5.1 Prices of early years childcare

The Government funding is paid at an hourly rate. Currently the rates in Croydon are: £6.03 per hour for funded 2 year olds and £5.09 per hour for funded 3 and 4 year olds (both the universal 15 hours and the extended hours are paid at this rate). For early years childcare outside the funded entitlements, most settings offer a range of options for families. Prices below are average hourly rates, as 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.

Generally the charges vary by age group in line with statutory adult:child ratios which are 1:3 for 0-2 year olds; 1:4 for 2-3 year olds and 1:8 for 3-4 year olds (1:13 when a qualified teacher or EY teacher is present).

Setting type	Average Hourly Rate 0-2 year olds	Average Hourly Rate 2-3 year olds	Average Hourly Rate 3-4 year olds
Day Nurseries	£6.83	£6.59	£6.42
	high £9.50 - £5.40 low	high £9.50 - £4.60 low	high £9.50 - £4.00 low
Term Time Pre-schools	N/A	£5.99	£5.78
		high £9.00 - £4.00 low	high £9.00 - £4.00 low
Nursery Schools and classes	N/A	£5.87	£5.87
		high £10.00 - £3.50 low	high £10.00 - £3.50 low
Childminders	Average £6.25		

Table 10.

5.2 Prices of school age childcare

For school age children, families can access childcare through breakfast clubs (these are usually run by schools); after-school clubs (again, usually run by schools); childminders and holiday clubs (often using schools as venue by run by independent businesses). The average cost per hour for each of these services is detailed below:

Type of setting	Price per hour
-----------------	----------------

Breakfast club	£4.40
After-school club	£4.65
School age childminder	£6.25
Holiday club	£3.60

Table 11.

5.3 In addition, a small number of tuition centres offer places for children after school and at the weekends/during holidays. These include academic tuition centres and arts centres. The average cost of these is £19 per hour.

6 Quality of childcare in our area

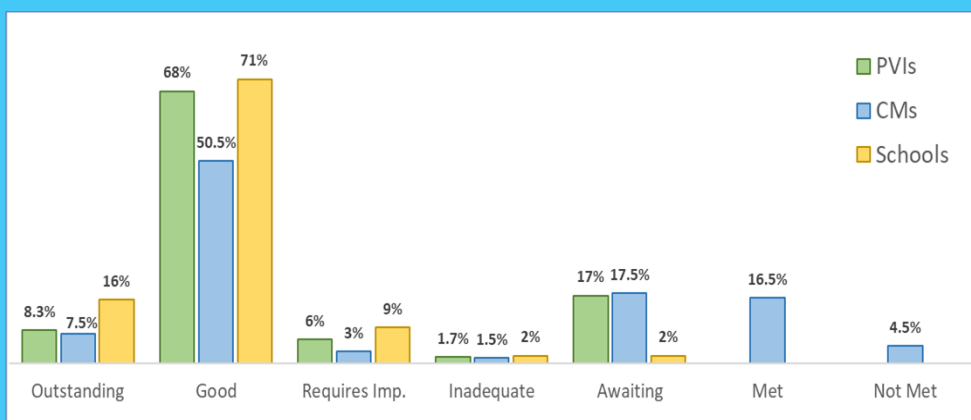
6.1 Ofsted inspection grades

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who give them an overall grade for the quality of their provision. Childminders and private and voluntary providers are on the Early Years Register, and schools and standalone maintained nursery schools are on the Schools' register. The grades for both registers are equivalent. Schools with nurseries have an overall inspection grade for the whole school and most also have a separate early years grade.

6.2 Both schools and early years providers have four possible Ofsted grades: 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement', and 'inadequate'.⁵ Some providers are still awaiting their first full inspection.

6.3 To receive funding from the Local Authority, settings cannot be graded as 'inadequate'; to receive funding for 2 year old places, settings must be judged 'good' or 'outstanding'. Settings are able to offer funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds whilst they are awaiting their first Ofsted grading.

