

Shropshire Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment April 2025

Document Details

Status: Draft

Date: Q2 2025

Document Location:

Contact: Dan Steele, Senior Development Officer, Dan.Steele@shropshire.gov.uk

Contents

Shropshire Council	1
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment April 2025	1
Introduction	3
Demographics of Shropshire	4
Household income	4
Economic Activity	5
Shropshire's employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS	5
New Housing and population changes	6
Sufficiency of Early Years Childcare	7
Background to Early Education Entitlement	7
Number of places	8
Code Validation (Spring term 2025 data)	12
Opening hours and availability	15
Special Educational Needs	16
Families from minority backgrounds	17
Affordability	18
Finding information and accessing funded hours	19
Sufficiency of Early Years Childcare at Ward level	20
Methodology	20
Conclusion	28

Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 outlines several duties of the local authorities in their role to ensure the childcare market can meet the needs of families and support parents back to work, education, or training.

The first of these duties is to secure, as far as is reasonably possible, early years education provision that is accessible, flexible, inclusive and provided through a range of settings to meet parental demand for childcare for children aged two, three and four.

The second is to ensure compliance with local and national nursery education funding requirements and support market development to allow eligible children to access their free entitlement in line with legislation.

The final duty is to ensure that there is enough information for families in accessing childcare, and that this is clear and easily available.

To meet these aims, the local authority must assess and map the supply of childcare against the anticipated demand in the market, which should then inform the strategic direction of the authority. In Shropshire, this report is made public each year on the County Council website.

This assessment of early education and childcare provision in Shropshire uses information at the start of the Spring term 2025 and reviews the likely sufficiency for children to access their entitlement to free early years provision during the following year using the following criteria: accessibility, flexibility, inclusivity, and type of setting. It also reviews the provision of childcare for 5–14-year-olds to support working parents and the methods for families to be able to find information and apply for places. In Spring 2025, data on children who had registered for free early years provision was used rather than actual attendance, due to the COVID19 pandemic and new Government guidance restricting access to places for certain periods.

Demographics of Shropshire

Shropshire is a mix of mostly rural and urban areas; The demographics of these districts will impact on the demand for and accessibility of childcare places across the County. It is commonplace for people living in Shropshire to travel to local amenities including childcare, due to its level of rurality when compared to other counties.

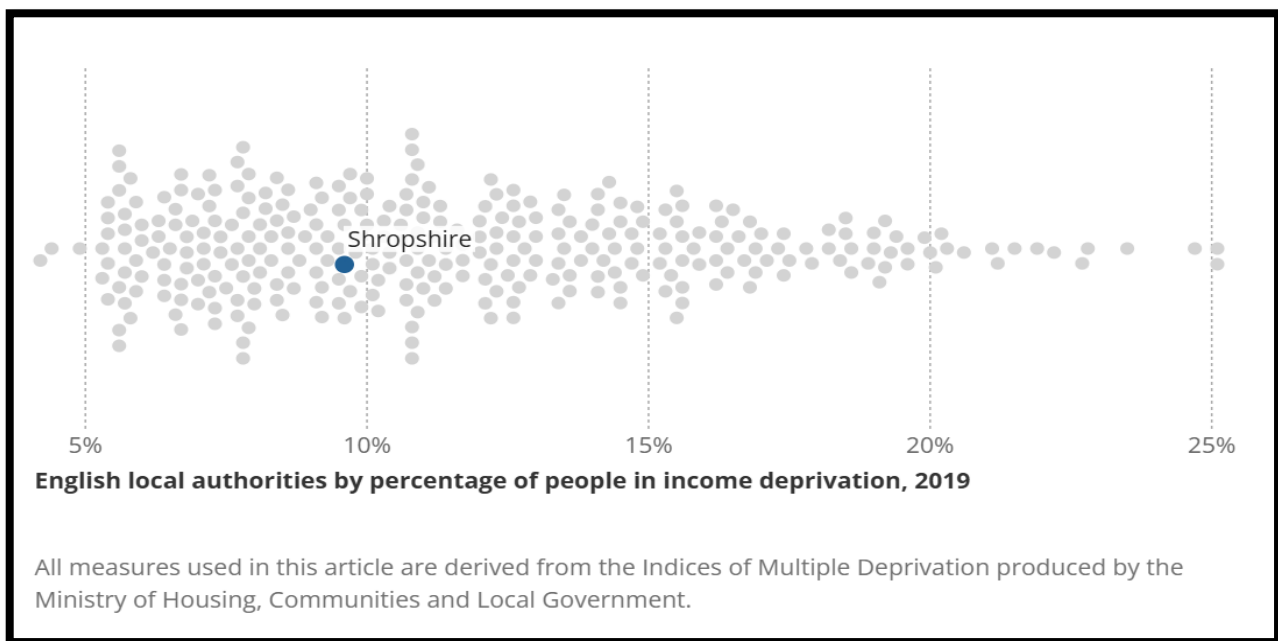
Household income

The annual average household income in Shropshire is just over £50,428 (2024), which is above the regional average as shown in Table 1 below.

