



CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2025



A white silhouette of the York city skyline, featuring various buildings and landmarks, is positioned at the top of a dark blue rectangular background. Below this, the text 'We work together, we improve, we make a difference' is centered in a large, white, sans-serif font.

We work together, we improve,
we make a difference

This report has been produced by: Early Years and Childcare Service, City of York Council

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Introduction and Background

This annual report updates elected members on how City of York Council is meeting its statutory duty to secure sufficient early years and childcare provision for children aged 0 – 14 years (and up to 18 years for children with a special educational need / disability).

What is Early Years and Childcare?

Early Years and Childcare is the full range of provision on offer for 0 - 14 year olds (up to 18 years old for children with a special educational need / disability) across our Private, Voluntary, Independent and Maintained Sectors.

Childcare Sufficiency Duty

The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area and all local authorities have a duty of securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents to enable them to: take up, or remain in, work, or access their early education entitlements.

Local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents. Local authorities are responsible for determining the appropriate level of detail in their report, geographical division, and date of publication. The local authority role is one of market facilitation and to:

- Ensure that the childcare is available, accessible, and affordable so that parents have the opportunity to use childcare in their area
- Ensure it is of good quality so that it benefits the child
- Provide parents with a choice of childcare so they can choose the childcare that meets their needs

Assessment Methodology

This annual childcare sufficiency assessment is informed by the following:

- Local datasets including birth data, planned housing developments etc.
- Occupancy data submitted from early years providers in Summer 2025
- Parent / carer survey, available via an online SurveyMonkey (between 19th June and 12th September 2025), promoted through local networks including York parent / carer forum.
- Childcare provider survey undertaken in July 2025
- Local intelligence including from the Quality Improvement Advisers who support early years providers
- York Family Information Service which supports families in finding early years and childcare and offers a brokerage service
- Regular dialogue with providers at information and networking events including the Leaders and Managers forum, Shared Foundation Partnerships etc.

Key Headlines

- There are 189 providers across the city offering approx. 3829 early years places, in 2024 there were a total of 188 providers offering approx. 3674 early years places showing an increase of 155 places.
- Summer 2025 occupancy data showed there were a total of 875 early years places vacant for 0 to 5 year olds, this is a slight increase when compared to Summer 2024 data which showed there were 737 places vacancies.
- Over the last 12 months, seven providers that were delivering early years places have closed (all were childminders) and eight providers have opened (seven childminders and one academy nursery)
- Take-up of two-year-old funding for families receiving additional support remains high in the city and in the summer term 2025 was 88%, which remains significantly higher than the estimated national average of 75%.
- In York one school was successful with their application for the school-based nursery capital funding, the additional places will be available from September 2025.
- Before and after school provision continues to grow across the city with 2321 places available for after school and 2003 available breakfast places (the breakfast places do not take into account those offered via the York Hungry Minds Scheme)
- One school is working to offer a free 30 minutes of breakfast provision as part of the DfE early adopter scheme.
- Two schools are offering free breakfast as part of York Hungry Minds Scheme.
- During the academic year 2024 to 2025 there were a total of 49 Ofsted inspections carried out in York. Of these inspections 18 were day nurseries / pre-schools, 27 were childminders and four were out of school clubs. The early years sector remains at 100% Good or Outstanding.
- York received £417,250 Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme funding for 2024 / 2025 which allowed for 3878 children / young people to attend HAF sessions across three school holidays.
- A parent / carer survey was undertaken between 3rd July and 12th September 2025. A total of 266 people reviewed the survey and 222 responses were received. Most respondents stated they currently use childcare, however 33 respondents stated they had not been able to access the childcare they had required. In most cases the parents who were not able to find suitable childcare the type that they required was after school and holiday care.
- Parents in the survey identified that the main places they find out about early education funding is through early years settings, online websites and social media sites.
- Most parents who completed the survey stated that their childcare needs would remain around the same for the next 6 to 12 months, however 68 respondents stated that they will need more childcare and 22 stated they will need less.
- In the academic year 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 Family Information Service supported 40 families to find childcare through their brokerages service. Out of the 40 cases no solution was found for four families, this was due to families requiring short notice / emergency care which providers could not accommodate.
- The 2025 annual childcare provider survey was undertaken between 2nd July 21st July 2025. The survey was for open dialect about sustainability, business support needs and overall readiness for the extended entitlements from September 2025. The vast majority of the respondents felt that they were reasonably confident that the setting would be financially sustainable for the next year and had generated a surplus in this financial year, however it was noted that four providers identified that they were not confident that they would be financially sustainable for the next year and eight others were not sure.
- Recruitment and retention remain a challenge for the sector however providers report less reliance on agency staff
- A considerable number of providers who responded in the survey expressed an interest in business support training for the sector.

York's Economic Strategy 2022 to 2032

York's 10-year Economic Strategy sets out to improve living standards and livelihoods for all of York's residents and businesses. The aim is to do this through increasing productivity, raising earnings, and maintaining our skills advantage. Childcare is seen as a key enabler of the economic strategy.

To achieve these objectives 5 themes are set where action will be taken:

1. York as a global city
2. A greener economy
3. A thriving workforce
4. Thriving businesses
5. An economy driven by good business

A fuller explanation of the 5 themes can be found in the full strategy document:

www.york.gov.uk/EconomicStrategy

Employment

York's employment rate was higher than across Yorkshire and The Humber as a whole in the year ending December 2023.

Of people aged 16 to 64 years living in York, 79.4% were employed in the year ending December 2023. This is a decrease compared with the year ending December 2022 when the local rate was 85.5%.

Across Yorkshire and The Humber in the year ending December 2023, 74.2% of people aged 16 to 64 years were employed. This was slightly lower compared with the previous year, when 74.6% of people were employed.

Source: www.ons.gov.uk

Housing

The City of York Local Plan was adopted by City of York Council on 27th February 2025 and covers the period from 2017 to 2033. The plan sets out how much, and where land should be provided to accommodate new homes and jobs that are needed in the city. It guides planning decisions within the city boundaries.

