



Annual Childcare Sufficiency Report 2022

Lincolnshire's Childcare Market

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Introduction

The Childcare Act (2006) requires local authorities in England to ensure a sufficiency of childcare for working parents, parents studying or training, and for disabled children.

Childcare sufficiency relates to the provision of registered childcare for children aged 0-14 years old, and up to 18 years old for disabled children and children with additional needs.

The duties in the act (section 6) require local authorities to shape and support the development of childcare in their area to make it flexible, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of the community. This role is described as a 'market management' function, supporting the sector to meet the needs of parents, children and young people, parents, and stakeholders.

Under section 6 of the act there is a requirement on local authorities to produce an annual sufficiency report on the availability and sufficiency of childcare in their area. This information should be made available to parents and elected members.

To meet section 6 duties, local authorities need to collect and publish information on the supply of provision and demand for childcare in their area. Statutory guidance provides clear indication of what must be included in the annual review, and what should be included.

Section 7 requires local authorities to secure prescribed early years provision free of charge. This provision is for children aged 2, 3 and 4 years of age. In the region of 40% of two-year-olds nationally are legally entitled to free early years provision, and all three- and four-year-olds. The Childcare Act (2016) extends the Childcare Act (2006) and the duty to provide universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds and 30 hours free childcare for 3- and 4-year-olds for working families.

Section 12 places a duty on local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents relating to the provision of childcare, services or facilities that may be of benefit to parents and prospective parents, children, and young people. The Childcare Act (2016) amends the Childcare Act (2006) to allow regulations to require local authorities to publish information of a prescribed interval, description, interval, and manner.

Lincolnshire's sufficiency consultation

The Local Authority completed the annual childcare sufficiency survey with all childcare providers from 25 April to 13 May 2022 to establish supply. The capacity survey ran parallel to a public survey for parents to feedback to the local authority regarding demand.

Provider Survey

The two specific surveys were designed to assess the sufficiency and sustainability of early years and childcare provision being offered in Lincolnshire.

These were:

- Early Years
This included private, voluntary, independent and school provision (EYE funded and non-funded provision) regarding their early year's provision and wraparound childcare (breakfast, after school and holiday) for children aged 4-11 years where applicable.
- Out of School (wraparound childcare)
This included Ofsted registered standalone kid's clubs and schools focussing on out of school childcare (breakfast, after school and holiday) for children aged 4-11 years.

The surveys were widely promoted via social media and email communication directly with schools and childcare providers. It was undertaken through a snap survey platform for accessibility.

The overall response rate was successful:

1. Early Years and integrated Out of school include 677 provider responses, 97% achieved
2. Out of school childcare includes 163 provider responses, 100% received

The survey gathered responses from providers on the services they offer, the age groups they serve, opening hours, hourly cost, number of places, and current take up. For the take up of places we required this information to be based on the week commencing the 25th of April 2022. This represented a sufficiency assessment census week.

Out of school provision around the county comprises of standalone kids' clubs and providers registered to deliver early years, the total responses received across both surveys therefore represents more than the overall number of childcare settings within the county.

Parent Survey

The parent survey was hosted on Let's talk Lincolnshire platform and received almost 50% more responses than the previous survey that was completed.

The aim of the parent survey was to find out if the need for childcare is being met across Lincolnshire, if parents can access the provision they need, when and where they need it.