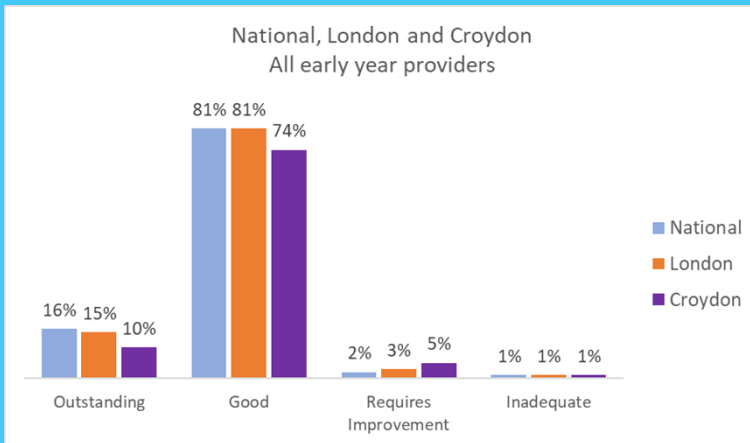
6.4 When providers do not have any children on site at the time of their first inspection, they are given an Ofsted grade of 'met' or 'not met'. This shows whether they are meeting the requirements for Ofsted registration, and usually happens when new providers are being set up. The graph below shows the percent of Ofsted gradings for Croydon settings.



Of the 406 settings which have received an Ofsted grading, 92% are 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and 8% are 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'.

Graph 6. Data correct as of August 2022

⁵ For more information see <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/about-our-inspection-reports>



Croydon has less early years settings judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' in comparison to national and London figures.

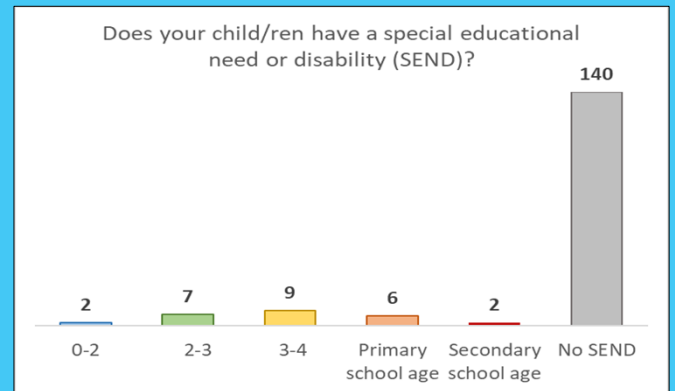
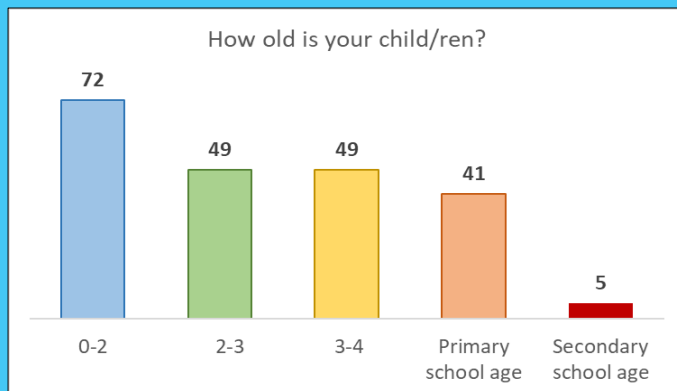
Graph 7.

7 Parents/carers and providers views of sufficiency in our local area (Copy of full responses available on request)

7.1 Parent/carers survey

Parents/carers were canvassed for their opinions on several childcare issues during July, August, and September 2022. A total of 161 people contributed to the survey which was carried out online via the www.getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk website.

Respondents had children across the age ranges. The majority of children did not have a special educational need or disability (SEND)

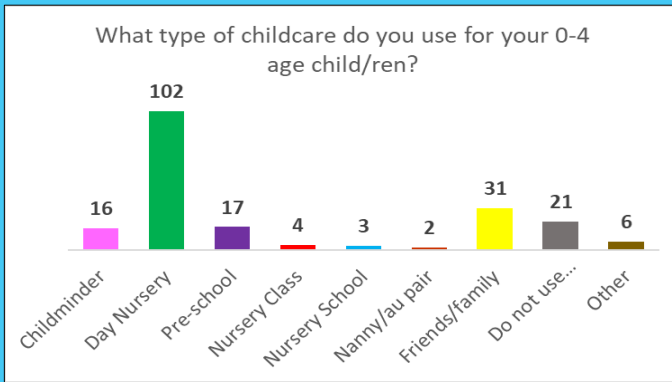


Graph 8.