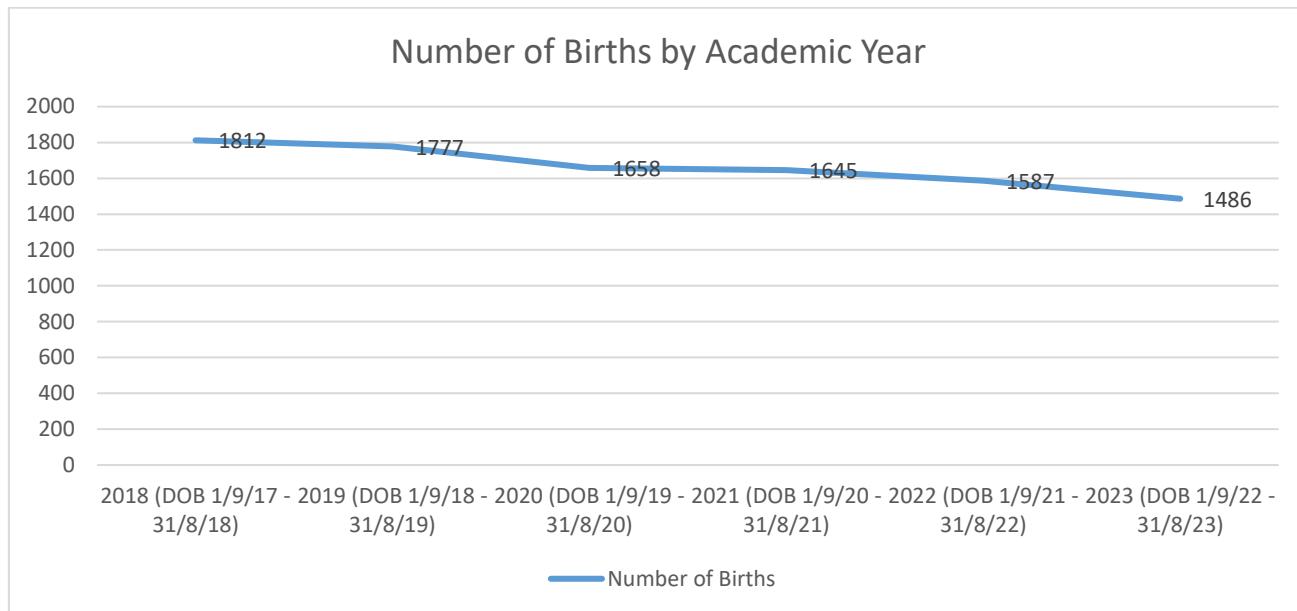
The full plan can be found here: city-of-york-adopted-local-plan-2025

To ensure sufficiency of early years places across the city contributions are sought from developers of each project to support the creation of new places where demand is expected to exceed supply. These contributions are known as section 106 developer contributions / community infrastructure levy.

Contributions to support the creation or expansion of early years provision has been received for several developments which have recently completed or are underway. A procurement process for the Chocolate Works / Terry's Development (Micklegate Ward) is currently ongoing and other procurement exercises will follow where contributions have been received, and data shows an evidenced need for increased places. It is usual that early year's places are created within 1.5km / 1.5 miles of a development.

Birth Data

The graph below shows the birth data in academic years over a six-year period (1st September to 31st August).



Source: ONS

The graph shows that births in the city have been declining over recent years. The dropping birth rates will impact on childcare needs in the coming years making it difficult to predict actual places required. Birth data is released annually in arrears, therefore at the time of this report this was the latest actual data. Termly occupancy data collections from childcare providers are in place to monitor availability and emerging shortfalls meaning the Local Authority can act swiftly to mitigate risks.

Asylum Seekers

Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country that has signed the '1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees' (the Refugee Convention). They have the legal right to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim, which is a legal process.

A person seeking asylum is someone who:

- has left their country of origin.
- has formally applied for asylum in another country, according to the Refugee Convention
- is awaiting the outcome of their application.

The use of hotels as asylum seeker accommodation is happening across the country. York is host to an asylum seekers hotel. The decision to use hotels, and which hotels, is made by the Home Office.

In York, the hotel is be managed by Mears, the Home Office's contractor for Yorkshire and the Humber.

Children placed in York are given access to education, either through temporary attendance at local schools, or other means, depending on their needs.

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In September 2025 there were a total of seven families residing in the hotel with children under the age of 5 years. No families were claiming early education funding; however Family Information Service offer a bi-monthly drop-in at the Asylum Seeker hotel to support families with childcare searches. Currently there are no open brokerage cases and families would be able to access local childcare if required.

Early Years & Childcare

The Childcare Reforms

In the Spring 2023 Budget, the Chancellor announced transformative reforms to childcare for working parents and to support the economy.

The new childcare reforms included the following:

- from September 2025, all eligible working parents of children 9 month+ can access 30 funded hours per week.

The focus for the Local Authority over the previous year was ensuring a sufficient supply of childcare to meet the needs of the families for the September 2025 roll out of the reforms. Supply mapping was undertaken based on summer term 2024 data and priority areas identified to support place creation using Childcare Expansion Capital Grant funding / provider capacity.

To date two providers have been successful in their applications for the Childcare Expansion Capital grant and a further procurement exercise will be undertaken in October 2025 to increase places across the city in priority wards where there are identified shortfalls for the future, with a focus on summer 2026.

The Chancellor also announced that the Government would invest £289m over two academic years to enable schools and local childcare providers to set up wraparound provision. The wraparound provision was for reception to year 6 children and to be available from 8am to 6pm.

The funding was to enable schools and local authorities to introduce or expand provision on either side of the school day and enable them to develop flexible ways of providing childcare. Work continues within the Local Authority to increase the place availability across the city and also support providers to extend their opening hours.

Giving every child the best start in life

In July 2025, the Department for Education (DfE) published the government's strategy for improving child development and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5 year olds in England have a good level of development (GLD) by 2028. The strategy outlines how the government will improve child development and ensure that all children have the chance to achieve and thrive.

This will be achieved by:

- improving family services, providing high quality support to parents and children from pregnancy to age 5
- making it easier and cheaper for families to access early education and care
- improving the quality of education and care that children receive in:
 - early years settings
 - childminders
 - reception classes

The DfE has set a statutory target for the City of York to ensure at least 79% of all children achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of Reception in 2027/28.

