

**Summary Conclusion**

Future demand for early years childcare places may not be met fully by recently opened, planned and intended expansions, plus the uptake of existing vacant places. Provision will need to be planned for an increase in demand for both out of school places and early years childcare places.

Theme	Status	Supporting Evidence												
Is there an estimated additional forthcoming demand – up to 2027 – for 0-4 years early years childcare places in the Alsager Schools Planning Area?	Yes	Local Authority calculations indicate that 78 new early years childcare places for 0-4 years would be required to maintain the 2022 sufficiency ratio.												
Is there an estimated additional forthcoming demand – up to 2027 – for 0-4 years out of school childcare places in the Alsager Schools Planning Area?	Yes	Local Authority calculations indicate that 84 new out of school childcare places (including actual school-based) for 5-11 year olds would be required to maintain the 2022 sufficiency ratio.												
Are there any childcare providers with an evident intention (in summer 2022) to expand located in the Alsager Schools Planning Area?	Yes	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Type of Provider</th> <th>Percentage of providers with intention to increase capacity...</th> <th>Combined number of additional places...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting</td> <td>20%</td> <td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Out of School Childcare Provider</td> <td>50%</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Registered Childminder</td> <td>0</td> <td>n/a</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Type of Provider	Percentage of providers with intention to increase capacity...	Combined number of additional places...	Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	20%	26	Out of School Childcare Provider	50%	15	Registered Childminder	0	n/a
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Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	20%	26												
Out of School Childcare Provider	50%	15												
Registered Childminder	0	n/a												
In terms of occupancy, what is there a greater incidence of? a) Waiting Lists b) Vacancies  among childcare providers located in the Alsager Planning Area in summer 2022?	Waiting Lists/ Vacancies	<p><b>80% of all relevant providers stated that they had seen a waiting increase in size since summer 2021</b></p> <p>None of all relevant providers stated that they had seen a waiting list decrease in size since summer 2021</p>												
Is sustainability of existing childcare providers a risk factor in the Alsager Schools Planning Area as of summer 2022. <small>(with 'risk' being denoted as greater than 30% of childcare providers stating they had sustainability concerns in summer 2022).</small>	Yes	<p>40% of early years childcare providers/settings situated in the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were experiencing <b>ongoing</b> sustainability issues as a result of COVID-19 – and repeated themes were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruitment of staff creating sustainability challenges</li> <li>2. Concerns about finances/income</li> </ol>												
Are there any evident plans by the Local Authority to develop new school places in the Alsager Schools Planning Area – as of summer 2022?	No													

The **Alsager Schools Planning Area** is located in the central west area of the Cheshire East locality.

There are five new housing developments planned for construction and eventual occupation up to 2027, which will yield approximately 982 new dwellings within the Alsager locality.

Source: Cheshire East Council 2022

**Table 1 - resident number of children/young people and the potential additional population up to 2027 created by new housing developments** Source: Office of National Statistics 2021

Relevant School Planning Area ward = Alsager	Number of resident children/young people in Schools Planning Area in 2020	<i>The ONS 2021 forecast percentage increase in cohort population by 2027</i>	Potential future <u>additional</u> population by 2027 for Schools Planning Area - by school cohort - when the new forthcoming 982 dwellings are factored-in – aligned to Cheshire East Council new yield formulas: For 0-4 years = 13 children per 100 dwelling For 5-11 years = 19 children per 100 dwelling For 12-18 years = 15 children per 100 dwelling		Estimated population at 2027 (ONS forecast + yield from new dwellings)	Population increase / decrease 2020 to 2027
0-4 years	356	<i>No change</i>	For:	+128	731	+110 (+17.7%)
3-4 years	265	<i>-6.9%</i>	0-4 years			
<b>Total 0-4 years</b>	<b>621</b>					
5-7 years	435	<i>-5.8%</i>	For:	+187	1,210	+167 (+16%)
8-11 years	613	<i>No change</i>	5-11 years			
<b>Total 5-11 years</b>	<b>1,043</b>					
12-18 years	<b>1,664</b>	<i>+5%</i>	For:	+147	1,892	+228 (+13.7%)
<b>Total 0-18 years</b>	<b>3,328</b>	<i>&lt;0.5%</i>		<b>+462</b>	<b>3,833</b>	<b>+505 (+15.2%)</b>

## Supply and Provision dynamics

### Providers located in the Alsager Schools Planning Area

The following **early years childcare settings/providers** are located in the Schools Planning Area

- Blue Skies Private Day Nursery
- Townhouse Childcare Limited - Lawton Road
- Townhouse Childcare Limited - Audley Road
- Sally Anna's Ltd
- Highfields Hoppers Ltd
- Pikemere School Nursery
- Cranberry Academy Nursery
- Rode Heath Primary School Nursery
- St. Gabriels RC Church Nursery

These nine providers account for a combined total of 424 registered places.