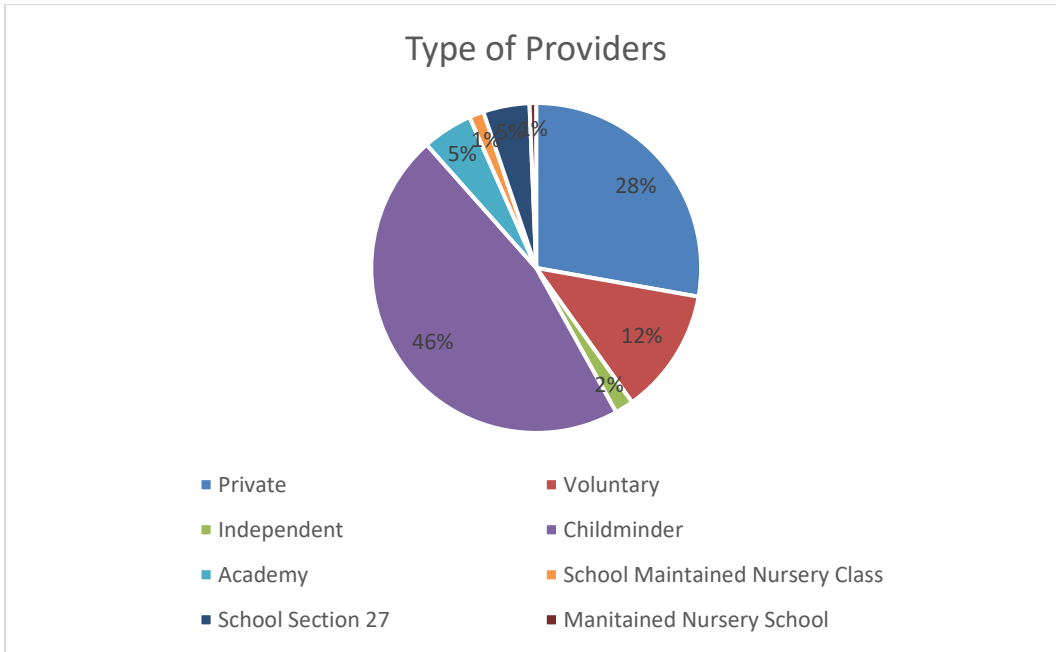
There were 1,481 respondents that completed the parent survey. Most of the parents/carers responding (1,031) had children aged 5-10 years old. 139 parents had a child with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Sufficiency consultation findings

Lincolnshire currently has 770 childcare providers registered to deliver early years, and an additional 100 schools offering before and after school clubs. The tables below demonstrate some of the findings.

Table 1: Type of childcare providers offering early years places in Lincolnshire

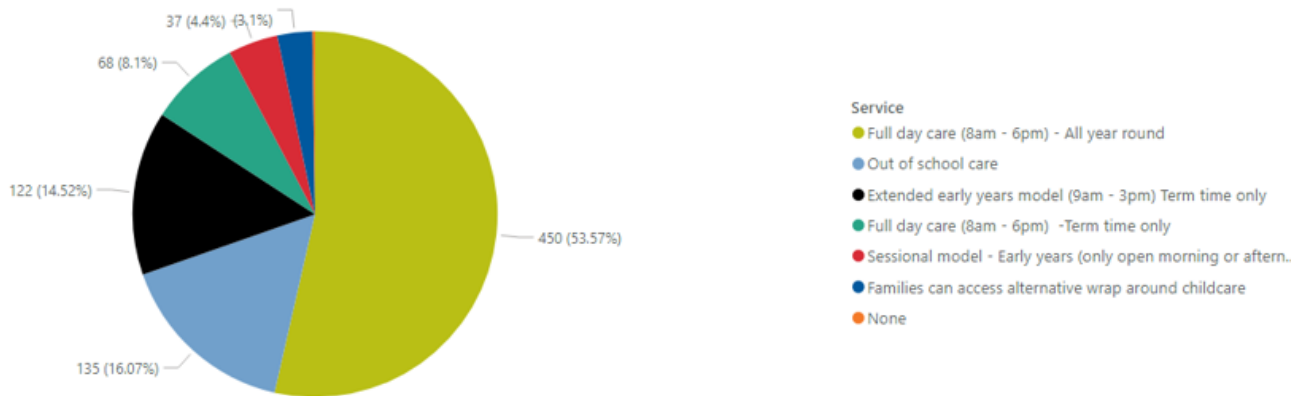
Type of Provider	Number
Private	214
Voluntary	95
Independent	14
Childminder	358
Academy	38
School Maintained Nursery Class	11
School Section 27	35
Maintained Nursery School	5
Total	770



A large proportion (88%) of the early years provision in Lincolnshire is delivered by Private, Voluntary, and independent providers, including Childminders. Compared with 12% of provision being delivered by schools.