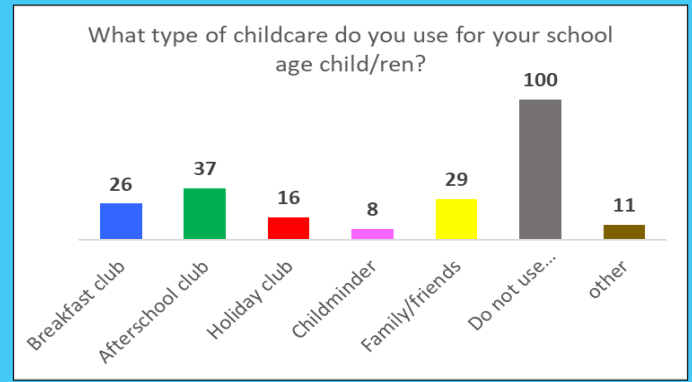
Graph 9.

7.2 Respondents were asked what type of childcare, if any, they used. The majority use all-year-round, childcare in day nurseries (102) for their 0-4 year olds. 31 use friends and family; 7 use schools; 41 use other types of provision; and 21 do not use any childcare for this age group.

For school age children, 26 respondents use breakfast clubs and 37 use afterschool clubs. Many (100) do not use childcare for this age group.

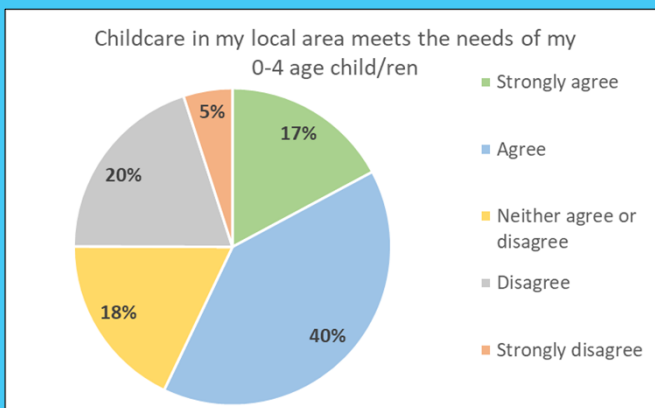


Graph 10.

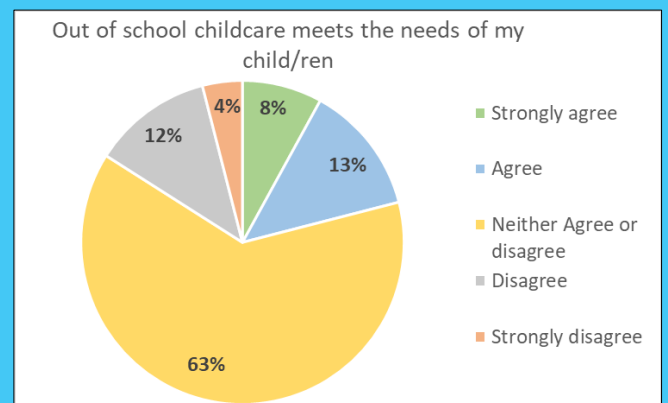


Graph 11.

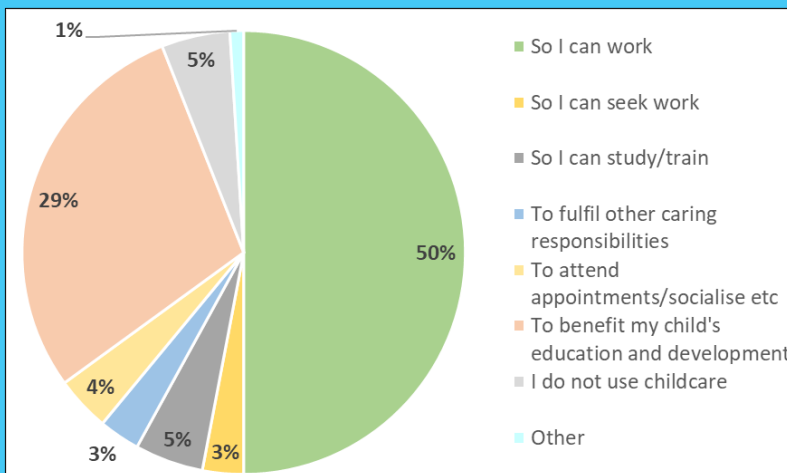
7.3 Respondents were asked whether they felt that the childcare in their local area met their needs and the needs of their children. 57% felt that, for the 0-4 age group, childcare did meet their needs and 25% felt it did not. For children in the primary school age group, 63% said that it neither met or did not meet their needs, reflecting the high number of respondents who indicated that they do not use childcare for this age group.