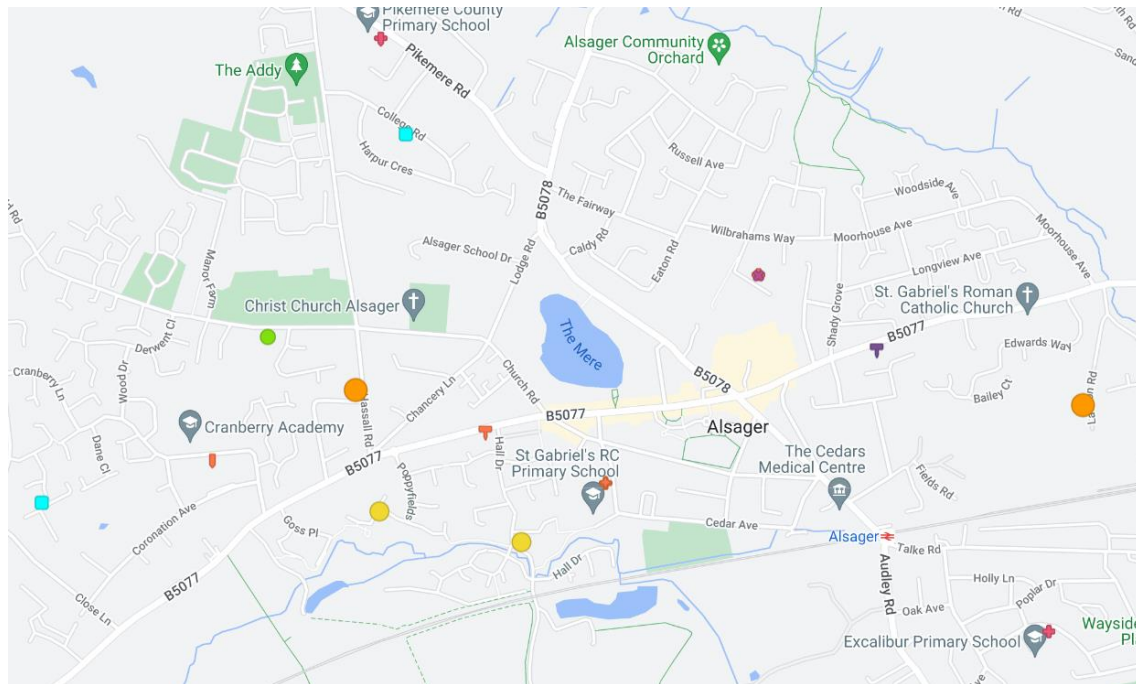
The following **out of school childcare providers** are located in the Schools Planning Area

- Highfield Hoppers
- St. Gabriels Whizz
- Alsager Highfields Community Primary School After School Club, Breakfast Club and Holiday Playscheme
- Excalibur Primary School After School Club, Breakfast Club and Holiday Playscheme
- Pikemere School After School Club, Breakfast Club and Holiday Playscheme
- Rode Heath Primary School After School Club, Breakfast Club and Holiday Playscheme
- St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School After School Club and Breakfast Club

These seven providers account for a combined total of 507 places.

Additionally, three **registered childminders** are resident in the Schools Planning Area and they are accounting for a combined total of 18 registered places.

Image A below indicates the location and relative size of forthcoming new housing developments in relation to the current provision of early years and childcare situated in this geographical area



Key – childcare types and size / approved and under construction new housing developments and size

Academy Nursery		0-20 places		Denotes development	Development Size	Denotes development	Development Size
Day Nursery		21-30 places			0-99 new dwellings		200-499 new dwellings
Maintained or Independent School		31-40 places			100-199 new dwellings		500 new dwellings +
Out of School Club		41-50 places					
Pre-School Playgroup		51-75 places					
State Funded Nursery		76-100 places					
Childminder		101-200 places					
		0-5 places					
		6-10 places					
		11-15 places					

Feedback from a summer 2022 consultation with early years and childcare providers that are situated in the Schools Planning Area is outlined below on pages 5-12.