The local authority’s ability to foresee changes with the private, voluntary and independent sector can be more challenging due to the volatility of the market. It is therefore essential that the local authority maintains a strong relationship with the sector to ensure consistent communication, and to gather updates on the sustainability of the provision being delivered to children and families across the county.

Table2. Service delivery across the sector



450 providers currently deliver a full day care model which supports working families. Across several years, there has been a significant shift from sessional delivery models to all-year-round places being offered. This was developed further when the Government introduced 30 hours funded childcare and working parents which required many settings to extend the hours they offer.

Before and after school childcare is also utilised as a wraparound provision for early years children where sessional day care or childminders may be offering term time only 9am-3pm delivery models.

Table 3: Before and after school provision for 4–11-year-olds

4-11 year olds - Before school



4-11 year olds- After school



The data shows there is some spare capacity within out of school childcare. The spare capacity we see across the county is being reduced by settings ability to secure suitable staff. Nationally, we are seeing a workforce crisis where more people are leaving the sector than joining. Like Lincolnshire, other counties are reporting the impact the crisis is having on their duty to secure sufficient childcare places.

Most schools signpost families to local holiday provision or activity-based clubs within the community. This is not generally delivered by the school themselves. However, there are several schools now starting to deliver holiday provision, with the introduction of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. The HAF team have identified some key geographical gap areas where there is no provision that has signed up. We have the data and knowledge of where existing Out of school Childcare providers may be willing and able to deliver HAF which has been shared.

Methodology for Place Planning

There is no national formula for measuring childcare sufficiency, so this has been locally developed. The service has a deep understanding of the sector and the communities it serves, this experience and knowledge was used to create a modern methodology of need. As with all data analysis and interpretation, coupled with local knowledge, parental voice and sector information are key to understanding the market position.

The following statements are used to ascertain our market position and are used on the new reports within the Microsoft Power BI data system.

Occupancy Levels: A summary showing the full-time equivalent places offered, and the take up of those places during the survey week, given as a percentage. Week commencing 25th April 2022. Sufficiency capacity benchmarks are based on occupancy levels (e.g., number of places taken compared with those offered). Where capacity is up to 74% it is shown in green as having sufficient, 74%-81% is shown in amber and above 81% is insufficient shown in red. This is summarised for under 2 years old, 2-year-olds, 3- and 4-year-olds, before school care, after school care and holiday care; by county, district, children’s centre reach area and ward levels.

Market Sustainability: Using provider occupancy information as a benchmark to inform the sustainability position of the market (collected week commencing 25th April 2022), this table shows a summary of the full-time equivalent places offered and the take up of those places during the survey week, given as a percentage. Where there is a sustainability concern, where below 61% of places are taken, this is shown as red, where 61%-74% of places are taken, this is shown in amber and an area with 74% take-up and above is deemed to be sustainable and is shown as green. This is summarised for under 2 years old, 2-year-olds, 3- and 4-year-olds, before school care, after school care and holiday care.

Sufficiency Need: A summary showing daily places offered, the population actual sizes, and the estimations for future years (population growth) and the number of preschool children that may come from new housing developments. The percentage capacity for the expected populations to take up places (20% of under 2 years old, 45% of 2-year-olds and 70% of 3- and 4-year-olds), and the shortfall between the places available and the expected population to take up places. For under 2 years old, 2-year-olds, 3- and 4-year-olds; and by county, district, Children’s Centre, and ward levels. Places needed for out of school care cannot be determined in the same way as early years and therefore the need is assessed by a combination of occupancy levels, parental demand, service knowledge and school sizes.

