



**Cumberland
Council**

Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2025-2026

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The councils' responsibilities

Local authorities in England have a legal duty to secure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable. These duties are set out under the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2026.

- Duty to secure childcare free of charge for qualifying children of working parents aged from 9 months (the working parent entitlement).
- Duty to secure childcare free of charge for parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds (referred to as the 2-year-olds from families receiving additional support entitlement).
- Duty to secure universal childcare free of charge for parents of 3- and 4-year-olds (the universal entitlement).
- The duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for parents to enable them to work or undertake education or training which could assist them to obtain work, including wraparound care.
- The provision of information, advice and assistance to parents.
- The provision of information, advice and training to childcare providers.

Introduction

The sufficiency assessment provides an overview of the supply and demand for early years and childcare across Cumberland.

Having sufficient provision is essential to meet the needs of families with children under the age of five, whether that is to provide universal early years provision for children aged 3 and 4, or additional hours for working families with children 9 months to 5 years.

Over the past two years, several new government initiatives have been introduced to support the expansion of early years and childcare provision.

Expansion of Early Years Funded Entitlements for Working Families

The expansion of government funded childcare for eligible working parents with children under the age of 3 began in April 2024, the entitlements are now fully available and are detailed below:

- April 2024: Eligible working parents of 2-year-olds could access 15 hours of funded provision per week over 38 weeks of the year.
- September 2024: Eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 2 years could access 15 hours of funded provision per week over 38 weeks of the year.
- From September 2025: Eligible working parents of children aged from 9 months until they start school, could access 30 hours of funded provision per week over 38 weeks of the year).

Some providers choose to offer the funded hours stretched over more than 38 weeks, providing less than the respective weekly entitlement hours over more weeks.

National Wraparound Childcare Expansion Programme

In the 2023 Spring Budget the Government announced investment for a national wraparound programme to support families with primary school aged children (5-11), who need to access wraparound childcare 8am-6pm before and after the school day, during term time.

The governments ambition is to ensure all parents and carers who need wraparound childcare can access this provision by September 2026. The programme aims to create a market that not only meets the current demand but encourages an increased uptake of wraparound in the future.

School Based Nursery Expansion

The Government has also committed to creating further childcare on school sites through the Department of Educations (DfE) Schools Based Nurseries Capital programme. Schools can apply directly to the DfE for capital funding to create additional early years places where their local authority has identified a sufficiency need.

Free Breakfast Clubs

The aim of the government free breakfast club programme is to ensure that all state primary schools offer free breakfast clubs to all pupils. Following the early adopter scheme in 2025 the national roll out of free breakfast clubs will commence from April 2026.

Child Population

There were 50,768 children aged 0 -18 years, with 13,969 children under the age of 5. (2023-2024 birth data and 2024-2025 GP registration).

Age in years	0- 1	1	2	3	4	5	Total 0-5s
Number of children	2237	2270	2281	2344	2433	2404	13,969

There were 594,677 live births in England and Wales in 2024, a 0.61% increase from 591,072 live births in 2023, but still the second lowest number since 2002; the number remains in line with the recent trend of overall decreasing live births year on year. (Data source - Office for National Statistics (ONS))

In 2024, the total national fertility rate was 1.41 children per woman for England and Wales compared to 1.42 in 2023. Cumberland's birth rates continue to be broadly in line with the national picture. Updated data for Cumberland has not yet been published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), they are still reporting by our legacy districts (Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland).

Allerdale	Carlisle	Copeland
1.49	1.51	1.47

Cumberlands Early Years and Childcare Market

Early years and childcare provision for children 0-5 years

On 1st November 2025 there were 239 registered early years and childcare providers, providing early years provision for children under the age of 5.

The market remained stable with a 1.3% increase, largely due to the opening of 3 new day nurseries.

Childminders continue to decline as can be seen from the table below; however, this is lower than the national average of 4% for the same period.

Table 1 - Number of providers by provision type

	1st November 2025	1st November 2024	Percentage change from 2024 to 2025
Childminders	59	61	-1.6%
Day Nurseries and Pre Schools (in the private, voluntary and independent sector)	70	67	4.5%
Maintained Nursery Schools	3	3	0%
School Nursery Classes	107	106	0%
TOTAL	239	236	1.3%

