



# **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022**

## **Summary and Action Plan**

**December 2022**

## Introduction

Cheshire East Council is committed to working with providers from the private, voluntary, and independent sectors (PVI) and the school run sector. This is to create a strong, sustainable, and diverse childcare market that meets the needs of families and supports children's learning through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) outlines how Cheshire East Council will continue to secure enough childcare places, as far as is reasonably practicable, for children to access the early education entitlements and support local parents who are working, studying, or training for employment. The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a role in shaping the childcare market.

The 2022 CSA has been produced to clearly outline strategic priorities aligned with the 26 School Planning Areas in the borough:

1. Alsager
2. Bollington
3. Congleton Central
4. Congleton East
5. Congleton West
6. Crewe North
7. Crewe South
8. Disley
9. Haslington
10. Holmes Chapel
11. Knutsford Rural
12. Knutsford Town
13. Macclesfield North
14. Macclesfield Rural
15. Macclesfield South
16. Middlewich
17. Nantwich Town
18. Nantwich Rural South

19. Nantwich Rural North
20. Poynton Village
21. Rural North East
22. Sandbach
23. Scholar Green & Woodcock's Well
24. Shavington
25. Wilmslow North
26. Wilmslow South

A set of 26 documents are accessible, for a reader to discern an assessment of childcare sufficiency in 2022 within each of those geographic locations.

The following CSA summary can be read aligned to the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which has had a significant impact on local families and has resulted in a changed demand for childcare, both on a national level and a local level. The scale of the impact may take some time to be fully understood, and this CSA represents an initial assessment appraisal of the effects on the dynamics of the Cheshire East early years and childcare sector.

The 2022 CSA summary, and the individual 26 Planning Area summaries, also report how new housing developments are influencing the sufficiency of early education and childcare provision. In 2022, Cheshire East Council has a policy for collecting developer contributions towards education infrastructure. However, that policy did not address and stipulate with regard to early years childcare. Therefore, as a specific outcome of the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, a policy for collecting developer contributions towards early years infrastructure was also produced and is accessible to a reader.

## Methodology

The research that has informed this 2022 Cheshire East Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) was undertaken by officers from the local authority in partnership with Place Group Consulting during summer and autumn 2022. Members of the Place Group sufficiency projects team had previously worked with the local authority on CSA projects. The research involved:

**1. A series of structured CATI - Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews** – undertaken by Place Group CATI team members – with childcare providers that are operating in the Cheshire East locality. The sectors that were incorporated within this series of interviews were:

- Day Nurseries
- Pre-School/Playgroups
- Maintained Sector Nursery Schools
- Independent Sector Nurseries
- Academy School Nurseries
- State Funded Nurseries
- Registered Childminders
- Out of School Childcare Providers (including providers of after school clubs, breakfast/before school clubs and holiday clubs)

Each interview comprised a 40-45 minute discussion about key themes aligned to occupancy, demand, COVID-19 and sustainability themes.

**2. A structured online web survey for completion by parents and carers** – which was launched by Cheshire East Council via their communications team in summer 2022. The survey incorporated a mixed methodology number of qualitative and quantitative questions which retained a focus on the types of childcare and early years provisions that parents and carers were taking-up (or not taking-up) post the advent of COVID-19. Almost 800 parents and carers responded to the on-line survey.

**3. Structured research to examine the incidence of new housing developments set to take place (i.e. be constructed and occupied) within the Cheshire East locality over the forthcoming period 2022-2027** – with the support of the Cheshire East Council planning authorities.

## Key Findings

The following section presents Key Findings of the 2022 Cheshire East Childcare Sufficiency Assessment within the context of the overall local authority area. The Key Findings have informed a series of recommendations, commencing of page 13 which, in turn, informs an Action Plan for the local authority to pursue and accomplish.