## Occupancy Dynamics in summer 2022

Table 2 - the incidence of: (a) waiting lists and (b) vacant places at Alsager Schools Planning Area-based providers in summer 2022

Type of Provider	Percentage stating they had a waiting list in summer 2022	Percentage stating they had vacant places in summer 2022
Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	60%	20%
Out of School Childcare Provider	n/a	0
Registered Childminder	50%	0

- 0 of all relevant providers stated that they had seen a waiting list decrease in size since summer 2021
- 80% of all relevant providers stated that they had seen a waiting increase in size since summer 2021
- For Alsager Schools Planning Area-based early years childcare providers/settings, the age groups that accounted for the highest incidence of vacant places was 3 and/or 4 years

Ultimately, aligned to the period: May 2021 – May 2022:

- 22% of Schools Planning Area-based childcare providers stated: Our occupancy has *decreased*
- 44% of Schools Planning Area-based childcare providers stated: Our occupancy has *increased*

## Fees

Table 3 - average fees charged by types of registered Alsager Schools Planning Area-based childcare providers

Type of Provider	Average hourly fee	Average sessional fee
Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	£4.91	
After School Club		£11.05
Registered Childminder	£4.07	

## Hours

Table 4 - average opening and closing times for types of registered childcare providers located in the Alsager Schools Planning Area

Type of Provider	Average opening/start time	Average close/finish time
Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	07:45	17:24
After School Club	15:00	18:00
Registered Childminder	08:00	18:00

## Demand

Table 5 presents:

- (a) an indication of the existing level of sufficiency in the Alsager Schools Planning Area-based aligned to the three types of formal childcare provision: 1/ early years childcare settings; 2/ registered childminders and; 3 /out of school childcare providers.
- (b) an indication about the extent to which forthcoming new housing developments (see Table 1) will alter the sufficiency landscape once all planned developments and new houses are constructed and occupied.

Table 5 - assessment of how new housing developments will change numbers of resident children and potential demand for childcare

Age Cohort	Existing number of childcare places in the Schools Planning Area in summer 2022		Population of cohort wards in locality in 2022	Childcare places available per child	Estimated population 2027	Estimated demand for places 2027
0-4 years	Number of places with: (a) Early years childcare providers	424	621	For early years childcare providers = 0.68	731	499 (+75)
	(b) Registered childminders	18		For registered childminders = 0.029		21 (+3)
	<b>Total Reg. Supply</b>	<b>442</b>				<b>520 (+78)</b>
5-11 years	Number of places with: (a) Out of school childcare providers (inc. actual school-based)	507	1,043	For out of school childcare providers = 0.49	1,210	588 (+81)
	(b) Registered childminders	18		For registered childminders = 0.017		21 (+3)
	<b>Total Reg. Supply</b>	<b>525</b>				<b>613 (+84)</b>

Table 5 indicates that 163 new childcare places may be required by 2027:

- 78 new early years childcare places for 0-4 years would be required to maintain the 2022 sufficiency ratio.
- 84 new out of school childcare places for 5-11 year olds would be required to maintain the 2022 sufficiency ratio.

However, it can be noted in Table 6 below that, as part of the response to the summer 2022 CSA structured interviews with childcare providers, 20% of early years childcare providers/settings that are located in the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated an intention to develop new provision in the forthcoming two years - which was a combined total of 26 new places.

Table 6 - incidence of Alsager Schools Planning Area-based childcare providers having plans/intentions to increase their capacity over the forthcoming two years

Type of Provider	Percentage of providers with intention to increase capacity...	Combined number of additional places...
Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	20%	26
Out of School Childcare Provider	50%	15
Registered Childminder	0	n/a

## Funded Childcare

Table 7 - Dynamics of provision in the Alsager Schools Planning Area in summer 2022 as outlined by *responding* settings/childminders

Type of Responding Provider	Number of free entitlement for 2 year olds offered in Schools Planning Area	Evident number of vacant places in summer 2022	Number of universal 15 hours free entitlement for 3&4 year olds offered in Planning Area	Evident number of vacant place in summer 2022	Number of 30 hours childcare offer places for 3&4 year olds offered in Planning Area	Evident number of vacant place in summer 2022
Early Years Childcare Provider/Settings	17	0	45	1	105	2
Registered Childminders	2	0	2	0	2	0

Table 8 - assessments of how much higher or lower each type of relevant provider envisaged the demand for 15 hours free entitlement for 3&4 year old places would be, in summer 2023

Type of Provider	% stating significantly higher	% stating higher – but not significantly	% stating About the Same	% stating lower – but not significantly	% stating significantly lower	% stating Don't Know
Early Years Childcare Provider/Settings	20%	60%	20%	0	0	0
Registered Childminders	0	0	100%	0	0	0

Table 9 - assessments of how much higher or lower each type of relevant provider envisaged the demand for free entitlement for 2 year old places would be, in summer 2023

Type of Provider	% stating significantly higher	% stating higher – but not significantly	% stating About the Same	% stating lower – but not significantly	% stating significantly lower	% stating Don't Know
Early Years Childcare Provider/Settings	25%	25%	50%	0	0	0
Registered Childminders	0	0	50%	0	0	50%

Table 10 - assessments of how much higher or lower each type of relevant provider envisaged the demand for 30 hours childcare places would be, in summer 2023