District	2019	2024
Shropshire	£41,811	£50,428
West Midlands Region	£36,716	£47,620
Great Britain	£39,964	£51,474

Table 1: Average (mean) annual household income by district (CACI Paycheck)

Income Deprivation in Shropshire ([Exploring local income deprivation](#))



In Shropshire, 9.6% of the population was income-deprived in 2019. Of the 316 local authorities across England, Shropshire ranked 192nd of the most income deprived areas. (Source: [Exploring local income deprivation](#))

Of the 193 neighbourhoods in Shropshire County vicinity, 11 neighbourhoods are among the 20 percent most income-deprived in England. On the other hand of these 193 neighbourhoods in Shropshire, 20 are among the least deprived in England.

Economic Activity

[Shropshire's employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](#)

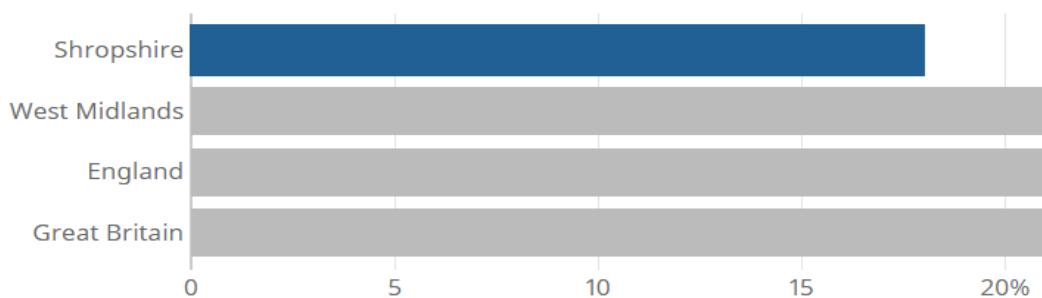
As of May 2024, Shropshire shows an employment rate of 78.8% for ages 16- to 64-year-olds. Overall, 152,000 people were employed, an increase year on year.

Unemployment rate is shown at 3.3% from the ages of 16+, the lowest in the West Midlands, around 5,200 people.

It is also important to consider statistics around economic inactivity which for Shropshire is recorded at 18%. People are described as economically inactive if they are not in employment but also do not meet the criteria for being unemployed either. Common reasons for this include being retired (Shropshire is widely reported in having an aging population), looking after the home or being disabled or on long term sick. For comparison, 21.2% of people in West Midlands were economically inactive in 2023, however other factors may dictate this figure. This 21.2% figure is mirrored with the wider picture of Great Britain too.

Economic inactivity in Shropshire compared to the West Midlands

Residents aged 16 to 64 years (%), year ending December 2023



Source: Annual Population Survey from the Office for National Statistics

The estimate for Shropshire is based on a small number of survey responses and is less precise than national or regional estimates. Ranking may be the result of sampling variability.

The graph above shows how Shropshire compares to the West Midlands, England and Great Britain.

(Source: [Shropshire's employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](#))

New Housing and population changes

Live birth rate and general fertility rate analysis by Public Health using the linear trend function, predicts a slow increase in live births from 6,000 to 6,200 by 2024. This will be impacted by development of new homes and migration rates at wards on the borders with other Local Authorities, particularly Birmingham and Warwickshire.

2023 data from the Population Health Monitoring Group linked to the ONS suggests the following:

- 591,072 live births in England and Wales, the lowest number since 1977.
- The total fertility rate (TFR) in England and Wales dropped to 1.44 per woman, the lowest since records began in 1938.

Planning applications for new housing are identified and sites of more than 10 dwellings are subject to a full review of impact on education places, including early years places and mitigation from developers is sought where needed.

Inward migration from other Local Authorities is tracked but there is no data on children living within Shropshire claiming their free early years provision outside of the County (outward migration). We therefore rely on local information from parents and providers to support our analysis of sufficiency.

Sufficiency of Early Years Childcare

Background to Early Education Entitlement

Since the 2006 Childcare Act, families with three-and four-year-old children in England are entitled to 570 hours of free childcare per year, over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year, beginning in the term after their third birthday and until the child reaches compulsory school age. This universal offer was introduced to support child development and school readiness.

In 2013 this offer was extended to eligible families from the term following the child's second birthday. These families are principally from disadvantaged backgrounds and this offer has recently been extended to children whose families have no recourse to public funds, and those with Zambrano carers¹.

From September 2017, the free early education entitlement was doubled for eligible families with three- and four-year-olds to equal a total of 1,140 hours per year, over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year, known as '30 hours'. This extended offer was introduced to support working families as one of the eligibility criteria states that parent(s) must be working at least 16 hours per week on minimum wage. The maximum a parent can earn is £100,000 per annum. The implementation of this new offer across Shropshire was supported by Childcare Works², whose contract ran until January 2020, and enabled Shropshire to effectively promote take up of the entitlement.