- 1 As of summer 2022, there were 107 new housing developments planned for construction and eventual occupation up to the year 2027, which will yield approximately 15,540 new dwellings within the Cheshire East locality - and would eventuate a total of 2,020 new early years age children, aligned to the relevant Cheshire East Council Pupil Product Ration planning formula Source: Cheshire East Council 2022. The three Planning Areas which will accommodate the highest incidence of new housing developments - and therefore new dwelling's occupations are:
  - Crewe North
  - Macclesfield South
  - Sandbach
  
- 2 Analysis of the School Planning Areas indicates that new housing developments will have the greatest impact, in terms of a need for new childcare places so as to maintain existing levels of sufficiency, in the following five locations:
  - Nantwich Town
  - Sandbach
  - Macclesfield South
  - Alsager
  - Crewe North

3 Supply of childcare accessible in Cheshire East in late summer 2022

Type of Provider	Number of Providers: Cheshire East	Total Number of places
Private, Voluntary and Independent Day Nurseries	90	5,900
Pre-School/Playgroups	54	1,687
Maintained and Academy Sector (School-based) Nurseries	53	1,883
Out of School Childcare Providers - After School Clubs - Breakfast Clubs - Holiday Playscheme	141	8,870
Registered Childminder	124	1,111

4 Actual take up of funded places and percentage take up against estimates of numbers eligible in summer 2022 – aligned to Cheshire East Children’s Centre area footprint

Children’s Centre area	2 year olds potentially eligible	2 year olds take-up	% of 2 year olds taking up	2 year olds registered	Population of 3&4 year olds	3&4 year olds take-up	% of 3&4 year old take-up	2 YO – 3/4YO Yes	2 YO – 3/4YO No	2 YO – 3 %
Ash Grove	49	44	90%	210	350	282	81%	9	0	100%
Broken Cross	66	52	79%	227	384	385	100%	11	0	100%
Congleton	72	59	82%	337	647	665	103%	19	1	95%
Hurdsfield	36	30	83%	225	350	330	94%	6	0	100%
Knutsford	34	30	88%	166	409	367	90%	3	0	100%
Monks Copenhall	71	43	61%	208	308	422	109%	12	1	92%
Nantwich & Rural	57	38	67%	206	556	549	99%	15	1	94%
Oak Tree	161	122	76%	295	521	492	94%	32	0	100%
Oakenclough and Poynton	73	57	78%	507	957	910	95%	14	0	100%
Sandbach/Alsager/Middlewich	114	89	78%	418	1,007	985	98%	20	1	95%
The Brooks	126	94	75%	333	731	665	91%	20	1	100%
Total	859	658	77%	3,612	6,300	6,052	96%	161	4	98%