Type of Provider	% stating significantly higher	% stating higher – but not significantly	% stating About the Same	% stating lower – but not significantly	% stating significantly lower	% stating Don't Know
Early Years Childcare Provider/Settings	20%	40%	40%	0	0	0
Registered Childminders	0	0	50%	0	0	50%

## Workforce, Recruitment and Retention

Table 11 - fundamental workforce details among setting-based providers in the Alsager Schools Planning Area in summer 2022

Type of Provider	Average number of staff employed at settings in the Alsager Planning Area	Percentage of settings stating that they had staff leave in the past 12 months	Percentage of settings stating that they were currently experiencing problems with recruitment and/or retention	Percentage of settings stating that they had training needs or gaps
Early Years Childcare Provider/Setting	15	100%	80%	0
Out of School Childcare Provider	6	0	50%	50%

Repeated stated reasons for staff leaving settings *included*:

- Wages being too low
- Staff deciding to work in a different sector

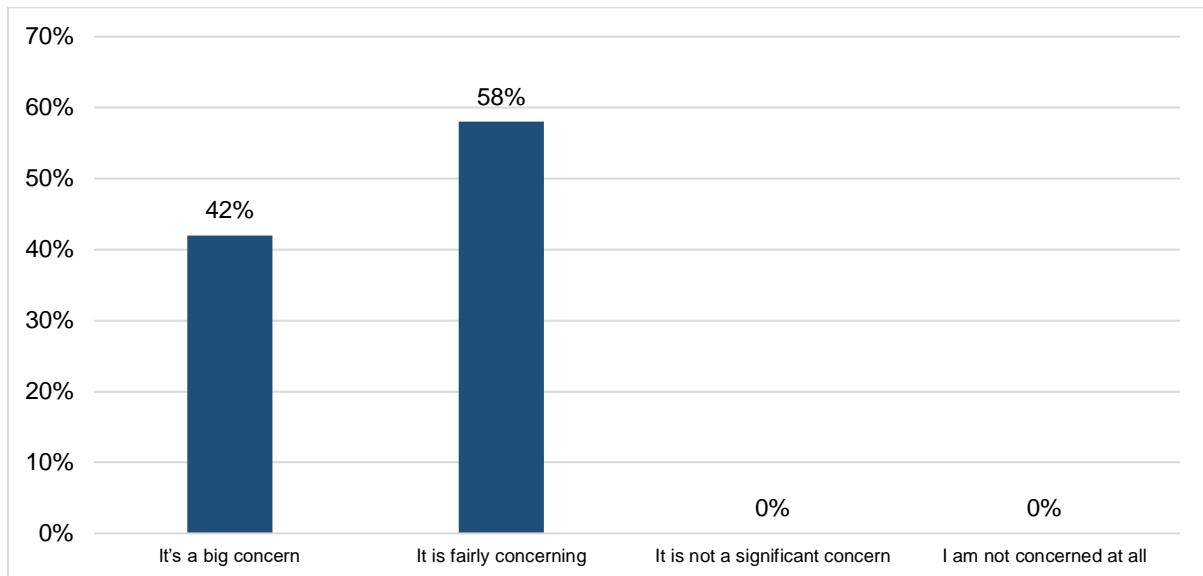
Stated posts/positions that evidently were aligned to recruitment or retention challenges/difficulties *included*:

- Qualified to Level 3
- Playworker

Additionally, 0 registered childminders stated that they had a training gap/need.



Image B - level of concern that setting-based childcare providers had about the theme of workforce recruitment and retention, including for the forthcoming period: summer 2022 – summer 2023



## Sustainability

40% of early years childcare providers/settings situated in the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were experiencing **ongoing** sustainability issues as a result of COVID-19 – and repeated themes were:

1. Recruitment of staff creating sustainability challenges
2. Concerns about finances/income

50% of out of school childcare providers situated in the Alsager Schools Planning Area

...and 50% of registered childminders situated in the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were experiencing ongoing sustainability issues as a result of COVID-19 – and this also related to concerns about finances/income.

Image C - how parents/families were continuing to feel in terms of their child(ren) (re)attending childcare, according to Alsager Schools Planning Area-based childcare providers