Table 2 - Number of early years providers by provider type at ward level

Ward	Child-minder	Day Nurseries and Pre Schools (in the private, voluntary and independent sector)	Nursery Class	Nursery School	Total
Aspatria	1	1	3		5
Belah		1	1		2
Belle Vue	1	2	2		5
Botcherby		2	1		3
Bothel and Wharrels	2	2	6		10
Brampton	1		4		5
Bransty	1		2		3
Castle		3	1		4
Cleator Moor East & Frizington		1	3	1	5
Cleator Moor West	1	2		1	4
Cockermouth North	2	1	2		5
Cockermouth South		3	2		5
Corby and Hayton	1		5		6
Currock		4	2		6
Dalston and Burgh	1	4	2		7
Dearham and Broughton	1		3		4
Denton Holme	1	5	1		7
Egremont		2	2		4
Egremont North and St Bees	1		2		3
Gosforth	1	3	2		6
Harraby North		2	1		3
Harraby South	1	1	2		4
Harrington		2	2		4
Hillcrest and Hensingham	3	2	2		7
Houghton and Irthington	4	2	3		9
Howgate	1	2	4		7
Kells and Sandwith	1	3	2		6

Ward	Child-minder	Day Nurseries and Pre Schools (in the private, voluntary and independent sector)	Nursery Class	Nursery School	Total
Keswick	2		2		4
Longtown	2	1	5		8
Maryport North	2	1	3		6
Maryport South	4		5		9
Millom	2	1		1	4
Millom Without	3	1	4		8
Mirehouse			2		2
Morton		1	1		2
Moss Bay and Moorclose		1	2		3
Seaton		2	2		4
Solway Coast	2	2	2		6
St John's and Great Clifton	2		2		4
St. Michael's	1	1	2		4
Stanwix Urban	3	2			5
Thursby	3	1	6		10
Upperby	4		2		6
Wetheral		3	2		5
Wigton	3	2	2		7
Yewdale	1	1	1		3
Total	59	70	107	3	239

Childcare provision for children of school aged - Wraparound Childcare

Wraparound childcare is defined as childcare for primary school aged children that operates before and after the school day, usually referred to as breakfast or before school clubs and after school clubs. The Government categorises full wraparound as provision that is at least from 8am to the start of the school day, and until 6pm directly after the end of the school day.

In Cumberland the majority of wraparound provision is provided by primary schools, with some providers in the private and voluntary sector offering drop off and collection services.

Table 3 - Summary of the wraparound provision at Cumberlands 145 primary schools (including infant, junior and special schools)

Type of wraparound available	Number of schools
Full wraparound places provided by the school (a minimum of 10 hours of childcare, Mon-Fri)	36
Full wraparound places provided by the school and alongside local provider/s from the private/voluntary sector (a minimum of 10 hours of childcare, Mon-Fri)	4
Partial wraparound places (at a minimum of 30 minutes before school, plus 90 minutes after school)	59
Schools signpost parents to local private or voluntary sector wraparound providers	7
Schools offer only before school provision, with no after school provision	9
School providing wraparound after school, with no before school provision	1
Schools providing before school provision with some after school provision, but this is not sufficient to meet the partial places definition	27
Schools who do not offer any wraparound provision	2

28 schools have accessed funded through Cumberlands Wraparound Programme Funding, creating new places and extending the opening times of 645 places across Cumberland. Wraparound programme funding will be available to create additional wraparound services until September 2026.

Early Years Funded Entitlements

Early years funded entitlements provide government funded early education and childcare places for eligible children.

All 3 and 4-year-old children and some 2-year-old children whose parents/carers are in receipt of additional support are entitled to 15 hours for 38 weeks a year, 570 hrs per year.

Eligible working parents can get an additional 15 hours of funded provision for their child from the term after their child is 9 months old, therefore they can get up to 30 hours of funded provision, 1140 hours per year.

On 1st November 2025 there were 236 registered early years and childcare providers offering government funded entitlement places provision for children under the age of 5.

Table 4 – Number of providers by type

	Number of providers offering places for 9 months to 2 yrs	Number of providers offering places for 2 yr olds	Number of providers offering places for 3 and 4 yr olds
Childminders	56	56	56
Day Nurseries & Pre Schools (private, voluntary & independent sector)	66	68	70
Nursery Schools	1	2	3
School Nursery Classes	0	35	107
TOTAL	123	161	236

Take Up Rates of the early years funding entitlements

The number of eligible children accessing funded early years entitlements places fluctuates through the year, this is because the majority of 4-year-olds move into school reception in the autumn term, hence the demand is at its lowest and then peaks in the summer term.

The take up rate for all eligible three and four year olds continues to be high at 100% in the spring term of 2025, the national average take up rate was 93%.

The proportion of eligible two year olds - for those receiving additional support (FRAS) was 67% in the spring term of 2025, slightly higher than the national average take up rate of 65%. It is also worth noting that the actual number of eligible children has gradually declined in line with a national decline.

The take up rates for the working families entitlement cannot be reported as a percentage take up, as the number of eligible children is not known.