## Feedback from childcare providers in summer 2022

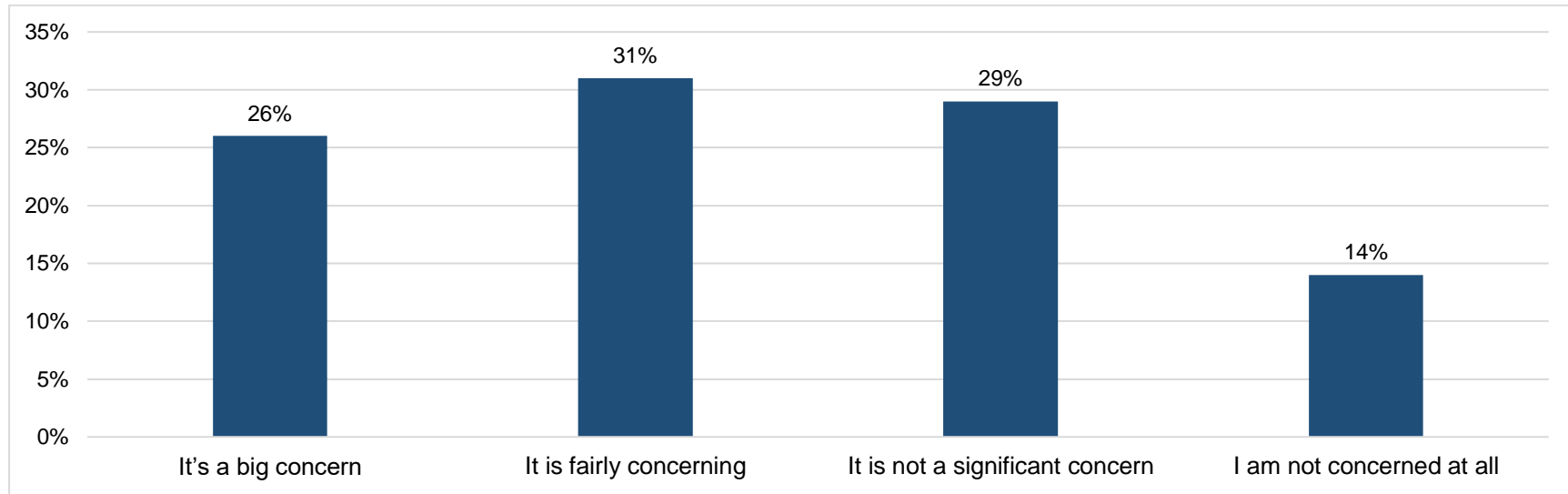
### 5 Occupancy Dynamics in summer 2022

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	39%	28%
Out of School Childcare Provider	68%	n/a
Registered Childminder	33%	19%

### 6 Fundamental workforce details among setting-based providers in the overall Cheshire East locality in summer 2022

Type of Provider	Average number of staff employed at settings in the Cheshire East 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	13	63%	53%	20%
Out of School Childcare Provider	6	24%	33%	14%

7 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

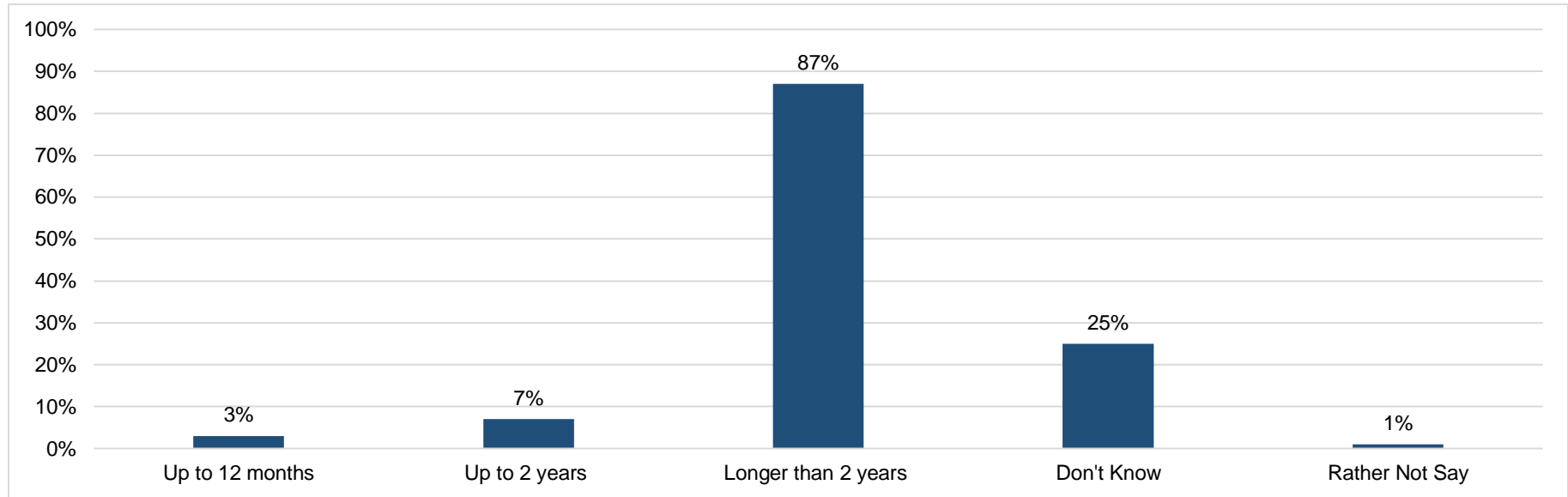


8 45% of *early years* childcare providers/settings situated in the Cheshire East locality stated that they were experiencing **ongoing** sustainability issues as a result of COVID-19 – and repeated themes were:

1. Concerns over recruitment and retention
2. Concerns aligned to income generation
3. Concerns aligned to staff's enthusiasm to remain working in the sector



9 Length of time childcare providers stated that they expected to be providing childcare for



10 67% 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:

- Level 3 SEND qualification
- General SEND qualification
- SENCO

11 62% Cheshire East locality-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, behaviour or demeanour of certain children.