Table 4. Occupancy Levels

District Name	FTE Under 2 places	Percentage Under 2 Take up	FTE 2 year places	Percentage 2 Take up	FTE 3 & 4 places	Percentage 3 & 4 take up	FTE Before school places	Percentage before school take up	FTE after school places	Percentage after school take up	FTE Holiday care
Boston	896	53.7 %	2346	51.3 %	4541	65.1 %	3537	57.1 %	2987	61.6 %	1862
East Lindsey	1782	58.5 %	3533	64.6 %	8642	71.9 %	4922	65.3 %	4638	63.1 %	2932
Lincoln	1631	60.9 %	3022	62.1 %	6534	72.3 %	4069	75.2 %	3409	77.0 %	2576
North Kesteven	2390	72.1 %	4049	68.9 %	8146	77.9 %	8974	67.3 %	9116	68.0 %	4789
South Holland	922	99.0 %	1791	75.7 %	4514	87.6 %	3513	64.6 %	2588	76.3 %	2207
South Kesteven	3263	67.6 %	4893	67.3 %	11141	78.6 %	7084	57.8 %	7643	62.2 %	4822
West Lindsey	1469	68.8 %	3263	66.2 %	6857	75.1 %	5130	51.7 %	5289	54.9 %	2671
Total	12353	67.8 %	22897	65.3 %	50375	75.6 %	37229	62.7 %	35670	65.1 %	21859

Current data from the childcare providers demonstrates some available capacity within the market, with pressure points. Whilst some Districts appear overall to have capacity, the data indicates that in some Children’s Centre reach areas, there are significant sufficiency gaps that require attention.

Table 5. Market Sustainability

FTE Under 2 places, Percentage Under 2 Take up, FTE 2 year places, Percentage 2 Take up, FTE 3 & 4 places, Percentage 3 & 4 take up, FTE f

BY DISTRICT NAME

District Name	FTE Under 2 places	Percentage Under 2 Take up	FTE 2 year places	Percentage 2 Take up	FTE 3 & 4 places	Percentage 3 & 4 take up	FTE Before school places	Percentage before school take up	FTE after school places	Percentage after school take up	FTE Holiday care
Boston	896	53.7 %	2346	51.3 %	4541	65.1 %	3537	57.1 %	2987	61.6 %	1862
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South Holland continues to be an area where there are limited places available for both under 2 years and 3- & 4-year-olds. Any provider with an occupancy level of 75% or above is deemed at full capacity based on delivery models and staffing levels required to deliver FTE places.

Table 6. Sufficiency Need

2 year olds, Under 2, 3 and 4 year olds, Places for under 2, Places for 2 year olds, Places for 3& 4 year olds, Percentage for Under 2, Shor...

BY DISTRICT NAME, CENTRE NAME

District Name	Places for under 2	Under 2	Percentage for Under 2	Shortfall Under 2	Places for 2 year olds	2 year olds	Percentage for 2 year olds	Shortfall 2 year olds	Places for 3& 4 year olds	3 and 4 year olds	Percentage for 3 and 4 year olds	Shortfall 3 and 4 year olds
Boston	178	1388	64.1 %	-100	468	797	130.5 %	109	907	1169	110.8 %	89
East Lindsey	358	2145	83.4 %	-71	709	1143	137.8 %	195	1732	1741	142.1 %	513
Lincoln	330	1945	84.8 %	-59	615	959	142.5 %	183	1318	1471	128.0 %	288
North Kesteven	489	2009	121.7 %	87	823	1038	176.2 %	356	1644	1651	142.3 %	488
South Holland	187	1790	52.2 %	-171	361	965	83.1 %	-73	906	1434	90.3 %	-98
Crowland CC	9	148	30.4 %	-21	37	75	109.6 %	3	70	101	99.0 %	-1
Holbeach CC	59	443	66.6 %	-30	125	230	120.8 %	22	229	366	89.4 %	-27
Spalding CC	91	943	48.3 %	-98	139	520	59.4 %	-95	462	761	86.7 %	-71
Sutton Bridge CC	28	256	54.7 %	-23	60	140	95.2 %	-3	145	206	100.6 %	1
Total	2504	13360	93.7 %	-168	4638	7056	146.1 %	1463	10165	10754	135.0 %	2637

Overall, there is a shortfall of places for 0-5 years across the county. Whilst in some District areas the 2-year-old places look secure, when we review this by Children’s Centre reach area, we can see gaps, demonstrated here is Spalding CC reach area.