These funded hours can be used in any Ofsted registered setting with a funding agreement. This includes school nurseries, nursery classes, childminders and private, voluntary and independent sector settings.

In Shropshire, there are several different funding streams we offer.

24U Funding

The 24U scheme offers 15 hours of free early years education to eligible children. 24U funding is not to be confused with the government's expanded 15 hours of free childcare for 2-year-olds which is for eligible working families. 24U funding is for families who are receiving some form of government support, list of which can be found here: [24U funding | Shropshire Council](#)

Expanded Offer Two year old Entitlement

Two-year olds from working families may be entitled to additional free childcare. The expanded entitlement is available if each parent / carers expects to earn (on average) the equivalent of

[Free childcare for 2 year olds](#)

working 16 hours a week at the national minimum wage (£125 at the National Living Wage or less if they are on the National Minimum Wage).

Universal entitlement for three- and four-year-olds

All three and four-year olds in England regardless of their circumstances. The entitlement will end when a child begins in a school reception place or at the end of term in which the child turns five whichever occurs first.

Extended entitlement for three- and four-year-olds from working families

Three and four-year olds may be entitled to additional free childcare. The extended entitlement is available if each parent / carers expects to earn (on average) the equivalent of working 16 hours a week at the national minimum wage (£125 at the National Living Wage or less if they are on the National Minimum Wage).

We recognise that there must be a flexible and robust childcare offer in Shropshire and that the demand for different types of childcares will vary from area to area based on factors such as demographics for example. We encourage providers to work with families to understand demand and develop models of delivery that support every need of families.

You can apply as early as the term before your child turns 9 months old, but the funding will not start until the term after your child has turned 9 months old.

When your child turns 9 months old	When they can access 15 & 30 hours from	Application deadline
1 January to 31 March	Term starting on or after 1 April	31 March
1 April to 31 August	Term starting on or after 1 September	31 August
1 September to 31 December	Term starting on or after 1 January	31 December

Number of places

To meet the needs of families in Shropshire, there are 276 settings across the County as at February 2024 offering childcare for 2-,3- and 4-year-olds. Of these, 234 settings offer free early years provision to 2-year olds and 232 offer universal funded places for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. In addition we also have 16 recorded Out Of School clubs.

The EYFS ([Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#)) categorises different types of childcare into three key categories. Group Based providers are stipulated as

nurseries and pre-schools. Childminders are home based providers often operating out of homes. School based providers, being nursery aged classes linked to schools. Figures below show the number of each we have recorded in the county as of February 2024.

Provider Types	Total No. of settings	NEF registered for 2yr olds	NEF registered 3&4 yr olds	Registered for extended hours
Group Based Provider (Nurseries & Preschools)	95	95	95	95
Childminders	95	95	95	95
School Based Providers (Nursery aged classes linked to schools)	86	44	42	86
TOTAL	276	234	232	276

Table 4: Early Years providers in Shropshire as of February 2024

This variety of provider types creates a comprehensive, flexible, and adaptable supply of places to meet the changing needs of families for formal childcare. Academy and maintained nursery classes are part of a first or primary school and typically offer care to match the school day. This is also the case for pre-school playgroups. The day care offer can be extended with wrap

around care, breakfast club, or out of school care. Alternatively, day nurseries usually offer full day care from 8am to 6pm.

Introductions of the Wraparound Childcare scheme nationally has been implemented within the county and has had a positive benefit, as of February 2024, funding has been allocated to 28 different providers creating 1867 childcare places within the specific parameters of the scheme itself (5–11-year-olds, term time, Monday to Friday between 8am to 6pm, or equivalent).

Similar schemes are on the horizon, such as the recent announcement of the breakfast club schemes, in which early adopters are commencing trials in Summer term 2025. This in addition to other offers shown above, look to further increase the flexibility and robustness of the childcare offer in Shropshire.

There has been no significant change in the number of settings operating within the County in the last 12 months, despite the fall in demand for places in formal childcare as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. This can be seen in the fall in the number of hours accessed in Summer term 2020 compared to Summer term 2019, despite similar attendance in the Autumn term.

The number of funded hours needed at Early Years settings increases term by term over the academic year as the number of children old enough to be eligible increases. The number of children in a funded place is lowest in the Autumn term as all children who have turned 4 over the preceding year are admitted into school at this time. This is shown in the graph by the increasing number of funded weekly hours used every term across the year.

Shropshire Take-up Patterns for Childcare Entitlements

The table below shows termly variation in take-up patterns across the previous three academic years for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 split across each of the terms.

The table is further broken down into 3–4-year-old universal hours, 3-4 year old additional hours and families of 2 year old receiving additional support across all providers. This is reported in the number of hours claimed across these parameters.