Correspondingly, 47% of Cheshire East locality-based -based registered childminders stated that they were still noticing some ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the development, behaviour or demeanour of certain children.

12 All childcare providers were invited to state the types of further and continued support that they would appreciate from the local authority. The three most frequent requests were:

1. Help with readiness and compliance for Ofsted inspections
2. Continued support on the theme of providing childcare for children and young people with SEND
3. Continued training/more training for childminders accessible at evenings or during weekends

### Feedback from parents and carers in summer 2022

13 Most frequent type(s) of childcare evidently accessed within the Cheshire East locality

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
Holiday Playscheme (24%)	After School Club (19%)	Breakfast Club (16.5%)

14 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 (50% of all respondents were having help through a grandparent).

- 15
- 26% of responding parents from the Cheshire East locality stated that they were: **accessing formal childcare only**
  - 14% of responding parents from the Cheshire East locality stated that they were: **accessing informal childcare only**
  - 60% of responding parents from the Cheshire East locality stated that they were: **accessing formal and informal childcare**

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

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
6 hours 33 minutes	6

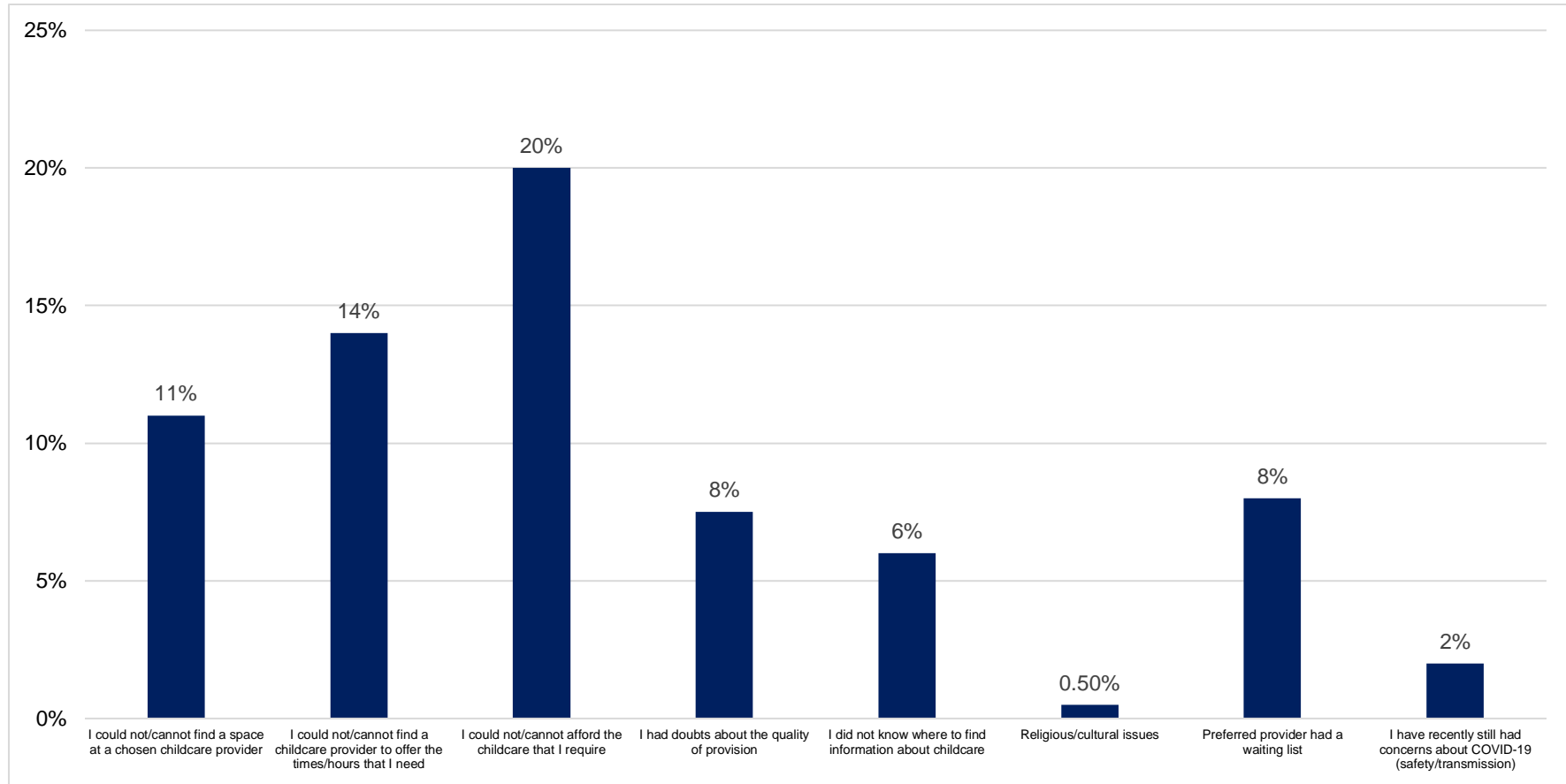
17 Weekdays which responding parents were evidently most frequently accessing formal childcare during: (a) school term-times and; (b) school holiday-times