Further analysis of this data can be viewed within [Microsoft Power BI Reports](#).

Parent Survey

Most respondents, 61%, felt they had sufficient childcare to meet their current need. The vast majority of those who felt they needed more childcare required afterschool club places or holiday clubs. The cost of childcare was the most prohibitive factor for families accessing provision.

Specific areas were identified within the parent survey as having a sufficiency pressure, these areas included Nettleham, Pinchbeck, Spalding and Waddington.

Please see [Parent Engagement Report](#) for full details.

Analysis has been completed on the responses provided and shows almost 200 parents found a lack of places locally prevented them from accessing provision. Please view the [Interactive Power BI Tool](#) for details of where these responses were received across the district areas.

Affordability

National data from the [Family & Childcare trust annual report](#) shows that families have seen a 2.5% increase in childcare costs this year. This is largely due to national and living wage increases and pension contributions, alongside possible increase in other expenditure.

The report suggests the UK, the average cost of sending a child under two to nursery is:

- £138 per week, a rise of £7 since 2020.

Table 7. Average hourly cost of a childcare place in Lincolnshire

Age Range	2020	2022	Difference	Increase
0-2 years	£4.56	£4.85	+£0.29	5.9%
2-3 years	£4.57	£4.81	+£0.24	4.9%
3&4 years	£4.48	£4.74	+£0.26	5.4%
4-11 years	£3.94	£4.05	+£0.11	2.7%

In Lincolnshire, the average hourly costs have increased significantly. The cost of childcare was the main barrier to accessing childcare, highlighted by parent respondents.

Childminders tend to charge a day rate which is the same for all age groups which is based on their staff to child ratios, which is different to a day nursery or pre-school provision.

Most parents are able to access support with paying for childcare costs for children aged 0-14 years, including from 30 hours funded childcare for three- and four-year-old’s with working parents in England, and Tax Free Childcare.

Tax-Free childcare was introduced in 2017 and aims to provide 20% support on childcare costs up to £2,000 per year for each child (and up to £4,000 for disabled children). Eligibility criteria apply, including upper and lower household income thresholds. This can be used to support the costs in addition to a child's funded entitlement.

Government offers to support childcare costs are widely promoted in Lincolnshire using the [Childcare Choices website](#).

Childcare providers utilise the [Childcare Choices communications toolkit](#) to support the promotion of Tax-Free Childcare and other offers. This has been further promoted through changing lives through childcare programme which is a national initiative to raise awareness of the Government offers available to support families. In Lincolnshire, this is being promoted with all professionals working with families to ensure more families access the available offers.

Early Years Entitlements

All 3- and 4-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds are entitled to 570 hours free early education a year, delivered as a minimum as 15 hours a week over 38 weeks (school term time) but can be taken as a stretched offer with fewer hours over more weeks of the year.

Eligible 3- and 4-year-olds will be entitled to an additional 570 hours free childcare, taking the entitlement for eligible children to 1,140 hours a year. This extended entitlement for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds is commonly referred to as '30-hours childcare'. 30-hours childcare is based on specific eligibility criteria and families apply through Childcare choices/HMRC. 30-hours childcare is aimed at reducing the cost of childcare for working families and supporting parents to work.

The number of children eligible for the extended entitlement is expected to change as working families' employment status changes following the pandemic.

There are currently 644 registered EYE providers, including 555 PVI providers, 52 schools and 37 academies (*as at 28 June 2022*).

In January 2021, Local Authority data from the statistical first release showed Lincolnshire had 90% of 3- and 4-year-olds attending for funded education, compared to 88% nationally. This is expected to have increased in 2022 and data will be released later in the year. The number of children eligible for the entitlements has reduced nationally with a fall in population.