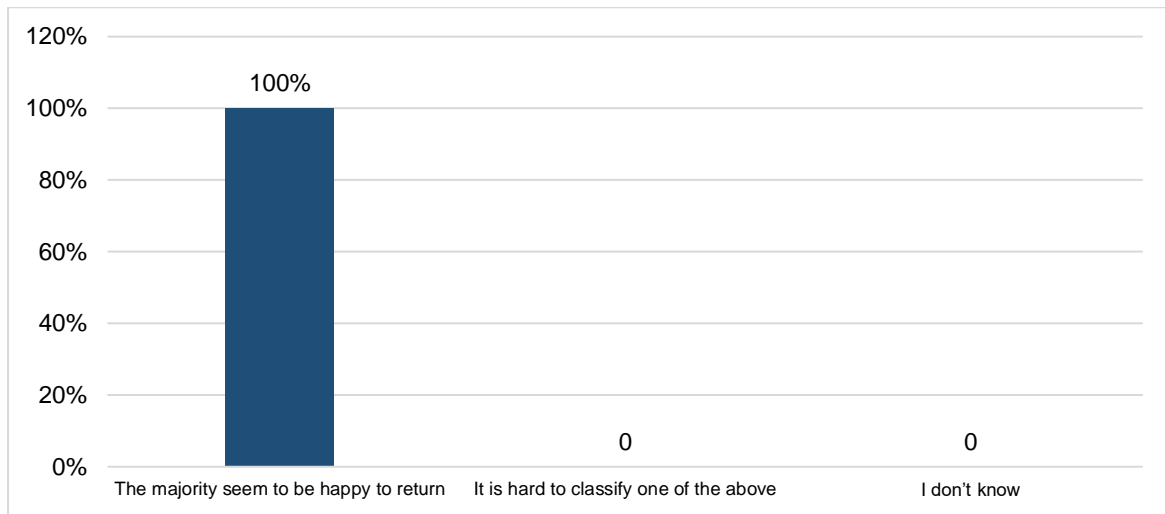
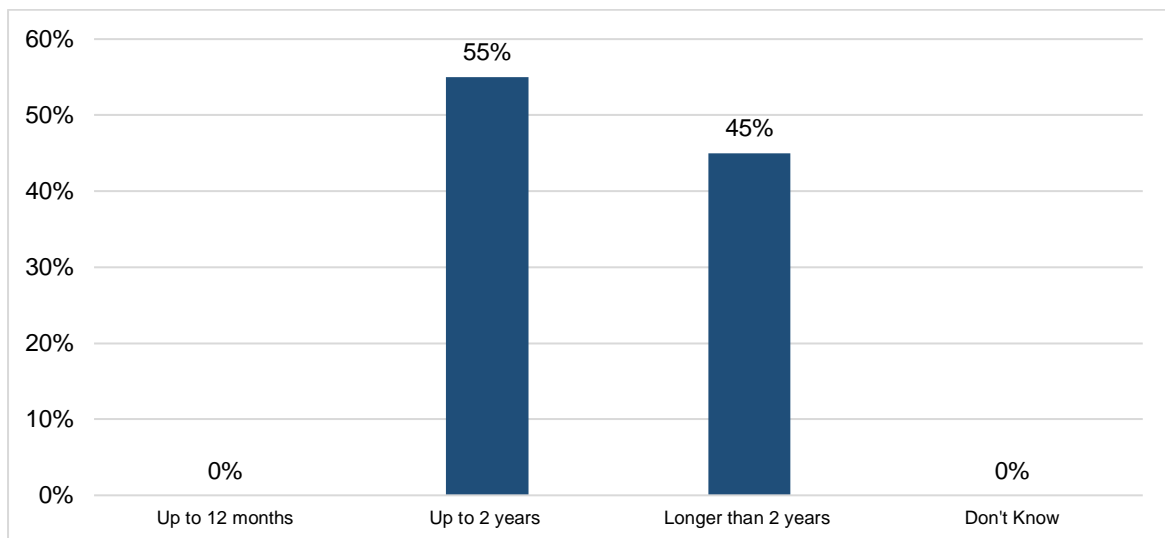


Image D - length of time childcare providers stated that they expected to be providing childcare for



## SEND

42% of setting-based early years childcare and out of school childcare providers stated that they had at least one team member with a SEND-themed qualification.

Repeated examples of qualifications stated were:

- A trained SENCO
- Staff member(s) with Autism training/qualification

Image E - Numbers of enquiries that responding childcare providers stated that they received in each calendar year from a carer of a child with SEND