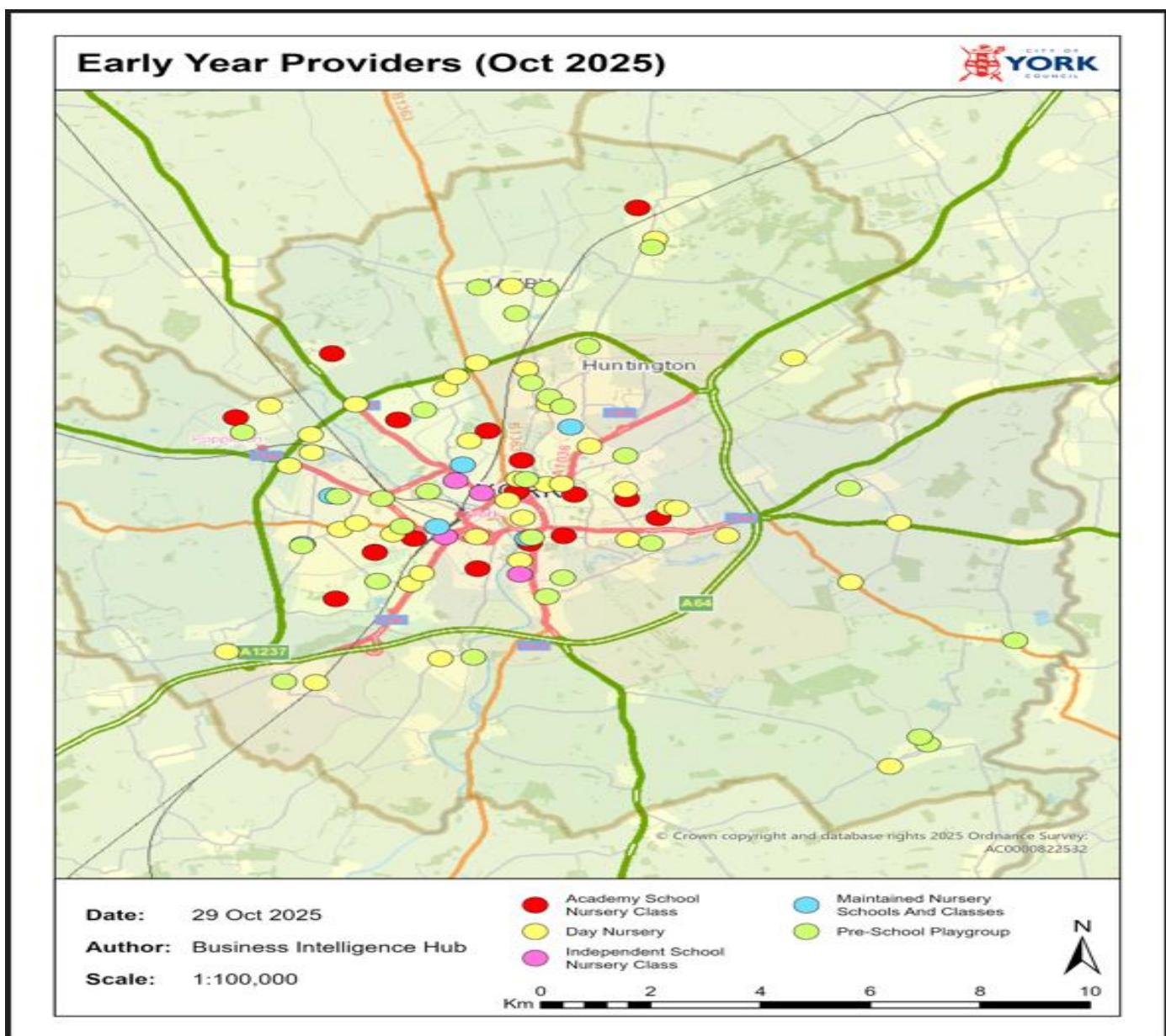
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A focus for the Local Authority over the coming months / year will be to review how the strategy will be implemented locally supporting the children / families within York. Work is currently underway on a multi-agency best start in life plan. The plan will highlight partnership across all areas with an emphasis on the home learning environment.

The full strategy can be found here: [Giving every child the best start in life - GOV.UK](#)

Childcare Supply

The map below shows the early years providers by type plotted on the city map. The map shows the majority of childcare falls within the ring road. For confidentiality reasons childminders have not been plotted on this map.



Provider Type

The table below shows the type of childcare for children aged 0 – 5 years available in York for the last 3 years. The overall number of providers by type has increased by one since 2023.

Provider Type	Number of providers as of 31/08/2023	Number of providers as of 31/08/2024	Number of providers as of 31/08/2025
Childminder	96	94	94
Day Nursery	39	41	41
Pre-school	26	26	26
Academy Nursery	16	16	17
Maintained Nursery	7	7	7
Independent Nursery	4	4	4
Total	188	188	189

The table shows that there is variety of provider types across the city offering choice for parents with childcare options, including term time and all year provision.

Openings / Closures of Settings

Over the last 12 months, seven providers have closed (all were childminders) and eight providers have opened (seven childminders and one academy nursery). From September 2025, we are aware of two providers opening (one academy nursery and one childminder) and four providers proposing to close (three childminders and one maintained nursery). In addition, one academy nursery is taking over the management of a pre-school setting.

Early Years Childcare Places Offered v Vacancies

The table below shows the places offered v vacancies across the city for children aged 0 – 5 years with a comparison against 2024.

Provider Type:	Under 2's				2 - 3 Years				3 - 5 Years				Totals (0 – 5's)			
	2024		2025		2024		2025		2024		2025		2024		2025	
	Places Offered	Places vacant	Places Offered	Places vacant	Places Offered	Places vacant										
Academy Nursery	0	0	0	0	43	5	50	7	433	65	478	86	476	70	528	83
Maintained Nursery	0	0	0	0	10	0	46	10	202	32	192	58	212	32	238	68
Independent Nursery	0	0	0	0	12	0	20	5	92	16	138	23	104	16	158	28
Day Nursery	553	177	643	191	618	142	631	205	884	195	891	193	2055	514	2165	589
Pre-school	3	0	5	2	136	37	140	31	420	56	428	64	559	93	573	97
Childminder	87	3	61	3	94	5	54	4	87	4	52	3	268	12	167	10
Totals	643	180	709	196	913	189	941	262	2118	368	2179	427	3674	737	3829	875

** Please note that data is missing from 25 childminders for 2024, and 55 childminders for 2025.

As at Summer 2025 there were a total of 3829 places offered for children aged between 0 – 5 years, which is an increase of 155 places when compared to 2024 where there were 3674 places offered. To note, there were 875 vacant places in Summer 2025 which is a slight increase from vacancies in 2024 where there were 737 places vacant. This shows there were

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a significant number of vacancies across the city in Summer 2025 to support families with their childcare needs.

The data also showed that there were vacancies for all age ranges (0 – 5 years).

Analysis is available at ward level to support local decisions on expansion / creation of new places and the Local Authority will work with any provider to identify local sufficiency for both early years and wraparound places / identify potential gaps for growth.

**** A breakdown of ward level places offered v vacancies is shown in appendix 1****

Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance

Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance sets out what local authorities and providers must do to comply with the law. The guidance was revised in February 2025 with key changes including clarification around charging for meals / consumables etc. A further update is expected in November 2025.

The local authority held an information session shortly after the release of the revised guidance to support providers to navigate the changes.

Support remains available to providers as they navigate the guidance to ensure compliance and prepare for further upcoming changes that providers must implement.

The full guidance can be found here: [Early education and childcare - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare-statutory-guidance)

Early Education Entitlements Take-up

Under 2s

Working families of children 9 months + were able to access 15 funded hours from Autumn 2024. The number of children taking up their funded place has steadily increased throughout the academic year as the entitlement has embedded. From September 2025, the entitlement increased to 30 hours.