The 2-Year-Old funded entitlement saw a reduction in take-up in the last 2 years. The number of children eligible has declined with 2,161 children eligible in summer term 2022, compared to 2,300 in 2021. By June 2022, the 2-Year-Old entitlement take-up increased to 79% take-up with 1,705 children accessing a place.

Current sufficiency position in Lincolnshire

According to [Ofsted - August 2021 childcare providers & inspection data](#) Lincolnshire had 17,794 childcare places across early years register (0-5 years), compulsory register (5-8 years) and the voluntary register (8 years & older).

Overall, there is a shortfall of places for 0-5 years across the county. Whilst in some District areas the 2-year-old places look secure, when we review this by Children's Centre reach area, there are gaps.

Table 8. Combined Children’s Centre reach area places shortfall within districts

District	0-2 years	2-3 years	3&4 years	4-11 years (Areas identified, number of places to be determined)
South Holland	- 171	-73	-98	Spalding
South Kesteven	-47			Market Deeping
North Kesteven	-16			Ruskington
Boston	-100		-28	
Lincoln	-59			Abbey and Carholme
West Lindsey	-12*			Nettleham
East Lindsey	-71		-10**	Louth & Tattershall

The table above demonstrates the number of places deficient in each district area. This is broken down further by ward within the reports in Power BI. The key areas that sit within the data above where the service has identified the immediate need to develop places are Spalding, Holbeach and Louth. Further information regarding development plans in these areas have been included in the Childcare Delivery Plan.

Some wards show some deficiency of places, these are predominantly in areas where there is little further demand and existing capacity can support future demand, e.g. Mablethorpe Skegness, Spilsby. These areas are carefully monitored.

There are other underlying priority areas, some of which are outlined below. These are being carefully managed by the service with the sector to try to resolve the sufficiency shortfall without the need for additional investment.

1. West Lindsey

*An overall shortage of baby places shows -12 due to an over supply in 2 reach areas of Cherry Willingham and Caistor.

The reach areas of note where there are shortfalls are both CC reach areas in Gainsborough -59 and -21 2-year-old places. The growth area to the South of Gainsborough is where potential future development may be needed to rebalance the market away from the oversupply of term time only places to all year round 0-5. This area has a section 106 agreement of an additional parcel of land with the school land specifically for meeting the sufficiency needs of 0-11 places. and Market Rasen and Middle Rasen which have no places capacity across the 0-5 age range. Scotter has a limited term time only school times only offer remaining following 2 x closures for non-sufficiency reasons.

2. East Lindsey

This area has a shortfall of 0-2 places across all reach areas apart from Tattershall. **Binbrook CC reach area has a shortfall of -10 3- and 4-year-old places.

3. Boston

There is a shortfall of 9 places for under 2-year-olds, 14 places for 2-year-olds and 22 places for 3&4-year-olds. This is due to a housing development in the area and places are being considered with existing market providers.

4. North Kesteven

North Hykeham Ling Moor reach area will need careful monitoring as the demand for places due to the demographic and planned growth.

Waddington Redwood CC reach area more specifically Waddington East Ward has no surplus capacity. This will need further development of 0-5 places. Washingborough CC reach area has a shortfall of -9 0 -2 places in Branston ward.

Housing developments

The sufficiency need table has the housing projection data included and the subsequent estimated children emerging from the planned increases in built until 2027. This will be updated with actuals as they occur. The service will closely monitor the ongoing sufficiency picture as the development come online with the market data.