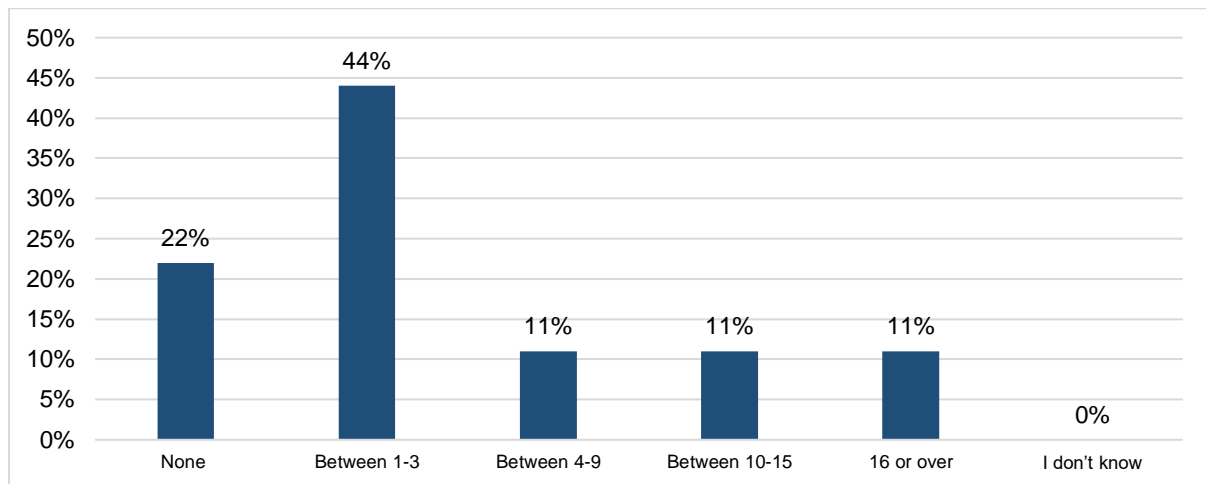
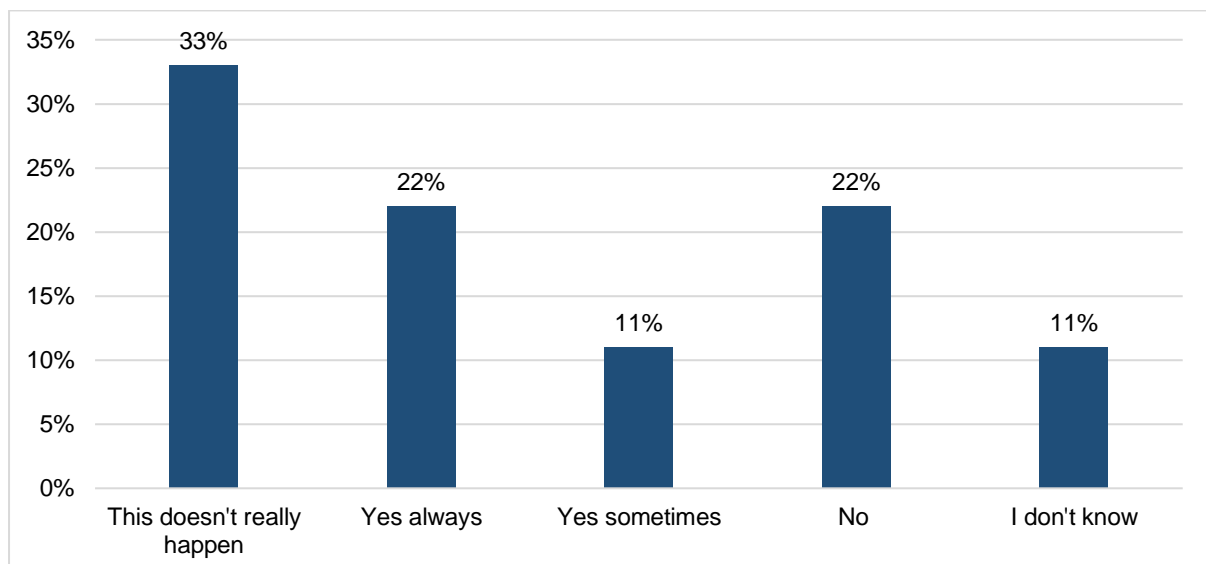


Image F - frequency with which childcare providers stated that they refer a family to another childcare provider if they cannot not take a SEND child for any reason



42% of Alsager Schools Planning Area-based early years childcare settings/providers and out of school childcare providers stated that they were still noticing some ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the development, behavior or demeanor of certain children.

Correspondingly, 50% of Alsager Schools Planning Area-based registered childminders stated that they were still noticing some ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the development, behavior or demeanor of certain children.

Ultimately, all setting-based (early years and out of school) childcare providers were requested to state, on a scale of 1 – 10, how **confident** they thought they were as a (whole) setting in supporting children/young people with SEND:

The average rating provided by early years childcare providers/setting was 8/10 – and thus it can be assumed that approximately 80% of such places are accessible to children with SEND in the Alsager Schools Planning Area.

The average rating provided by out of school childcare providers/setting was 9/10 – and thus it can be assumed that approximately 90% of such places are accessible to children with SEND in the Alsager Schools Planning Area.

Additionally, the average rating provided by registered childminders was 6/10 – and thus it can be assumed that approximately 60% of such places are accessible to children with SEND in the Alsager Schools Planning Area.