Financial Year	Terms	Early Years PTEs - all providers		
		3-4YO Universal Hours PTEs	3-4YO Extended Hours PTEs	Families of 2YO receiving additional support PTEs (Known as 24U funding in Shropshire)
2021-22	Spring 2022	688,918.96	361,127	93,937.70
2022-23	Summer 2022	870,179.93	453,858	104,271.95
	Autumn 2022	555,617.07	296,013.75	101,526.13
	Spring 2023	681,392.92	372,103	91,623.76
2023-24	Summer 2023	860,435.97	470,674	100,552.72
	Autumn 2023	530,709.74	288,875	97,852.02
	Spring 2024	664,213.53	375,096	87,802.80
2024-25	Summer 2024	853,871.03	480,414	94,021.48
	Autumn 2024	558,916.61	316,879	90,051.74
	Spring 2025	669,549.84	389,807.36	66,825.20

Source: Synergy SQL Reports, Shropshire Council Spring 2025.

Analysis

The data shows an annual increase trend across the previous three academic years for universal 3- and 4-year-old take up rate. A slight increase in percentage of +1% but in real terms this factors an increase of 26978.24 hours total. Spring terms persist in being the largest take up rate term per academic year boasting an increase of 5000+ hours when comparing Spring term 2024 to Spring term 2025.

3- and 4-year-old extended entitlement hours shows as a steady increase across all terms year on year, with Autumn term 2023 and 2024 showing an increase of 28,004 hours in comparison. Thus, due to the requirement of working 16 hours per week minimum to access this extended entitlement, reflecting the rate of employment in Shropshire which is high on comparison with neighbouring authorities.

2-year-old additional entitlement or as it is known in Shropshire, 24U funding has several requirements based on certain criteria of government support (Listed here [24U funding | Shropshire Council](#)) has seen a steady decline in recent years. Most notably, when comparing the previous academic year to the current as of writing this report, we have seen a decrease of 35,309 hours. The biggest decline seen Spring term 2024 to Spring term 2025 of just under 21,000 hours claimed.

Overall, both streams of 3 and 4 year old funding show a steady increase year on year. We do anticipate these numbers to look dramatically different considering September 2025 entitlement changes and increases due to eventualities such as parents placing both children in nursery (if they qualify of age) rather than just the one individual.

Code Validation (Spring term 2025 data)

Code Validation is a metric used to measure the level of codes used by parents/guardians to claim for funding for a particular child for that childcare place in setting.

The table below shows data for 1-year olds & 2-year-olds.

It is important to note the following:

- Existing Users are users who have used the entitlement previously (have validated their code for use in a previous term) and are still using the entitlement this term.
- New Users are users using their entitlement for the first time this term.

<u>Spring 2025</u>	Existing Users	Existing Validated	%	New Users	New User Validated	%
1 Year Olds	1111	1066	95.9%	232	194	83.6%
2 Year Olds	1530	1494	97.6%	149	119	79.6%
Overall	2641	2560	96.9%	599	512	85.5%

(Source: View your Education data- Department for Education)

The next table shows code validation rates for all age groups per ward across Shropshire for **Spring Term 2025**.

Ward Name	New User	New User Validated	%	Existing User	Existing User Validated	%
Abbey	3	3	100%	25	25	100%
Albrighton	15	14	93%	32	29	91%
Alveley and Claverley	6	6	100%	22	20	91%
Bagley	13	11	85%	55	54	98%
Battlefield	14	13	93%	66	65	98%
Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton	37	34	92%	168	168	100%
Belle Vue	6	5	83%	18	18	100%
Bishop's Castle	7	6	86%	14	13	93%
Bowbrook	6	4	67%	29	26	90%
Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots	6	6	100%	27	26	96%
Bridgnorth West and Tasley	14	10	71%	50	47	94%
Broseley	6	5	83%	38	37	97%
Brown Clee	4	3	75%	19	19	100%
Burnell	13	12	92%	44	44	100%
Castlefields and Ditherington	6	6	100%	35	35	100%
Cheswardine	9	9	100%	44	43	98%
Chirbury and Worthen	3	3	100%	15	14	93%
Church Stretton and Craven Arms	11	7	64%	32	32	100%
Clee	8	7	88%	35	33	94%
Cleobury Mortimer	6	6	100%	43	43	100%
Clun	9	8	89%	25	25	100%
Copthorne	6	3	50%	55	54	98%
Corvedale	9	9	100%	20	20	100%
Ellesmere Urban	8	6	75%	34	33	97%
Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn	19	15	79%	70	67	96%
Harlescott	11	9	82%	26	25	96%
Highley	11	8	73%	30	30	100%
Hodnet	2	0	0%	32	30	94%
Llanymynech	5	5	100%	34	32	94%
Longden	3	3	100%	28	27	96%
Loton	3	3	100%	48	47	98%
Ludlow East	5	3	60%	17	14	82%
Ludlow North	6	5	83%	19	19	100%
Ludlow South	5	4	80%	32	32	100%