Table 7: Planned housing stock in Lincolnshire, by district

Local Plan area	District	Planned New Homes		Planned Distribution of Housing (where over 500 homes in one area)		
		Period	Total Number	Annual average	Area	Number
Central Lincolnshire	Lincoln	2012-2036	38,960	1,540	Lincoln - West (Western Growth Corridor)	3,200
					Lincoln - Other	3,487
	Stamford - South				1,450	
	Stamford - West				1,400	
	Stamford - Other				1,434	
	Lincoln - South East (Canwick Heath)				3,500	
	Lincoln - South West (Grange Farm)				1,800	
	Skellingthorpe				651	
	William St Hughes				1,355	
	Billinghay				563	
	Ruskington				549	
	Gainsborough - North				750	
Gainsborough - South	1,400					
Gainsborough - Other	1,736					
Welton by Lincoln	524					
Lincoln - North East (Greethwell)	1,400					
South East Lincolnshire	Boston	7,550	300	Boston - Quadrant	1,515	
				Boston - Other	6,111	
	South Holland	2011-2036	11,125	445	Spalding - North	676
					Spalding - Other	5,860
Holbeach	765					
Crowland	524					
East Lindsey	East Lindsey	2016-2031	7,819	558	Kirton	514
					Long Sutton	608
South Kesteven	South Kesteven	2011-2036	15,625	625	Loft	1,616
					Lofting and Tattershall	549
					Horncastle	683
					Grantham - Spitalgate Heath	3,705
					Grantham - North West (Rectory Farm and adjacent)	1,554
					Grantham - Prince William of Gloucester Barracks	4,000
Stamford - North	1,300					
The Deepings	753					

Source: Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2012-2036 (adopted April 2017) - www.n.kesteven.gov.uk/central-lincolnshire/local-plan
 South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 (adopted March 2019) - www.southeastlincolnshirelocalplan.org/adopted-plan
 East Lindsey Core Strategy 2016-2031 (adopted July 2019) - www.e.lindsey.gov.uk/localplan
 South Kesteven Local Plan 2011-2036 (adopted March 2019) - www.southkesteven.gov.uk/newlocalplan

Market Changes

The local authority monitors the number of childcare places being opened and closed quarterly. This enables the local authority to support areas where any closures could impact on the sufficiency of places required to support the local demand.

Table 9. April 2021- March 2022 open/closures

Reporting Period April 2021 - March 2022	Early Years under school governance	Out Of School under school governance	Early Years PVI	Out Of School PVI	Childminders (Ofsted and Childminder Agency)	Total Number of Providers
Number of providers Open	2	3	14	10	24	53
Number of providers Closed	0	0	13	12	62	87
Difference	2	3	1	-2	-38	-34

Schools that opened Out of School provision have replaced this service from a PVI provider. Lincolnshire has continued to see more childminders resign than become newly active under both regulators. Some of those Early Years providers under PVI registration have been sold to larger chains.

Home carers continue to play a part in the sufficiency of childcare for 0–18-year-olds with families that do not necessarily access traditional childcare options due to requiring more flexibility. In addition to the recorded number of Ofsted places on the Early Years and Childcare register, and those provided by schools. Lincolnshire has 34 registered home carers that provide families with flexible childcare within the home.

Local Intelligence

Alongside the consultation surveys, the local authority also considers live birth data, census data and the requirements of early years childcare needs based on parental demand. Using data from the survey reports alongside local intelligence regarding economic demographics provides us with an understanding of the need for new places. For example, in some areas the context of the methodology used explains the requirements, in other areas, economic development would be required to drive further demand.

Table 10. Census 2021: Usual resident population by age group

Area name	All persons	Aged 4 years and under	Aged 5 to 9 years	Aged 10 to 14 years
Lincolnshire	768,400	35,800	41,200	42,800

School Place Planning

The service has developed stronger links with the school place planning team for both strategic and front line delivery to ensure a common approach, find solutions and explore opportunities for joint developments, surplus capacity of school places and accommodation coupled with the potential utilisation of budgets where there is a combined pressure. This can include where EY and school places are essential, and accommodation is short. A current example of this is Donington on Bain.

Staff recruitment and retention

Analysis commissioned by the DfE in 2021 confirmed that for both group-based and school-based providers, the largest proportion of total outgoings is spent on staff costs, including wages, National Insurance payments and pension contributions. Staff costs accounted for 74% of total costs for PVI providers and 82% of total costs for school-based providers ([Early years recruitment, retention and business planning, April 2022](#)).

In Lincolnshire, a mounting pressure on cost of living, insurance, energy bill prices and the cost of food have all added to childcare providers increasing outgoings. The Government spending review included an increase to the Early Years Entitlement funding available to the sector, however there are still huge inequalities across the country in terms of the amount of funding local authorities receive. Lincolnshire is 1 of 47 local authorities receiving the lowest level of funding in the country.