Term	Number of children accessing funding
Autumn 2024	1005
Spring 2025	1018
Summer 2025	1033

2 Year old take-up

Take-up of funded places for two year olds in receipt of additional government support has remained consistent over the previous year and for summer term 2025 take-up was 71.2% (spring term 2025 63.7% and Autumn term 2024 79%). However, due to the expanded entitlements, some parents chose to apply for the working family entitlement rather than the disadvantaged route, therefore take up for summer 2025 for 2 year olds in receipt of additional government support would have been 88% if we account for those families who could have applied through CYC rather than through the working families route.

Take-up remains higher than the national estimated average of 75% in 2025.

Working family entitlement	
Term	Number of children accessing funding
Autumn 2024	1044
Spring 2025	1008
Summer 2025	975

3 & 4 Year Olds:

Take-up of funded places for 3 & 4 year olds remains high across the city and summer term 2025 saw a take-up rate of 93% which was a total of 2482 children accessing an early education place. However, to note that in the summer term 202 children accessed a place with a York provider who did not have a York postcode. Therefore an assumption can be made that a proportion of York children are accessing their childcare out of authority in neighbouring Local Authorities which would give a higher overall take-up rate. It is currently not possible to collect this data on out of area claims.

Early Years Expansion Grant 2025 to 2026

In February 2025 the department for education published guidance relating to the Early Years Expansion Grant. The government provided £75 million of funding to support the early years sectors as it was preparing to deliver the final phase of expansion of the working parent entitlement from September 2025.

Yorks total allocation from this funding was: £284,000. The expansion grant was distributed in full to eligible providers across the city in August 2025, meeting the statutory deadline.

While use of this early year's expansion grant funding will be diverse, reflecting different provider circumstances, it must be used for the purposes of supporting the delivery of the childcare entitlements and a mandatory survey to identify how providers have used the grant will be undertaken in the Autumn term 2025 with all recipients of the grant.

School Based Nursery (SBN) Capital Grant

In early 2025 the Department for Education launched the School Based Nursery programme.

The SBN programme was available for state funded primary phase schools and maintained nursery schools to apply for up to £150,000 of capital funding to create or expand a school-based nursery.

In York one school was successful with their application for school-based nursery capital funding and additional places will be delivered from September 2025.

Phase 2 of the SBN programme was launched in September 2025 and a further phase will be rolled out in 2026.

Programme details can be found here: [School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-based-nursery-capital-grant-2025-to-2026)

School age Childcare

This section of the report focusses on wraparound childcare. We define wraparound childcare as provision on or near school sites provided either by the school or an Ofsted registered PVI provider:

Before school care: typically open between 7:30am and 9am

After school care: typically open between 3pm and 6pm

Ofsted registered Holiday childcare during the school holiday periods

The policy context for wraparound childcare is outlined in the National Wraparound Childcare Programme which launched in September 2024, the ambition is that all primary aged children should be able to access wraparound childcare by September 2026. In York the LA received a grant from the national funding pot of £279 million which was made available from Government. Submission of a delivery plan was the mechanism for securing the funding allocation, and the DfE approved York's costed delivery plan in full. It should be noted that the wraparound programme has a term time only focus, so holiday provision is not eligible to be funded.

Current wraparound childcare provision

Since the start of the wraparound programme additional places at wraparound providers have been created and are open or will be open during the autumn term. The breakdown of place creation is below:

Type of expansion	Total places
Creation of new places	120
Expansion of places at existing providers	111
Expansion of opening hours at additional providers	159
	390

The grant rounds remain open for wraparound applications and are assessed monthly so we envisage that further places will be created before the end of the programme.

Provider Type	Number of providers as of 31/08/2025
Breakfast club	47
After school club	49
Holiday club	29

Current supply analysis indicates that there are:

Provision type	Number of places
Breakfast club	2003
After school club	2321
Holiday club	644

Other clubs run throughout the school holidays to support families e.g. sports clubs, tuition etc however as these are not Ofsted registered and may not open 8am to 6pm therefore

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we do not record these for sufficiency purposes, but we acknowledge that they may be of benefit to working parents.

Demand for after school club places remains high in some areas of the city, funding from the wraparound programme has helped to alleviate some of the pressure of this and increase supply to support families by expanding places in the following wards:

- Dringhouses and Woodthorpe
- Heworth Without
- Rural West York
- Micklegate
- Holgate

A breakdown of which providers have received Wraparound Programme Funding is included as an annex.

Eleven families stated in the annual parent survey that they could not access the wraparound care they needed due to locality; however, this is being addressed through the National Wraparound programme.

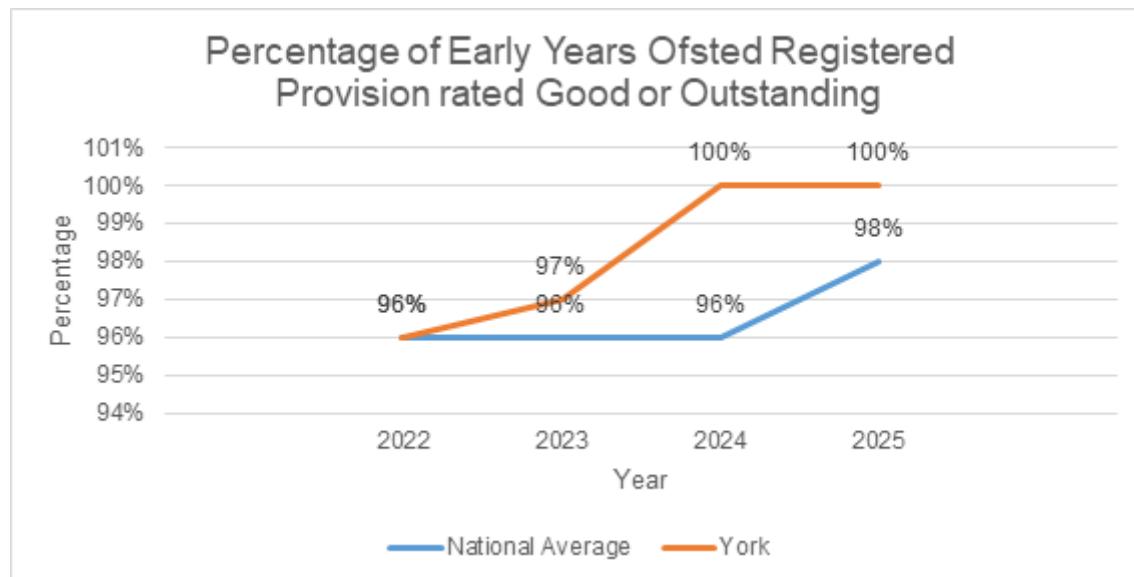
Ofsted Outcomes

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. They also inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people.