### Role of Cheshire East Council

Finally, all childcare providers were invited to state the types of further and continued support that they would appreciate from the local authority. The three repeated requests were:

1. Support with sourcing training on SEND
2. Support and advice on the issue of SEND related paperwork
3. An ideal of a dedicated childminding contact at the LA

## Perspective of Parents and Carers resident in the Alsager Schools Planning Area

### Background of respondents

10% of the respondents to the summer 2022 Cheshire East Council Childcare Parental Demand survey were resident in the Alsager Schools Planning Area.

All responding parents and carers across all of the Schools Planning Areas were invited to state what term best described their current circumstances aligned to their **employment status**. The most frequent stated circumstance of responding parents was in full-time employment/self-employment (30 hours + per week) (36%), followed in frequency by part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week) (17%).

All responding parents and carers responding from the Alsager Schools Planning Area were invited to state their annual family income bracket (before tax).

Table 12 - Incidence of gross household income per year (before deductions/tax)

Annual household income	Percentage of relevant responding Alsager locality parents/carers	Most frequently stated type of formal childcare accessed during term-time
Up to £16,190	5.5%	After School Club
£16,190 - £29,999	10%	Pre-School/Playgroup
£30,000 - £54,999	18%	Day Nursery
£55,000 - £99,999	15%	Out of School Childcare
£100,000 or above	8.5%	Pre-School/Playgroup
I don't know	1.5%	Out of School Childcare
I would rather not say	10%	n/a
Did not say	31.5%	n/a

### Feedback from carers of children and young people with SEND

21% of responding parents, i.e. carers, who were resident in the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were caring for/raising at least one child with SEND or a long-term illness.

The most frequent SEND type stated was Speech, Language and Communication Needs followed in frequency by Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

These relevant respondents were invited to describe any particular issue(s) they have experienced as a carer of a child with SEND in accessing childcare – and the most frequent was: Staff are not appropriately trained/qualified to support children with SEND.

## Usage of Formal and Informal Childcare

Table 13 - Most frequent type(s) of formal childcare evidently accessed within the Alsager Schools Planning Area

Schools Planning Area	Most frequent type of formal childcare evidently accessed by responding parents	Second most frequent type of formal childcare evidently accessed by responding parents	Third most frequent type of formal childcare evidently accessed by responding parents
Alsager	After School Club (47%)	Breakfast Club (43%)	Holiday Playscheme (33%)

The type of *informal* childcare responding parents/carers had evidently used for any of the children in their household at some point in 2022, was grandparents (75%) followed in frequency by just me and/or a partner (58%).

- 14% of responding parents from the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were: **accessing formal childcare only**
- 22% of responding parents from the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were: **accessing informal childcare only**
- 64% of responding parents from the Alsager Schools Planning Area stated that they were: **accessing formal and informal childcare**

Table 14 - Average number of hours (relevant) responding parents stated that they were accessing **formal** childcare for on a typical weekday in 2022 during term-time

Schools Planning Area	Average number of hours on a typical week day formal childcare was being accessed for – by relevant parents, during term time	Most frequent number of hours on a typical week day formal childcare was being accessed for – by relevant parents, during term time
Alsager	5 hours 30 minutes	3

Table 15 - Weekdays which responding parents were evidently most frequently accessing formal childcare during: (a) school term-times and; (b) school holiday-times

Schools Planning Area	Most frequent weekday – during term-times	Most frequent weekday – during holiday times
Alsager	Tuesday	Wednesday

Table 16 - Average monthly amounts that relevant responding parents spent on formal childcare during: (a) term-time and: (b) school holiday-times

Schools Planning Area	Average monthly expenditure on formal childcare – term-time	Average monthly expenditure on formal childcare – holiday-time
Alsager	£177.10	£297.00

All responding parents and carers were invited to state any types of *formal* childcare that they would like to access in the near future, which they were not accessing in summer 2022?:

Table 17 - Most frequent type(s) of formal childcare envisaged for future use

Schools Planning Area	Most frequent type of formal childcare evidently envisaged will be accessed in the future	Second most frequent type of formal childcare evidently envisaged will be accessed in the future	Third most frequent type of formal childcare evidently envisaged will be accessed in the future
Alsager	Holiday Playscheme	After School Club	Breakfast Club

The three most frequent themes and assurances that such relevant parents/carers stated that they would look for if they were to consider accessing formal childcare at some point in the future were – in order of frequency:

1. For it to be affordable
2. For there to be flexible hours/ad hoc availability
3. Good quality

### Funded Childcare

10% of responding Alsager Schools Planning Area-resident, parents/carers stated that they had a child aged 2 years. 0 of such parents/carers subsequently stated that they were currently accessing the free entitlement for 2 year olds.