Most frequent weekday – during term-times	Most frequent weekday – during holiday times
Wednesday (followed in frequency by Tuesday)	Wednesday (followed, again, in frequency by Tuesday)

18 Most frequent type(s) of formal childcare envisaged for future use

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
Holiday Playscheme	After School Club	Pre-School/ Playgroup

19 Barriers to accessing childcare



## Action Plan

**Recommendation 1:** Commencing in 2023, implement a policy for collecting financial contributions from housing developers that support the establishment of early years childcare infrastructure – as well as additional school places infrastructure.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Develop and legally formalise a Developer's Contribution Policy. This will be refined in partnership between relevant local authority officers – and will be informed by the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment outcomes.	Childcare Development Manager	By Autumn 2023	Housing developers will – as is the policy/procedure with other local authority areas – be expected to make a financial contribution towards the costs of establishing new early years childcare places/provisions – which will in likelihood be attached to future new primary schools, that serve new housing developments.	<b>HIGH</b>

**Recommendation 2:** Establish and maintain a triangulated communication channel between  
 1. early years and childcare officer; 2. school places planning officers and; 3. planning officers, so as to primarily ensure that an incidence of any new – status approved – housing developments can feature in the sufficiency planning for requisite early years and childcare infrastructure on an ongoing basis. This would complement plans to establish a new school provision.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Relevant local authority officers from early years, schools, planning and legal services will work in partnership to support the ratification of a developers contribution policy – including aligned to specifications for new free school programmes.	Childcare Development Manager	By Autumn 2023	To supplement a policy which applies to schools places: housing developers will – as is the policy/procedure with other local authority areas – be expected to make a financial contribution towards the costs of establishing new early years childcare places/provisions – which will in likelihood be attached to future new primary schools, that serve new housing developments.	<b>HIGH</b>

**Recommendation 3:** Continue to monitor the sustainability of childcare providers, from the specific perspective of their ability to both recruit and retain qualified staff and apprentices. The childminding sector has also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic downturn. The local authority should also retain an awareness of the challenges that this sector is facing aligned to occupancy and the changes to the work from home routines of certain parents.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Develop a clear early years and childcare workforce development plan. Cheshire East Council will continue to support – where possible/viable – with workforce themes. This will include working with key education (colleges), training and employment partners to develop a clear training and employment pathway for those wishing to work in the sector.</p>	<p>Childcare Development Manager / Lead Early Years Consultant</p>	<p>2023 - 2025</p>	<p>Cheshire East Council will strive to support a cohesive and recognised recruitment pathway including in partnership with local FE providers and the childcare sector.</p> <p>An ambition for a reduction in the number of professionals that have Level 3 and Level 5 qualifications exiting the sector.</p> <p>An increase in the number of qualified people entering the workforce.</p>	<p><b>HIGH</b></p>