Graph 12.



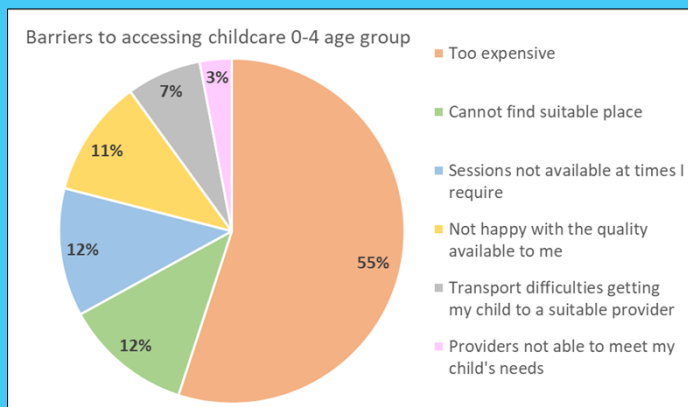
Graph 13.



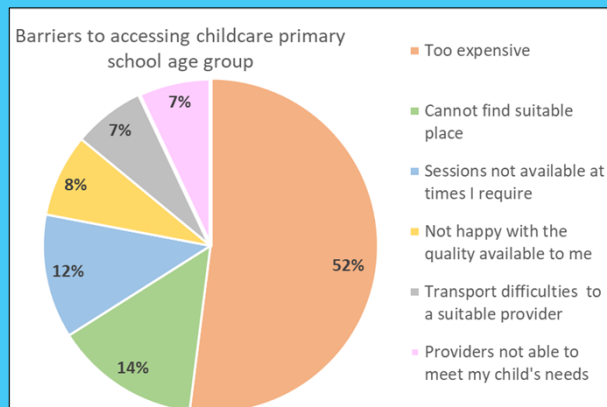
Graph 14.

Respondents gave a number of reasons why they used childcare, with many citing more than one reason. The reason most respondents gave was to enable them to work (50%) and/or to benefit their child's education and development (29%).

7.4 When asked about the barriers to using childcare, respondent cited cost as the main barrier in both the 0-4 and primary school age groups. A similar percent of respondents stated that finding a suitable place and suitable sessions was a barrier for both those with children in the 0-4 age and primary school age groups.

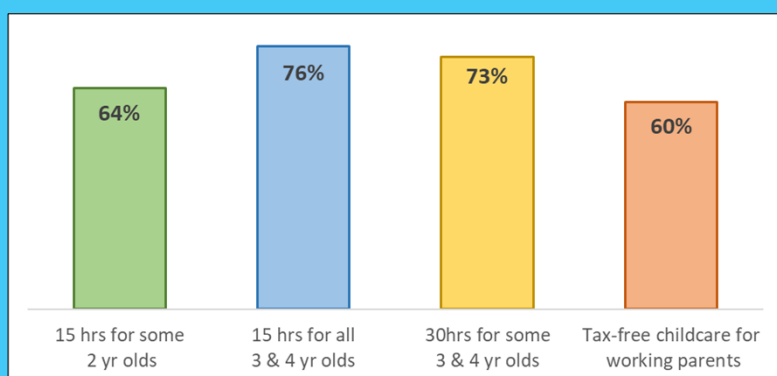


Graph 15.