In September 2025 Ofsted changed the early years inspection framework replacing the overall effectiveness grade and implemented a new "report card" format, which focuses on evaluation areas aligned with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. Key changes include a focus on the quality of adult interactions, communication, and language, along with a greater emphasis on curriculum, teaching, and children's well-being. The inspection process will involve professional dialogue with leaders, a nominated contact person, and reports that describe the experiences of children at the setting.

During the academic year 2024 to 2025 there were a total of 49 Ofsted inspections carried out in York. Of these inspections 18 were day nurseries/preschools (16 received a Good outcome at initial inspection and 1 received an inadequate judgement and has since been reinspected and received a Good outcome), 27 were childminders (21 Good, six Outstanding judgements and 4 out of school clubs all receiving a met judgement.

The graph below shows the percentage of early years Ofsted registered provision rated Good or outstanding compared to national averages for the past 4 years. At present York has 100% Good or Outstanding Ofsted outcomes which is higher than the national average of 98%.



Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

In addition to the overall childcare availability York's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme offers fun activities for keeping active, being creative, and trying something new over the easter, summer, and winter school holidays. Children and young people from reception and year 11 and who are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals receive a voucher from their school which allows them to book onto free activities. Each of these sessions will include a healthy meal and a selection of activities ranging from sports, drama and creative workshops, nature activities, and much more. Some clubs provide specific sessions for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or additional needs.

Since 2021, the programme has grown significantly. The aim is to offer a range of activities for all ages, abilities, and interests across the city. The total amount of funding received for the 2024/2025 programme in York was £417,430.

The table below shows a total of 3878 children / young people attended HAF sessions across three school holidays.

	Amounts awarded / number of organisations involved	Number of children/young people attended	Number of primary aged children and young people	Number of secondary aged children and young people	Number of children and young people with additional needs
Easter 2024	£108,069 awarded to twenty three organisations	1151	885	266	235
Summer 2024	£220,167 awarded to twenty eight organisations	1846	1474	372	530

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Christmas 2024 / 2025	£35,879 awarded to fourteen organisations	881	629	252	222
Totals	£364,115	3878	2988	890	987

** please note the figures are for the financial year 2024/2025

In August 2025 the Government announced that funding for the HAF programme would be extended for another three years with a commitment of £600 million, providing support until 2029.

Government Help with Childcare Costs

There are various types of support available to families to help with childcare costs. Eligibility varies for each type and a full table setting out all current government help with childcare costs is shown in **Appendix 3**.

Special Educational Needs / Disability (SEND)

Supporting children with Special Educational Needs / Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) applies to everyone providing early years care and education. It applies to individual childminders and to networks of accredited childminders.

The DDA sets out two main duties:

- Not to treat a disabled child 'less favourably'
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled children

There are two key early years funding streams aimed at supporting access to the early years entitlements for children with additional needs and disabilities; the SEN Inclusion Fund and the Disability Access Fund (DAF).

SEN Inclusion Fund

SEN Inclusion Fund is awarded to children attending an early years setting who usually have a My Success Plan, or equivalent, and who do not have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The children must be in receipt of early education funding at the setting to be eligible for the funding. The funding is usually for children with emerging needs. In York, providers submit an application form and allocation of funding is determined by the Learning Support Hub panel. The amount awarded depends on the level of funding agreed by the panel using a staggered formula:

- £750 – Standard payment
- £1500 Enhanced payment
- £2250 Extraordinary temporary payment

In York 79 children accessed SEN Inclusion Fund over the 12 month period from September 2024 to August 2025. This is a decrease from the previous year where 91 children accessed SEN Inclusion Funding, however in addition some children / settings have benefited from targeted support via the Learning Support Hub outreach Team.

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Providers can receive £938 (increased from £910 in previous financial year) per year for funded children who receive Disability Living Allowance and are accessing a place at their setting.

The aim of the Disability Access Funding (DAF) is to assist providers to make reasonable adjustments to support the equality of access for all children as set out by the Equality Act 2010. Local authorities must have arrangements to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disabilities (SEND code of practice 2014).

The fund responds to meet the needs of children receiving Disability Living Allowance and taking up the Early Education Funding (EEF).

The funding coincides with York's commitment to improving children's outcomes through offering support in the early years of a child's life to access enabling environments. Creating these environments helps towards diminishing the difference between our most disadvantaged children and their peers. It also underpins the guiding principles based upon enabling environments as set out by the Early Years Foundation Stage that: "Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices ensure that every child is included and supported."

In York 85 children accessed the Disability Access Fund over the 12 month period from September 2024 to August 2025, this is an increase from the previous year where 68 children accessed DAF. A total of £78,050 was paid to childcare providers.

York SEND Local Offer / The Learning Support Hub

The York Local Offer website provides information about the available support for parent carers, professionals as well as children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in York.

The Local offer website can be found here: [Welcome to York SEND Local offer – York SEND Local Offer](https://www.yorksend.org/send-local-offer)

The Learning support Hub is also available to request support for a specific child / young person, staff training, group learning or guidance.

Further details can be found here: <https://www.yorksend.org/learning-support-hub>

Section 23

A section 23 duty requires health professionals to tell the local authority if they believe a child under school age has, or is likely to have, special educational needs or a disability (SEND).

The table below shows the referrals received over a three year period, the majority of referrals received were for social / communication:

Academic Year	**Total referrals received	Total referrals for social / communication
2022 / 2023	124	94
2023 / 2024	118	94
2024 / 2025	118	93

**The data reflects the referrals received and not individual children

Annual Parent / Carer Childcare Needs Survey 2025

A parent / carer survey was undertaken between 3rd July and 12th September 2025. The survey was conducted in partnership across the city and included a full communications strategy for ensuring a wide reach.

A total of 266 people reviewed the survey however, 222 responses were received from parents / carers in York.

The majority of respondents (201) stated that they currently use childcare and others stated they did not need childcare or would prefer to use family / friends instead. However 33 respondents stated that they had not been able to access the childcare they had required, the main type of childcare that families had not been able to access was after school and holiday care. This aligns to the Local Authority's work to increase after school places across the city, and in particular the creation of a new wraparound provider based in the Heworth / Heworth without ward. Four families with children who have a special educational need / disability stated that they had not been able to access the childcare they required.

Families reported that the main sources of information around early education funding and childcare were from an early year's setting, online websites and social media sites as well as friends, family, and word of mouth. This shows the sector is well embedded into communities and that families are getting the information they require around help with childcare costs.

Where families were accessing early education funding most respondents (123) stated that they also pay for additional hours.

The majority of respondent (116) stated that they had used Tax Free Childcare to help with the cost of childcare, however 7 respondents stated they did not know about tax free childcare, whilst this figure is relatively low it is important that all families are able to access help with childcare costs and therefore some promotion of this will need to be undertaken.