Market Drayton East	11	9	82%	44	42	95%
Market Drayton West	23	22	96%	80	80	100%
Meole	6	5	83%	42	42	100%
Monkmoor	6	6	100%	26	26	100%
Much Wenlock	6	6	100%	26	26	100%
Oswestry East	18	15	83%	74	69	93%
Oswestry South	5	3	60%	27	26	96%
Oswestry West	5	4	80%	18	16	89%
Porthill	3	1	33%	41	41	100%
Prees	14	12	86%	38	37	97%
Quarry and Coton Hill	4	4	100%	18	15	83%
Radbrook	9	8	89%	60	59	98%
Rea Valley	13	11	85%	42	41	98%
Ruyton and Baschurch	10	10	100%	56	54	96%
Severn Valley	8	7	88%	58	57	98%
Shawbury	15	13	87%	50	49	98%
Shifnal North	12	10	83%	82	81	99%
Shifnal South and Cosford	14	13	93%	115	111	97%
St Martin's	8	5	63%	38	31	82%
St Oswald	10	9	90%	43	41	95%
Sundorne	13	9	69%	42	41	98%
Tern	10	8	80%	60	59	98%
The Meres	9	8	89%	35	35	100%
Underdale	8	6	75%	27	27	100%
Wem	14	11	79%	61	60	98%
Whitchurch North	22	20	91%	54	49	91%
Whitchurch South	11	10	91%	37	37	100%
Whittington	11	10	91%	44	42	95%
Worfield	6	6	100%	22	20	91%

As of March 2025, we are delighted to share that we ranked in 1st place for code validation across the West Midlands.

Existing codes are codes that are renewed by families term on term, while new codes are brand new and used for the first time in term.

	Existing Codes	New Codes
National	95%	86%
West Midlands	95%	85%
Shropshire	98%	89%

(Source: View your Education data- Department for Education)

Opening hours and availability

Funded childcare is provided to support parents back into work. Due to the variety of shift patterns and employment contracts, the childcare market needs to be flexible and adaptive which can only be facilitated by a marketplace that has many types of providers with a clear offer to parents, covering locations near workplaces and homes as well as various opening times including at weekends and early mornings.

The universal offer available to all children the term after their third birthday is for 570 hours per annum. This is usually taken as 15 hours per week over 38 weeks, matching the school calendar. However, families can stretch their entitlement over a longer period by reducing the number of hours taken each week, though it cannot be increased to over 15 hours per week.

Providers are asked each year to sign an agreement to accept Government funding for free early years provision. In Summer 2025, we have amended provider agreements to reflect recent changes to statutory guidance around funding and charging following recent High Court judgment which prompted review of the overall guidance from DfE.

There is a wide range of providers across the County which gives a good choice to parents, although due to the rural nature of large parts of Shropshire, for some family's choice is limited. Only high-quality settings (those rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted) are supported to offer funded places, however funding is not removed from a provider following a low-quality judgement if sufficient places, for similar age range, and hours, is not available elsewhere.

If the impact of the COVID19 pandemic results in a long-term change of employment patterns and occupations for families in Shropshire, the Local Authority, through Shropshire. Children First, will work with providers to ensure suitable places are provided.

Greater consideration is also being given to ensure there is sufficient childcare available in settings across the County for babies and very young children as grandparents may be required to take on less childcare in the future due to shielding.

Special Educational Needs

Under the Equalities Act 2010, Local Authorities must ensure they promote equality and inclusion by removing barriers of access to funded childcare. This is done by working with parents to know what is available to them and support them to find the right provision, and by working with providers to support and promote best practice. It is important to secure multiagency focus on local partnerships between education, health and social care.

In Shropshire as of April 2025, we have evolved the method in which Early Years providers can access funding for children. We now hold a collaborative inclusive advice and funding panel where we can assess cases. The aim is not to always award funding to supplement 1:1 support for example but utilise the wealth of expertise within the Education Improvement Service to support settings.

Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding ([Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding | Shropshire Learning Gateway](#))

Why does Shropshire have an Early Years Inclusion Fund?

Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities places a requirement on local authorities to establish an Early Years Inclusion Fund to support all providers delivering funded early years education in meeting the emerging needs of children with special educational needs (SEN). In Shropshire this is Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF) which will support all eligible children with special educational needs (SEN) who are taking up the new and existing Early Years entitlement funding.

What is the Early Years Inclusion Advice and Fund Panel?

The Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding Panel is a meeting of Local Authority representatives and other professionals who have expertise in special educational needs within the Early Years. It has been developed for all Early Years Settings in Shropshire in order for them to access advice and additional funding to support children who attend their settings with special educational needs.