In the last year, Lincolnshire has experienced several well-established provisions close due to an inability to recruit staff. In addition, the premises and available space within existing provision is not fully utilised due to a lack of staff to cover the child ratio requirements.

Accessibility

Schools, early year's & childcare settings and other organisations that provide services for children, must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that all children have the same play and learning opportunities. The Equality Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (covering children's early education from 0–5) are in place to ensure that all children get the support they need, when they need it, and that all children have every opportunity to reach their potential. Under the legislative frameworks, all children and families have access to an inclusive childcare place.

Universally all families/carers are able to contact the Family Information Service or use the [Family Service Directory](#) to support them in their search for childcare. Where a family or carer contacts the Family Information Service and no resolution to their search is found. A GAP form is completed to raise the concern to EYCC for sufficiency monitoring. The parent survey identified that many families were unaware of the Local Offer and access to the Family Services Directory for information. This is being addressed by the service within the working groups, as part of the Early Childhood Strategy and Family Hubs agenda.

Summary

The development of childcare places has remained steady from March 2021 to April 2022. We have seen the completion of capital projects that had been started prior to the pandemic. This includes a key development to support the housing growth in Bracebridge Heath complete which has seen an extended pre-school convert to offer full day care, all year round this provision is now full and an expansion of new places within new accommodation at Bardney. The new build at Monks Abbey for 2-year-old places has seen a significant uptake of funded 2-year-old places.

Where provision has closed this has been monitored at a localised level for potential sufficiency impact with local solutions having been implemented. This has included where necessary supporting the retention of places with a tender framework.

The outcome of this consultation has demonstrated that Lincolnshire is in a reasonable position in some areas and a difficult /unmet position in others to meet the needs of families, however, there are the following factors to consider:

- There are areas with increasing capacity issues within the marketplace, as outlined above
- The current workforce crisis is placing additional pressure on the availability of places within the market which are not necessarily demonstrated within the survey data
- It is evident that increased costs have had an impact on childcare sectors ability to maintain places across one or more of the age ranges

This has resulted in increased sustainability concerns across the childcare market in Lincolnshire.

The risk is that if staff recruitment and retention does not improve, we may see further closures across all sectors of the childcare market. Through national research it is well accepted that staffing and low levels of funding are intrinsically linked.

There is a consistent number of developments open to the Early Years and Childcare support team. 22 across Lincolnshire varying from full day care to out of school provision. Sometimes in areas where there is an identified need and often enquiries that can be unexpected and require consultation to determine the need. There are several governance model changes throughout the county, including schools taking over existing PVI provision where there are sustainability concerns. None of these developments are within our areas of most concern, such as South Holland, and there is still the need for capital investment to secure additional places.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of registered childminders during the last 2 years. There is a drive within the support service to recruit childminders into the market and encourage a career in childcare more broadly. LCC web pages have been specifically designed to deliver key messages across professionals and partners regarding [Working in Childcare](#)

The Early Years and Childcare Support service will continue to monitor and be responsive to the needs of the childcare market.

Conclusion & Next Steps

South Holland is an area of greatest concern for the local authority. Spalding needs additional places for 0–5-year-olds, all year round to support working families and for eligible children to access their funded 2-year-old entitlement.

Where childcare places can be developed with existing providers or schools, these options are already in motion. For example, Nettleham was an area identified as requiring out of school childcare places from the parent survey. This development is already underway with the school. These developments require minimal funding and will continue to be explored wherever possible.

In addition to childcare developments, the service will be responding to parent feedback on the awareness of the Family Services Directory. As part of the wider Family Hubs agenda, the online systems used to share information to families in Lincolnshire will be explored and improvements will be implemented.

As part of the Early Years and Childcare Support teams next steps, a [Childcare Delivery Plan](#) has been developed to outline the areas across the county that require further development of childcare places and some investment from the local authority to progress this further.