Additionally, 31% of responding parents/carers stated that they had a child aged 3 and/or 4 years and 14% of such parents/carers subsequently stated that they were currently accessing the universal 15 hours free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

45% of such parents/carers subsequently stated that they were currently accessing the extended 30 hours childcare offer, with all of these parents/carers stating that it was either very easy to organise or fairly straightforward to organise – with just one exception, a parent that stated: it was not as easy as I would have liked.

Relevant parents were invited to give further feedback about the free entitlement for 2 year olds. Two parents provided such a response:

*"I think that there is a lack of places. I work within early years and there is not enough 2 year old places [in my opinion] especially in the Sandbach area too".*

*"This entitlement needs to be offered to working parents. [In my opinion] it's unbelievable that parents who don't work can get free childcare".*

There was no repeated incidence of feedback about the universal 15 hours free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

Relevant parents were invited to give further feedback about the 30 hours childcare offer and responses included:

*"I find it very unfair that only one partner salary is taken into account rather than a total household income".*

*"It's difficult when the 30 hours has to be split over the whole year as 'you' still end up paying a substantial amount, I think. It is also a shame to have to pay full costs (apart from Tax Free Childcare) before age 3".*

### Childcare and COVID-19

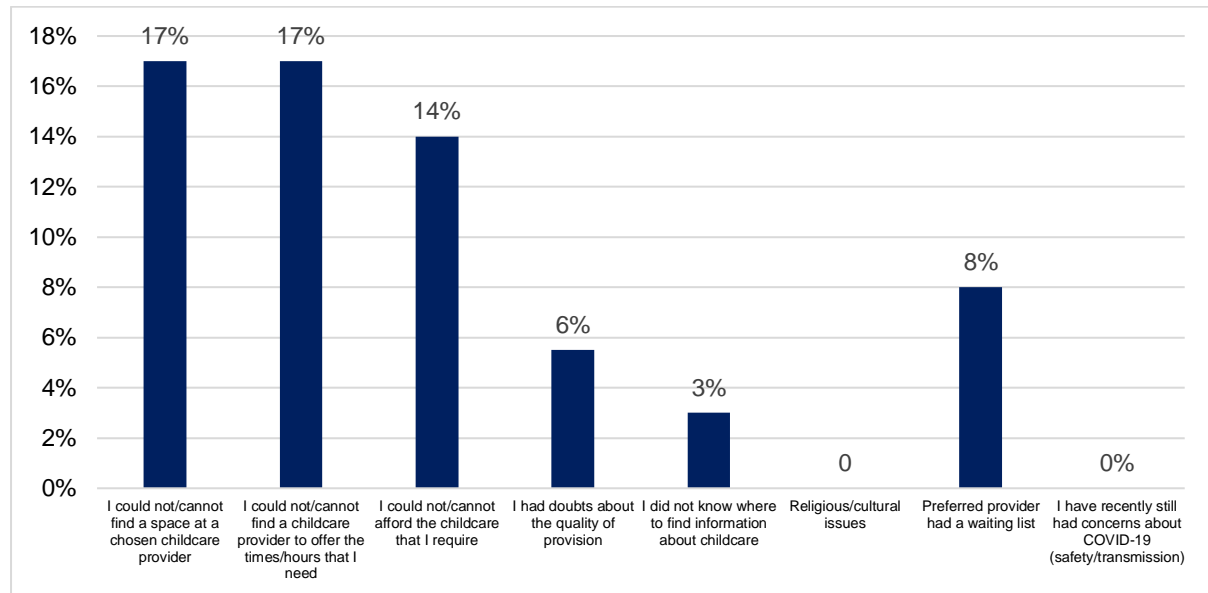
All Alsager Schools Planning Area-resident parents of pre-school aged children were invited to state whether they had any concerns about their relevant child(ren)'s early development, including their early years education, as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic? (only) 4% of relevant parents stated Yes and the most frequent type of concern was (words to the effect): *"we are still experiencing delays receiving support with speech and language concerns".*



## Barriers to accessing childcare

All Alsager Schools Planning Area-resident parents were invited to state whether – at some point in time – they had experienced specific barriers to accessing childcare:

Image H - Incidence of barriers to accessing childcare



## Childcare and Cheshire East Council

All Alsager Schools Planning Area-resident parents were invited to state whether there was anything that Cheshire East Council should be doing in terms of supporting parents and carers with childcare, in 2022.

The most frequent type of feedback was (words to the effect):

*There is a need for longer hours... and help with that would be great...*

Specific examples of such feedback included:

*It would be much better if local parents could access childcare 7am-7pm rather than 8am – 6pm...*

*I'd like to see a particular nursery which could offer longer hours of care to nurses and NHS staff*

Finally, all parents were invited to state whether they were aware of the existence of Cheshire East Family Information Service. For those who responded to this question: 22% stated that they were – and 78% stated that they were not, or did not provide a specific response either way.