Settings must work with parent carers and children in a person-centred way, including parents in the application and review process. Parent Carers are not required to attend the panel.

Families from minority backgrounds

Ensuring children from minority backgrounds are able to access funded early education places is key to reducing inequality and ensure all children receive the best start in life. Therefore, the monitoring of take-up amongst these groups and the active engagement by the Local Authority to ensuring the childcare market and available information meets the needs of these families is a crucial aspect of assessing childcare sufficiency.

Data from the 2021 census shows that across Shropshire 93.3% of residents classified themselves as White British, with a further 3.4% classified as 'White, other'. The next largest ethnic group were those classifying as 'Indian' at 0.5% of the population, with all other ethnic groups at less than 1%. This represents a far lower population of minority ethnic groups than the

West Midlands, where 79.2% of residents were recorded as 'White British', 2.5% 'White, other', 4.1% as 'Pakistani', 3.9% as 'Indian' and all other groups at or below 1.5%³.

Comparing the ethnic make-up of Shropshire to the take-up of 3- and 4-year-old funded hours places in Summer term 2020, we can see from table 17 that access to funded places is fairly in line with demographics of the County as a whole. However, 12.2% do not record any ethnic original, a significant percentage of the cohort.

White British/Welsh/English/Cornish	75.4%
Eastern European	1.4%
European	1.4%
Pakistani	1.2%
54 other ethnic groups, each less than 1%	8.4%
Information not obtained	12.2%

Table 17: Ethnic make-up of Children accessing the Universal offer, Summer 2020 Source: Synergy July 2020

(Source: [Ethnicity, national identity, language and religion | Shropshire Council](#))

This suggests that efforts to ensure the engagement of families across different ethnic backgrounds and the provision of places that meets a range of needs is being met, although further assessment will be maintained ongoingly.

Source: [Ethnic group - Office for National Statistics](#)

Affordability

Government funded places is intended to ensure the delivery of 15 or 30 hours a week of free childcare but is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumable or additional services. For many providers, these additional costs are crucial to delivering sustainable high quality flexible childcare, but they should not restrict a family's ability to take-up their child's free place. Providers must therefore be clear and transparent at the point of offering a place of any additional costs for the family, and that these are additional costs must be voluntary. This has recently been spotlighted due to a High Court judgement which resulted in the DfE sharing more up to date statutory guidance around charging.

Parents returning to work may also incur costs for childcare commitments for younger children and wrap-around care for school age children. Availability of these providers is shown at the start of this section and all schools are encouraged to offer breakfast and after-school clubs.

The cost of a place to families is reported annually by the Coram, Childcare Survey and shows an annual increase from 2023 to 2024. Information is collected locally, and providers are asked to keep it updated as information for parents. Another research body for early years, CEEDA have undertaken a more current report published in June 2020 about sustainability in the early years market.⁴

This highlights the role that childcare will place in economic recovery after the pandemic and the cross-subsidy of the various provider types.

Shropshire continue to offer business support to all providers and encourage one-to-one meetings to consider business sustainability in a confidential environment.

Source:

[Childcare Survey 2024](#)

[Ceeda: About Early Years Workforce Report 2019 - EY Matters](#)

Finding information and accessing funded hours

Since April 2020, the Family Information Service (FIS) is commissioned by Shropshire as part of the Starting Well contract. This service supports families with access to the early education childcare offer as well as parenting support, community engagement and volunteering.

Link to the FIS page can be found here: [Family Information Service | Shropshire Council](#)

Information is also available on the Shropshire Council website: [Children's social care and health | Shropshire Council](#)

We will continue to engage with parents wherever possible via all professional partners including GPs, DWP job coaches, as well as Health Visitors.

Sufficiency of Early Years Childcare at Ward level

Methodology

Shropshire is an authority with 63 separate wards.. A ward is the primary unit of English electoral geography for civil parishes and borough and District Councils. This allows sufficiency of places to be considered at a local level and allows comparison with other parts of the local authority area. A data review is undertaken each term, to review those children eligible for a free early education place, demand from families, and supply of places from Early Years providers registered with Ofsted. This review considers the details in each ward within the County and is presented by District, in the following sections.

As we have considered through this report thus far, locality is only one indicator of sufficiency and factors such as availability of places for siblings and flexibility are also crucial in understanding how well the childcare and early education market is meeting the needs of families in each area.

Table index:

Table one: Demand in Shropshire (As of March 2025)

Table two: Demand in Shropshire expected September 2025

Table three: Supply in Shropshire (As of March 2025)

The below data is taken from Department for Education Readiness document published in Spring 2025. The first table shows the level of demand, in hours, for childcare for under two-year-olds (<2yo) and over two-year-olds (2yo). The second table shows expected demand in September 2025.