Parents / carers were asked whether their childcare needs will change within the next 6 - 12 months. 112 respondents stated their needs would stay the same, 68 respondents stated they would need more childcare and 22 stated they will need less childcare, and 68 respondents skipped this question. Occupancy data collected termly, and other local intelligence will ensure the local authority can be proactive in supporting providers to increase capacity in wards where there is demand.

Brokerage Support

York's Family Information Service (FIS) is a free and impartial service providing information, advice and guidance for parents and carers of 0 – 19-year-olds (or up to 25 years if the child or young person has special educational needs or disabilities). The service provides information on a wide range of services, activities and groups and Ofsted registered childcare. This includes a childcare brokerage service, to support families who are struggling to find childcare that meets their needs.

In academic year 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025, the Family Information Service opened 41 brokerages. Out of the 41 opened cases there were four where no solution was found due to short notice / emergency care and no providers could accommodate. At the time of compiling this report one brokerage was open.

Annual Childcare Provider Survey 2025

The 2025 annual childcare provider survey was undertaken between 2nd July and 21st July 2025. The survey was for open dialect about the sectors sustainability, business support needs and overall readiness for the extended entitlements from September 2025. For the purpose of this report all responses have been grouped to ensure no provider can be identified.

The survey was sent out to all provider types including childminders, day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, school nurseries and out of school provision (wraparound).

A total of 50 providers viewed the survey, however the survey was not mandatory and due to the sensitivity of the questions around business sustainability some providers may have chosen not to answer some or all of the questions.

The vast majority of the respondents felt that they were reasonably confident that the setting would be financially sustainable for the next year and had generated a surplus in this financial year, however it was noted that four providers identified that they were not confident that they would be financially sustainable for the next year and eight others were not sure.

A small number of providers had been capping / limiting places offered during the previous year and when asked the main reasons given were recruitment / retention issues, supporting children with SEND and personal circumstances.

Recruitment of suitable practitioners remains a challenge both locally and nationally and a small number of settings reported that they use agency staff to support with meeting ratios, however the survey highlighted less reliance on agency staff when compared to the previous year.

Early education funding is not intended to cover the costs of meals / snacks and consumables, however around half of the respondents stated that they do not charge for meals / snacks and consumables on funded entitlement hours. Out of these the majority that did not charge were childminders.

The majority of settings stated that they are able to meet demand from September onwards, however some report their setting is full and has a waiting list.

A small number of settings reported that they were aware of families that have been unable to find the childcare they require, however the majority of these families are choosing to remain on a waiting list as they want this specific provider.

When asked if settings would attend / be interested in business support training many settings responded positively.

A small number of providers did express an interest in either expanding places or exploring opportunities for business growth across the city, however the majority stated they did not wish to expand at this time.

The findings from the survey will inform the action plan for the coming year and will be used to target support where there is an identified need.

Conclusions and Action Plan

There remains a number of national and local challenges which continue to impact on the early years and childcare market and have the potential to affect the supply of good quality places to meet demand in the future.

However with the new best start in life strategy this will bring potential opportunities for the childcare sector and the multi-agency local plan will see childcare providers as a key partner to improving outcomes for the children and families in York.

York is currently meeting its statutory duty to ensure that there is provision of childcare in the city to meet the needs of parents of children aged 0 – 14 years to allow them to work or undertake education or training. This is confirmed by the availability of vacancies for parents to access across the age ranges 0 – 5 years. In the summer term 2025 there were a total of 875 vacant places across the city. There is a good mix of childcare types across the city giving parents a varied choice of childcare options: 96 childminders, 41 day nurseries, 26 pre-schools, 17 academy nurseries, seven maintained nurseries and four independent nurseries.

The analysis of wraparound provision for school aged children identified some small gaps in provision and that there remains a small gap for children with complex needs. Both of these areas are being addressed through a procurement process to commission delivery of places to meet this need and being supported through the national wraparound programme funding. Also due to a closure of a wraparound setting in the Heworth / Heworth without ward a procurement process has been followed to identify a provider to deliver provision from this city of York building. This new provision will be open shortly and will meet the sufficiency gap for local families.

Through the parent survey and other local intelligence, the Local Authority is aware of the rising challenges for families of children with SEND. The provision of appropriate early years and childcare that meets the needs of children with special educational needs and, or disability continues to be of high importance in York and there are a number of strategies to uphold equity of access for all children. These include the provision of additional funding for providers where staffing levels are increased above statutory ratios in order to meet the needs of children with SEND. Additionally, work has begun to ensure children that have an EHCP plan / section 23 are able to access their full entitlements. A focus of any new creation of places is to ensure all places are inclusive. York's Special Educational Needs / Disability strategy highlights how a 'whole system' approach is used for provision planning, incorporating early years.

A new model of support for providers was introduced in York in September 2022; the learning support hub aims to build in skills and capacity from birth to 25 for children and young people with identified and emerging SEND. Providers can apply to the hub for targeted intervention which will involve specialist teachers or practitioners from the outreach team to work directly in settings over a prescribed period of time by offering a scaffolded approach to build skills and capacity into the sector to support children with additional needs. Alongside this there is a universal training offer and a bespoke training offer which can be applied for to meet the unique specific requirements of a cohort or an individual child where the universal training offer does not meet the child or young person's specific needs. York is working with Best Practice who are delivering the Level 3 SENCo qualification and have increased the number of SENCo networks to an additional network each term.

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Whilst Family Information Service report very few brokerage cases for children specifically with SEND the parent survey highlights that a small number of families have been unable to find suitable childcare. Therefore, there is partnership work to do to ensure that those families struggling to find childcare are supported from the relevant professionals.

The provider survey highlighted that most respondents were reasonably confident that the setting would be financially viable for the next year however it was noted that a small number were not confident or not sure on future sustainability. Support is available to providers on a 1:1 basis around sustainability and further training on business support factors are planned for 2026. Business support training specifically around financial planning, business planning, marketing and recruitment will be incorporated into the annual plan for the training offer to support providers through what have become very challenging times.

The ongoing staffing recruitment and retention crisis continues to affect the sector, however the provider survey evidenced that fewer providers are using agency staff than the previous year. Initial recruitment & retention training has been offered to providers and further in-depth training will be delivered in 2026. The local authority continues to work with colleagues in partner agencies such as the Job Centre Plus, colleges, universities, the local government association and sector organisations alongside ongoing dialogue with the Department for Education to highlight the current staffing crisis and seek potential short, medium and longer term solutions. Termly drop-in sessions are delivered in partnership with department for work and pensions at Job Centre plus to promote working in childcare / becoming a childminder.