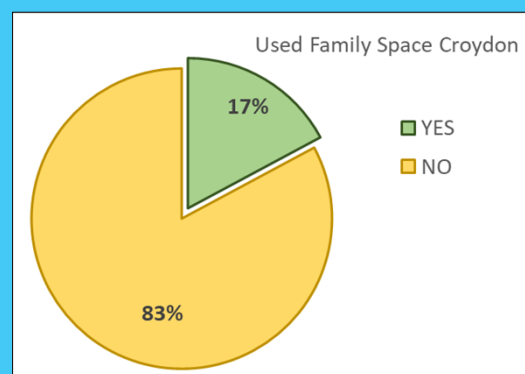


Graph 16.

7.5 All respondents were asked whether they were aware of the various funding and support with childcare costs and also whether they had used the Council's FIS platform, Family Space Croydon, when looking for childcare.



Graph 18.



Graph 17.

7.6 Between 30 and 40% of respondents were unaware of the available funding and tax options. Only 17% had used the Family Space Croydon platform to seek childcare.

7.7 Respondents to the parent/carer survey were asked to expand on the question "Childcare in my local area meets the needs of my 0-4 year old child/children". Below are the comments recorded. Whilst the main issue appears to be the high cost of childcare, there were also comments regarding the perceived lack of childcare for children with additional needs/Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

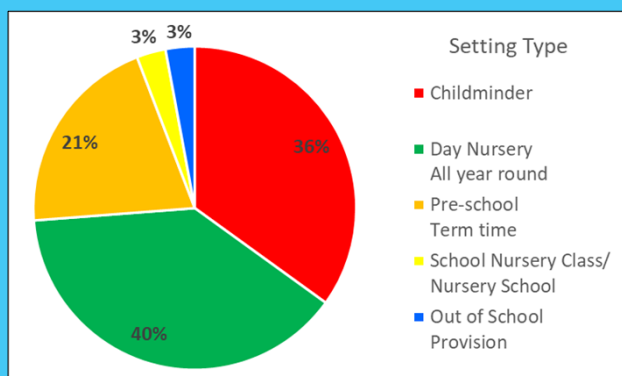
7.8 Similarly, respondents were asked to expand on the question "Out of school childcare meets the needs of my child/children". Comments reflect the same issues as the previous question, namely cost and availability for children with SEND.

7.9 Finally, parents/carers were asked whether they had any further comments regarding childcare in Croydon. Several respondents recognised that the issue of cost is a national issue, directly related to the current situation with the funding allocated to LAs.

(Copy of full responses available on request)

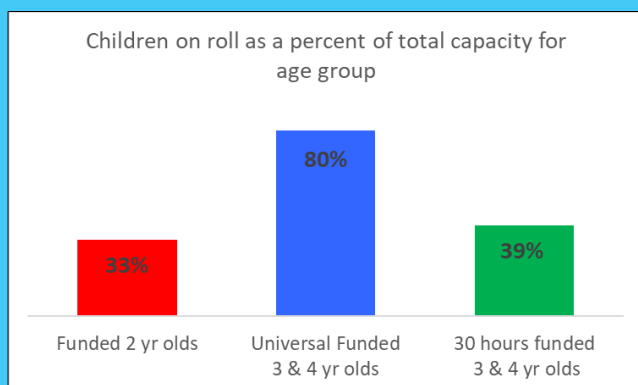
7.10 Provider survey

There were 66 individual responses to the Provider Survey, which was also carried out online via the www.getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk website. The majority of responses were from childminders or representatives of day nurseries:



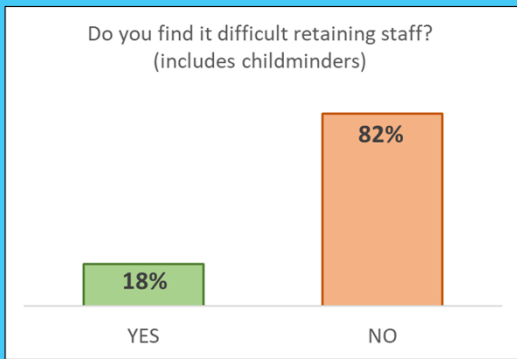
Graph 17.