The number of children accessing funded entitlement hours

Table 5 – Number of 9 month to 2 year olds receiving working families hours

Term	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Number of children	1350	1383	1434

Table 6 - Number of 2 years olds for those receiving additional support (FRAS)

Term	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Number of children	399	357	337

Table 7 - Number of 2 years olds receiving working families hours

Term	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Number of children	1389	1398	1500

Table 8 – Number of 3 and 4 year olds receiving universal entitlement hours

Term	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Number of children	3410	3933	2427
Number accessing the additional working families entitlement hours	2320	2725	1715

Cost of Childcare

The cost of childcare represents a substantial out-going for parents; support is available to parents towards the cost of childcare through a variety of government support schemes.

- Universal Credit Pays up to 85% of childcare costs
- Tax Free Childcare covers 20% of childcare costs
- Early years funded entitlements supports parents to reduce their childcare costs by the number of government funded hours a child receives.

Early years and childcare providers set their own fee structures; the table below represents the average rate of providers based on information providers have given voluntary. There will be variations to costs based on the number of hours used, and any discounts providers may offer. There will also be supplementary costs for additional services such as food and other consumables.

Please note these costs are before the government funded entitlement hours are taken into consideration.

Table 9 - Average hourly rates

	Under 2s average cost per hours	2 year olds average cost per hours	3 and 4 year olds average cost per hours
Childminders	£5.38	£5.36	£5.40
Day Nurseries and Pre Schools (in the private, voluntary & independent sector)	£7.43	£6.76	£6.70
School based Nurseries	£4.80	£4.64	£4.26

Quality of Provision

All childcare providers who are registered with Ofsted are inspected and given a quality outcome. Childminders and private and voluntary providers are on the Ofsted Early Years Register, and schools and standalone maintained nursery schools are on the Schools register. The grades for both registers are equivalent.

The percentage of good and outstanding providers in the private and voluntary sector is 99%, which is just above the national average of 98%. A direct national comparison for schools cannot be made due to changes in the grading system.

From November 2025 the grading system will change for all early years inspections from an overall single grade to a report card system. Individual areas will be given an outcome of exceptional, strong standard, expected standard, needs attention or urgent improvement.

Table 10 – Ofsted Outcomes for Schools and Nursery Schools – as of 1st December 2025

Ofsted Outcome	Percentage
Outstanding	6%
Good	87%
Requires Improvement	5%
Inadequate	1.83%

Table 11 – Ofsted Outcomes for the Private Voluntary Sector as of 1st December 2025

Ofsted Outcome	Percentage
Outstanding	16%
Good	83%
Requires Improvement	1%
Inadequate	0%

Key Priorities for 2026-2027

- Continue with the implementation of the Wraparound Childcare Project to ensure all primary school age children can access wraparound childcare from 8am to 6pm where families require it.
- Support early years childcare providers to expand provision where there is demand for additional places.
- Continue to monitor the supply and demand for early years places following the expansion of the childcare entitlement for working parents.
- Improve the collection and recording of early years and childcare supply data.
- Better utilise the existing information management systems, to improve the accuracy of all sufficiency assessments and government data returns.

For further information contact **EYSufficiency@cumberland.gov.uk**

Appendices A

Definitions Early Years and Childcare Provision

Childminders (with Domestic Premises) are registered and inspected by Ofsted or a Childminding Agency. Childminders work in their own home or the home of someone else providing paid for childcare for children of all ages and funded entitlement hours for eligible children under the age of 5.

Childminders (without Domestic Premises) is a childminder who works solely from somewhere else other than a home (domestic premises), providing paid for childcare for children of all ages and funded entitlement hours for eligible children under the age of 5. A Childminder without Domestic Premises can work with up to and including 4 persons.

Childcare on Domestic Premises is where 5 or more people provide the care in domestic premises (homes), providing paid for childcare for children of all ages and funded entitlement hours for eligible children under the age of 5.

Day Nurseries are registered and inspected by Ofsted; they primarily provide paid for childcare and funded entitlement hours for eligible children under the age of 5.

Independent School Nurseries are registered with either Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, providing paid for childcare for children of all ages and funded entitlement hours for eligible children under the age of 5. Some hold a separate Ofsted registration to provide provision for children under the age of 2.

Maintained Nursery Schools are registered and inspected by Ofsted, they primarily provide paid for childcare and funded entitlement hours for eligible children aged 2-5 years. Some hold a separate Ofsted registration to provide provision for children under the age of 2.

Wraparound Childcare Providers (or Out of School Childcare) provides childcare to school age children and provide one or more service types, breakfast/before school, after school and holiday childcare.

Pre Schools are registered and inspected by Ofsted; they primarily provide paid for childcare and funded entitlement hours for eligible children 2 to 5 years.

Primary School Nurseries are registered and inspected by Ofsted; they primarily provide funded entitlement hours for eligible children 2 to 5 years. Some hold a separate Ofsted registration to provide provision for children under the age of 2.