Where providers are experiencing sustainability issues, the local authority works closely with them, providing advice and support and looking at potential solutions including revisiting their business models, fee structures, staffing structures and developing marketing strategies. Support is available to providers with ensuring compliance of the early education statutory guidance and in particular around ensuring sustainability whilst working within the guidance around meal charges etc.

Working in conjunction with school place planning, York's supplementary planning guidance has been updated, and the council has been successful in securing capital funding (Section 106 / Community Infrastructure Levy) from new housing developments to support the creation and expansion of both early years and school places. The process to commission new places has begun for the Chocolate Works / Terry's development. Further procurement will be undertaken where there is funding available from developers and there is an identified need.

Work is also done in partnership with the school place planning team for the school based nursery programme, which saw one York school successful with their application and will be delivering places from September 2025. Round two opened in September 2025 and a further round will open in 2026.

To support families with the cost of childcare work, Tax Free Childcare is promoted via the local authority website, social media sites and within community venues. This work will continue in partnership both internally and externally to ensure new families taking up childcare are aware of the support they can access.

Ongoing overview of the early years and childcare market will continue to be informed by local intelligence including from colleagues in the quality improvement team, local

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councillors, services directly supporting families and networking events with our local early years and childcare providers. Termly occupancy collections from providers will ensure the local authority can adapt to emerging trends / patterns of parental choice and offer targeted support where necessary for business sustainability. The local authority hosts regular engagement events with the sector including briefings and information sessions to ensure that providers have the most up to date information on any available funding sources, training, learning from recent Ofsted inspections and learning from other local authorities. Regular dialect also ensures the local authority gain an up-to-date perspective on the current situation with the childcare market in York.

Action Plan for 2025 / 2026

Key Issue		Timescale	Actions / Lead Team	Success criteria
Government policy	The new 'Giving every child the best start in life' strategy was launched in July 2025 with some key changes around: good level of development, accessible early education, early years inclusion fund etc. therefore the local authority is working towards implementation of the best start in life strategy locally.	Ongoing	Early Years & Childcare Head of Service	
	Implement any changes from the school's white paper once published / finalised.	Expected Autumn 2025	Early Years & Childcare Head of Service	
	New early education statutory guidance is expected in November and this will impact on early education funding agreements, therefore new agreements will be required.	Prior to March 2026	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead	
Sufficiency	Ensure sufficiency of places for both working family entitlements / for families in receipt of additional support. Where data identifies that additional places are required work with providers to shape the market / investigate options for developing new places e.g. through expansion or reorganisation of existing provision, or possibly development of new provision. Work alongside colleagues in procurement, planning, premises, and quality improvement to support the creation of new high-quality provision to support demand arising from the childcare reforms / housing developments.	Termly occupancy monitoring Follow procurement process when applicable for childcare expansion capital funding and S106 developer contributions.	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead	
	Provide business support to providers where required to ensure a future proof sector, particularly where there are significant vacancies or challenges for providers with sustainability / implementing statutory guidance requirements. This will include both group and 1:1 support	Ongoing 1:1 support offered to providers Signposting to available resources Training programme will be delivered early 2026	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead	
	At the time of this report the Department for Education had announced round two of the school-based nursery (SBN) programme. Sufficiency information / targeted support will	September to December 2025 Round 3 will be launched early 2026	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead / School Place Planning Officer	

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	be provided to support any school expressing an interest in the SBN programme			
	Breakfast Clubs: awaiting further roll-out nationally. Monitor the impact on 'paid for childcare once the national roll-out take place	Currently awaiting further information on roll-out	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead / Wraparound Project Officer	
SEND	Track children with SEND to ensure they can access the full early years entitlements and are not disadvantaged with a reduced offer of hours of early education	Ongoing through termly partnership board	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead	
	Work within the SEND strategy to ensure data is captured to provide an accurate prediction for planning for early years places.	Monitored through termly partnership board	Early Years & Childcare Head of Service / Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead	
	Continued analysis of Section 23 notifications to continue. With improved quality of notifications and analysis of outcomes over time, this crucial data can be used to support future sufficiency planning.	Monitored through termly partnership board	Early Years & Childcare Head of Service / Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead	
Recruitment and retention	Continue to work with colleagues at DWP, Skills team, and York Learning to promote early years and childcare careers, apprenticeships and routes into early years management and promote the early years and childcare sector as a viable career path	Ongoing and half termly meetings with DWP	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead / Quality Improvement Manager	
	Roll out further cohorts of the management skills programme to support providers and their staff. Subjects to include recruitment & retention, business planning, financial planning etc.	Planning has begun and sessions will be delivered from early 2026	Early Years & Childcare Programme Reforms Lead / York Learning	

Contacts:

Find out about help with childcare costs: www.beststartinlife.gov.uk

For families looking for local childcare: York family information service – Raise York

For sufficiency / early education funding queries: earlyyearsfunding@york.gov.uk

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Appendix 1: Early Years Places Offered v Vacancies at Ward Level

Ward:	Under 2s		2 - 3 Years		3 - 5 years		Totals (0 – 5's)	
	Places offered	Places vacant	Places offered	Places vacant	Places offered	Places vacant	Places offered	Places vacant
Accomb	6	0	16	2	62	3	84	5
Bishopthorpe	21	3	13	4	46	11	80	18
Clifton	6	3	24	3	140	41	170	47
Copmanthorpe	13	2	13	3	53	24	79	29
Dringhouses & Woodthorpe	40	15	41	20	111	18	192	53
Fishergate	40	15	41	14	161	24	242	53
Fulford & Heslington	0	0	12	1	35	1	47	2
Guildhall	60	18	73	18	156	29	289	65
Haxby & Wiggington	27	3	47	6	105	14	179	23
Heworth	45	12	54	15	83	14	182	41
Heworth Without	0	0	3	1	16	1	19	2
Holgate	16	6	84	25	128	21	228	52
Hull Road	51	16	51	20	59	6	161	42
Huntington & New Earswick	26	6	68	10	146	14	240	30
Micklegate	12	4	20	2	84	6	116	12
Osbaldwick & Derwent	87	28	69	32	138	48	294	108
Rawcliffe & Clifton Without	83	31	89	40	224	56	396	127
Rural West	84	16	75	17	160	19	319	52
Strensall	27	9	67	18	72	22	166	49
Westfield	53	7	61	7	157	41	271	55
Wheldrake	12	2	20	4	43	4	75	10
Totals	709	196	941	262	2179	427	3829	875