We are aware that there are several areas that we will continue to work on. Based on the data below, we are aware that we have surplus demand in the Tern area of Shropshire, but a shortfall in Wem, Whitchurch South and Bayston Hill. We are continuing efforts with projects in all these areas, which have had investment through Capital works projects to providers in that area, as well as collaborating with 'over the border' colleagues from other local authorities. Our belief is that these areas with continued work, will have sufficient places available.

This has informed our work that has been going on over the many months in pursuit of childcare coverage. This is an ever-moving situation, with variables like birth rates, provider availability and even affordability of running settings to consider. Therefore, we would ask you to be cognisant of the fact that this is a snapshot in March 2025 and the situation will almost have inevitably changed since.

Demand in Shropshire (As of March 2025)

Table 1:

<u>Ward Name</u>	<u><2yo</u>	<u>2yo</u>
Abbey	80	102
Albrighton	614	798
Alveley and Claverley	132	249
Bagley	313	422
Battlefield	1,094	1,371
Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton	1,852	2,238
Belle Vue	563	780
Bishop's Castle	222	330
Bowbrook	566	628
Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots	751	963
Bridgnorth West and Tasley	391	512
Broseley	456	431
Brown Clee	71	91
Burnell	473	525
Castlefields and Ditherington	624	750
Cheswardine	351	457
Chirbury and Worthen	233	309
Church Stretton and Craven Arms	560	746
Clee	448	523
Cleobury Mortimer	391	674
Clun	264	324
Copthorne	340	414
Corvedale	225	262
Ellesmere Urban	489	625
Harlescott	674	811
Highley	287	393
Hodnet	500	607
Llanymynech	217	206
Longden	548	687
Loton	287	342

Ludlow East	387	494
Ludlow North	399	522
Ludlow South	271	323
Market Drayton East	361	491
Market Drayton West	977	1,474
Meole	481	573
Rea Valley	458	637
Monkmoor	781	1,050
Much Wenlock	335	504
Porthill	634	912
Prees	399	531
Quarry and Coton Hill	46	56
Radbrook	262	361
St Martin's	196	228
Severn Valley	180	212
Shawbury	499	607
Shifnal North	367	428
Shifnal South and Cosford	892	1,128
Sundorne	163	187
Tern	425	449
The Meres	170	222
Underdale	184	228
Wem	857	1,060
Whitchurch North	133	163
Whitchurch South	892	1,099
Worfield	239	311
Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn	791	954
Oswestry East	691	796
Oswestry South	727	847
Oswestry West	429	483
Ruyton and Baschurch	558	674
St Oswald	627	724
Whittington	440	464
TOTAL	29267	36762

Table 2:

Demand in Shropshire For September 2025

<u>Ward Name</u>	<u><2yo</u>	<u>2yo</u>
Abbey	106	129
Albrighton	856	977
Alveley and Claverley	163	303
Bagley	447	522
Battlefield	1,420	1,720
Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton	2,534	2,936
Belle Vue	764	977
Bishop's Castle	274	395
Bowbrook	765	804
Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots	976	1,257
Bridgnorth West and Tasley	514	668
Broseley	575	524
Brown Clee	96	114
Burnell	634	714
Castlefields and Ditherington	783	906
Cheswardine	464	583
Chirbury and Worthen	297	401
Church Stretton and Craven Arms	682	911
Clee	566	658
Cleobury Mortimer	531	859
Clun	344	405
Copthorne	465	530
Corvedale	289	334
Ellesmere Urban	618	808
Harlescott	863	1,004
Highley	383	470
Hodnet	683	782
Llanymynech	292	291

Longden	731	874
Loton	377	440
Ludlow East	497	620
Ludlow North	517	647
Ludlow South	351	407
Market Drayton East	482	586
Market Drayton West	1,267	1,781
Meole	646	733
Rea Valley	587	819
Monkmoor	1,021	1,316
Much Wenlock	444	620
Porthill	911	1,132
Prees	529	693
Quarry and Coton Hill	63	72
Radbrook	354	453
St Martin's	253	290
Severn Valley	234	274
Shawbury	694	787
Shifnal North	506	538
Shifnal South and Cosford	1,261	1,405
Sundorne	201	223
Tern	578	599
The Meres	230	283
Underdale	246	294
Wem	1,153	1,264
Whitchurch North	169	206
Whitchurch South	1,130	1,378
Worfield	305	395
Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn	1,060	1,175
Oswestry East	874	981
Oswestry South	917	1,030
Oswestry West	538	592
Ruyton and Baschurch	740	863
St Oswald	815	909
Whittington	591	589
TOTAL	38656	46250

The tables when compared, show there is a further need of 544 places required in September 2025 for 2-year-olds and under 2s. This data was used keenly by the Sufficiency team at Shropshire council to inform Capital projects work through government funding.

From this, efforts were made and places created through expansion to ensure childcare duty in terms of sufficiency was met.

Supply in Shropshire September 2024 & September 2025 expected

Following data analysis of the demand, we were able to compare this with the 'supply' or what was currently available through our childcare providers. These, as previously mentioned in this paper, are broken down into three key categories in line with the EYFS.