7.11 It was hoped that the provider survey would give us an indication of how settings had been affected by Covid in terms of their child numbers and the take up of funded and non-funded places. Unfortunately, the sample size is too small to draw any meaningful conclusions, although it would appear that many settings are operating below capacity:

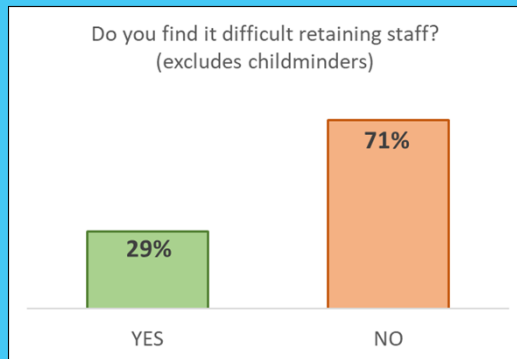


Graph 18.

7.12 Many pre-school settings are reporting difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, so we asked questions in the survey to ascertain the extent of the issue facing the sector. The survey results are surprising, with the majority stating that they have no issues with recruitment or retention. However, childminders tend to be lone workers and removing them from these questions gives a different result.



Graph 18.

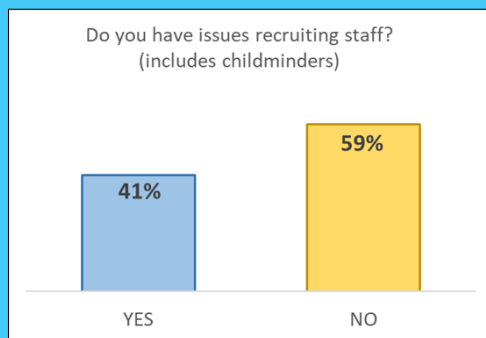


Graph 19.

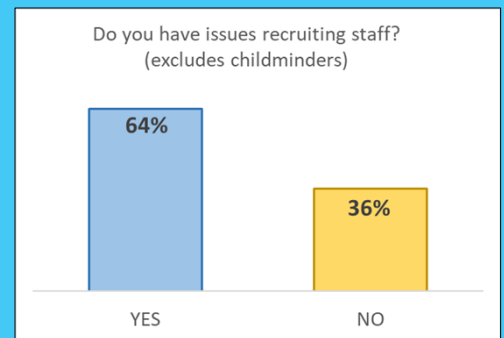
It would appear that staff retention is an issue for many group settings.

7.12 We asked respondents to comment further on retention of staff. Many cited support and well-being as reasons why they do not have any retention issues. Salaries are the main reason respondents felt they were having difficulties in retaining staff.

Excluding childminders from the data on the question of recruitment, it is clear that for group settings this is a concerning issue.



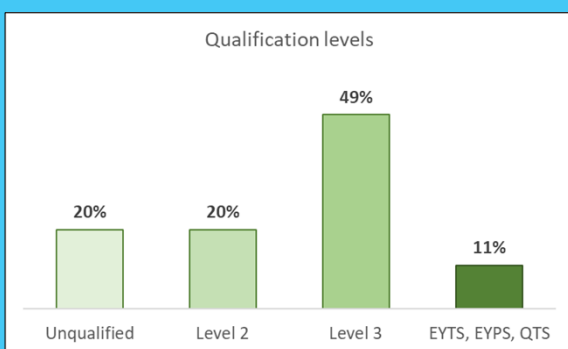
Graph 20.



Graph 21.

7.13 Providers were asked to expand on their answer as to whether they were having any issues recruiting new staff. As with retention, the main concern is with the amount which settings can afford to pay staff however, many respondents cited lack of suitable qualifications of candidates. Candidates simply not turning up to interviews was cited on more than one occasion.

7.14 Providers were asked about the qualifications of staff in their settings. The Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage sets out the staff:child ratios for all pre-school settings (including childminders but excluding schools) as “In settings on the early years register, the manager must hold an approved level 3 qualification or above and at least half of all other staff must hold at least an approved level 2 qualification”.



Graph 22.

Schools and settings which have a staff member with teachers with QTS (Qualified Teacher Status); EYPS (Early Years Professional Status); EYTS (Early Years Teacher Status; or another approved level 6 qualification require a staff:children ratio of 1:1. In classes and pre-school settings (including day nurseries) without QTS; EYPS; EYTS or a Level 6 qualification, the ratio is 1:8 for children aged 3 and over; 1:4 for children aged 2-3 and 1:3 for children under 2.