**Recommendation 4:** Retain awareness that approximately 25% of childcare providers aligned concerns about their ongoing sustainability to revenue generation, including as an outcome of concerns about occupancy and vacant places.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Promote the business advantages to childcare providers of developing more flexible opening hours/mindsets in line with evolving demand.</p> <p>Continue to support childminder recruitment initiatives with a focus on childminders offering childcare outside of traditional hours.</p>	<p>Childcare Development Manager</p>	<p>2023-2024</p>	<p>An increase in the number of registered childminders by 2024 with a focus on priority SPAs where low supply and a higher number of new housing developments expected.</p> <p>Increase in out of school childcare providers and childminders (new and existing) offering childcare outside of traditional hours 8am – 6pm Monday- Friday.</p> <p>Maintaining and helping to ensure sustainability of the Cheshire East early years and childcare sector.</p>	<p><b>HIGH</b></p>



**Recommendation 5:** Retain an awareness that more parents/carers stated that they were not aware of the role of the Family Information Service (FIS), than those who state that they were aware of its role.

This informs the need for continued promotion and marketing of the FIS.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Cheshire East FIS will continue to prioritise its outreach and promotion strategies – including with the following stakeholders:                      (a) schools;                      (b) employers;                      (c) health sector colleagues                      (d) parents</p> <p>FIS to prioritise the promotion of financial assistance towards childcare costs.</p>	<p>Family Information Service Manager</p>	<p>2023-2024</p>	<p>The number of FIS enquiries including website traffic will have increased, as will the ‘where did you hear about the FIS’ metric(s).</p> <p>Parents and professionals will continue to have access to high quality information on early years and childcare provision including financial assistance towards childcare costs.</p>	<p><b>MEDIUM</b></p>

**Recommendation 6:** Retain an awareness that approximately 50% of childcare providers are, aligned to their feedback, evidently still witnessing the global ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the development, behaviour or demeanour of certain children. This is affecting the transitions of certain children in to Reception classes and potentially highlights the need for continued training within the theme of speech, language and communications of early years professionals, plus continued specialist partnership working with the early years and childminding sectors across the locality.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS  (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Cheshire East Council will continue to monitor how children in their early years are progressing with their development and early education. Training will be identified and sourced which continue to align to the early identification of potential speech, language and emotional problems with pre-school children.</p>	<p>Lead Early Years Consultant</p>	<p>2023-2024</p>	<p>Over time, as 'normality' continues to return, there will be a stabilisation of childcare providers feeding-back that they are witnessing such early development challenges with the children in their care, particularly with children pending entering a Reception cohort.</p>	<p><b>HIGH</b></p>

**Recommendation 7:** Retain an awareness – from an ongoing sufficiency perspective – that parents, carers and guardians most frequently highlighted out of school childcare as a type of provision that they envisage accessing in the future, in particular those resident in the urban towns of the locality. A frequent type of response from a parent was words to the effect  
*“I would like the Council to help with more availability of childcare during the summer school holidays”.*

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Cheshire East Council will continue to promote the existence of registered childcare support for the school holidays, particularly the summer holidays. This will include it's promotion of the HAF programme(s). Sustainability for this sector will be a key priority.	Childcare Development Manager / Family Information Service Manager	2023-2024	<p>In the subsequent full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment there will be a decrease in the incidence of parents and carers highlighting challenges in identifying childcare that is accessible during the school holidays.</p> <p>New childcare provisions are supplementing the holiday playscheme sector with relevant clubs and programmes.</p>	<b>HIGH</b>

**Recommendation 8:** Retain an awareness that, during this period of cost of living challenges for many families, parents and carers who responded to the summer 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment survey most frequently stated that affordability was still a barrier to them accessing childcare of their choice.

ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATION/ RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	POTENTIAL TIMESCALE	OUTCOME	PRIORITY STATUS (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Cheshire East Council, including via the FIS, will continue to prioritise the promotion of funded childcare and Tax Free Childcare, including to all new parents.	Childcare Development Manager	2023-2025	<p>In the subsequent full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment there will be a decrease in the incidence of parents and carers highlighting challenges with regard to affordability of formal childcare of their choice.</p> <p>The cost of living crisis, as it effects Cheshire East, will avoid having a concerted impact on the early years and childcare sector.</p>	<b>HIGH</b>