1. Childminders
2. Group based providers
3. School based providers

The tables below again, compares supply in September 2024 and expected supply in September 2025. Please note- this does not consider the ongoing work, expansion and therefore place creation for early years providers across the second half of 2024 and 2025 in the lead up to September 2025 childcare changes and entitlements.

Table three:

Supply in Shropshire (March 2025)

<u>Ward Name</u>	<u><2yo</u>	<u>2yo</u>
Abbey	109	166
Albrighton	466	754
Alveley and Claverley	143	224
Bagley	256	412
Battlefield	1,168	1,955
Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton	1,497	2,249
Belle Vue	955	1,345
Bishop's Castle	120	244
Bowbrook	980	1,477
Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots	818	1,228

Bridgnorth West and Tasley	520	652
Broseley	397	621
Brown Clee	193	276
Burnell	665	1,037
Castlefields and Ditherington	364	634
Cheswardine	301	453
Chirbury and Worthen	5	107
Church Stretton and Craven Arms	443	665
Clee	137	285
Cleobury Mortimer	524	850
Clun	179	309
Copthorne	410	578
Corvedale	47	99
Ellesmere Urban	445	652
Harlescott	672	1,127
Highley	267	407
Hodnet	577	906
Llanymynech	427	607
Longden	375	580
Loton	451	667
Ludlow East	428	668
Ludlow North	193	352
Ludlow South	216	347
Market Drayton East	368	691
Market Drayton West	1,093	1,833
Meole	301	457
Rea Valley	617	867
Monkmoor	766	1,192
Much Wenlock	93	211
Porthill	534	889
Prees	39	157
Quarry and Coton Hill	0	0
Radbrook	200	268
St Martin's	3	60
Severn Valley	36	85
Shawbury	454	714
Shifnal North	105	188
Shifnal South and Cosford	1,205	1,820
Sundorne	215	289

Tern	788	1,266
The Meres	3	58
Underdale	114	153
Wem	332	586
Whitchurch North	298	417
Whitchurch South	337	644
Worfield	227	341
Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn	1,049	1,676
Oswestry East	700	1,057
Oswestry South	705	1,038
Oswestry West	5	117
Ruyton and Baschurch	684	1,063
St Oswald	828	1,263
Whittington	375	592
TOTAL	27218	42831

Conclusion

The scope of this Childcare Sufficiency Report is to map and assess the available information on supply of early education places for children, along with the demand for those places, to form an assessment of the sufficiency of places within Shropshire. It also examines any barriers to the supply of, and demand for, that provision to support the Local Authority in its market management duty.

At the present time, Shropshire has sufficient childcare and high-quality early education places for funded children in each of its districts, although this is not evenly available across all wards. We are aware however, that there are several areas that we will continue to work on. Based on the readiness document, we are aware that we have surplus demand in the Tern area of Shropshire, but a shortfall in Wem, Whitchurch South and Bayston Hill. We are continuing efforts with projects in all these areas, which have had investment through Capital works projects to providers in that area, as well as collaborating with 'over the border' colleagues from other local authorities. Our belief is that these areas with continued work, will have sufficient places available.

However, ensuring the flexibility to match families' needs for childcare due to working times, and the additional care for younger children can still cause barriers for some working families. Shropshire will continue to explore all opportunities to ensure that provision is local, flexible, affordable and inclusive. Further combining this example with the rurality Shropshire has by geographical means, shows us that to access childcare, families may have to travel further than their local provider.

The question therefore comes to the forefront of, what are we doing about the challenge as a sufficiency team? We have reported to our providers through network meeting face to face and engaging provider forums we host, that we have passed on hourly rate increases. Namely the Early Years expansion grant to providers and NIC Grant to maintained nurseries and school-based nurseries to support them, ahead of entitlement increases arriving in September 2025. We are also working on a Childminder incentive scheme for both existing and prospective childminders as possible financial incentive. This is still in the works and is ongoing, however. Finally, as mentioned on several occasions in this paper, we are continuing to work with providers who have been identified as a priority based on the level of need in their area to allocate capital works funding and ensuring the work is completed with a number of success stories in place creation.

Despite this, Early Years as a sub-section of education while forming a cornerstone for most children receiving education from 9 months to 4 years of age before entering primary school, does face multiple challenges both nationally and in Shropshire. Despite the aforementioned hourly rate increases, this is deemed by many to be a financially unattractive industry, considering examples like some supermarket chains which offer higher hourly rates. We are also experiencing that while some providers inevitably retire, there is no uptake of younger practitioners to open businesses as commonly or replace the experienced individuals who either own or manage providers.

As always, we continue to work with providers across Shropshire and both colleagues within the Council and DfE in pursuit of excellence. While sufficiency is a constantly changing picture for all local authorities, our aim to ensure children can access high quality education is a constant.