Appendix 2: Action Plan 2024 / 2025 update

Key Issue	Action	Update
Sufficiency	<p>Where data identifies that additional places are required work with providers to investigate options for developing new places e.g. through expansion or reorganisation of existing provision, or possibly development of new provision. Work alongside colleagues in procurement, planning, premises, and quality improvement to support the creation of new high-quality provision to support demand arising from the childcare reforms / housing developments</p>	<p>Supply data has been captured termly to ensure the city remains in a strong sufficiency position and this is mapped at ward level to reflect where future place creation may be needed.</p> <p>A paper was presented to the exec board in September 2024 and final agreement was made for the capital spend process. A procurement process has been developed and is ongoing in order to commission new places ready for the expansion in September 2025 and beyond. Provider engagement events were held in October 2024 & June 2025 to begin the spend on the early year's capital funding and wraparound programme funding.</p> <p>In addition to the early years capital expansion grant a procurement process has been undertaken for S106 developer contributions from the Chocolate Works / Terry's development.</p> <p>Due to the timescales of following a procurement process and the required works for providers this action is ongoing and will be carried forward to 2025 / 2026.</p>
	<p>At the time of this report the Government had announced 3000 additional nursery places in schools and a free breakfast for all children. However, no further detail was available and was expected to be announced at the Autumn budget</p>	<p>The government held an expression of interest round for the school-based nursery programme. One York school was successful with their application and will be funded directly from DfE to deliver additional early years places.</p> <p>Free breakfast – one school is currently taking part in the pilot for free breakfast schools. DfE have not committed to a date for national roll-out of this scheme and are awaiting the findings from the pilot schools.</p>
SEND	<p>Track children with SEND to ensure they can access the full early years entitlements and are not disadvantaged with a reduced offer of hours of early education</p>	<p>A multi-disciplinary project board has been established and meet regularly to share local data / intelligence. To date there is no confirmed data to suggest SEND children are not able to access their full early education entitlements. However, there is some anecdotal suggestion that places may be restricted and therefore this will be monitored / challenged if applicable.</p>
	<p>Progress work with support partner Hampsalls which focuses on wraparound care for children with complex needs with a view to developing a viable business model which will assist in commissioning</p>	<p>Work has been undertaken with Ebor MAT to work up a business model for after school care, at present costs and the uncertainty of financial viability, due to the</p>

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	<p>wrap around care for sustainable, affordable out of school provision for children with complex needs.</p> <p>Work within the SEND strategy to ensure data is captured to provide an accurate prediction for planning for early years places.</p> <p>Longer term continued analysis of Section 23 notifications should continue. With improved quality of notifications and analysis of outcomes over time, this crucial data can be used to support future sufficiency planning.</p>	<p>time limited resource in the wraparound programme is a barrier to delivery of this provision.</p> <p>Following parental feedback, liaison with HAF and Shortbreaks to consider how holiday provision could support children with complex needs is ongoing.</p> <p>We are engaged with the DfE to escalate these concerns, by providing them with a case study summary.</p> <p>A multi-disciplinary project board has been established and meet regularly to share local data / intelligence.</p> <p>The project board will continue to analyse data presented and map trends to support future sufficiency planning, in particular around quality of provision.</p>
Recruitment and retention	<p>Continue to work with colleague at DWP and in Economic Growth team, Skills team, and York Learning to promote early years and childcare careers, apprenticeships and routes into early years management and promote the early years and childcare sector as a viable career path</p>	<p>Regular meetings / information sharing takes places between DWP and City of York council.</p> <p>Termly partnership information sessions are held within Jobcentre Plus to support recruitment into the childcare sector and becoming a childminder.</p> <p>Ongoing work takes place with colleges / universities across the city to support with curriculum / working in childcare.</p> <p>Business support training has been delivered with a specific focus on the challenges faced within the sector.</p>
	<p>Roll out further cohorts of the Management Skills Programme and develop and promote further Multiply Maths workshops as part of the Skills Bootcamp Programme to further enhance skills and knowledge of existing early years workforce</p>	<p>Business support training sessions have been delivered with a specific focus on the early years sector and further roll-out is planned for 2026.</p>
	<p>Develop a strategy / working group to support with business planning, recruitment, marketing etc.</p> <p>The group to complete a full programme of support</p>	<p>A working group was established and successful roll-out of training was delivered in partnership with York Learning.</p>

Appendix 3: Help with Childcare Costs Eligibility Table

Entitlement:	Childs' age:	Eligibility:	What can you receive:	How to apply:
Working parent's entitlement / Extended entitlement	Term after child turns 9 months	Working parents	30 hours per week over a period of 38 weeks per year	Your code needs to be obtained from: www.beststartinlife.gov.uk Speak to your chosen childcare provider to ensure they have a place.
Parents of 2-year-olds receiving some additional forms of government support	From the term after child turns 2 years old	If you are claiming certain benefits / have a low household income Looked after children. Child has an education, health, and care plan. Child has an adoption order, special guardianship, or a child arrangement order. Families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)	15 hours per week over a period of 38 weeks per year	https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/childcare/funded-childcare-2-year-olds-application-form
Universal entitlement	From the term after child turns 3 years old	All 3 & 4 year olds	15 hours per week over a period of 38 weeks per year	Speak to your chosen childcare provider to check their availability and then take them your child's birth certificate for confirmation of date of birth.
Tax Free childcare	All eligible children (up to age 11 or 16 if child has a disability)	Dependent on working / benefit status	If you get Tax-Free Childcare, you'll set up an online childcare account for your child. For every £8 you pay into this account, the government will pay in £2 which you can use to pay your provider.	Find all the details here: www.beststartinlife.gov.uk

Appendix 4: Childcare Reforms Progress Update (November 2025)

National Wraparound Childcare Programme – creation of places using revenue funding allocated by the DfE as part of the National Wraparound Childcare Programme, grant rounds take place monthly for providers to submit an application.

Original DfE Target: 390

Provider	Programme Type	Number of places created	When will places be available?	Grant Awarded/ to be awarded
Dinky Groves OOSC	Creation of places	30	Feb 25	£17,520.00
St Pauls Primary	Creation of places	35	April 25	£35,000.00
St Oswald's	Expansion of opening hours	35	Start of summer term 2025	£7,875.00
Dringhouses Out of School Club	Expansion of places	15	Start of summer term 2025	£8,674.00
Lord Deramores Kids Kabin	Expansion of opening hours	52	Start of summer term 2025	£3,480.00
St George's	Expansion of opening hours	72	Start of autumn term 2025	£5,400.00
York Explorers	Creation of places	56	After October half term 2025	£38,620.00
Wheldrake OOSC	Expansion of places	8	Start of autumn term 2025	£6,000.00
Sticky Fingers Tiny School	Expansion of places	10	Start of autumn term 2025	£6,900.00
Funfishers	Expansion of places	10	Start of autumn term 2025	£7,500.00
Kool Kids	Expansion of places	10	Jan 26	£6,000.00
St Oswalds	Expansion of places	15	Jan 26	£9000.00
Dringhouses OOSC	Expansion of places	25	Jan 26	£15,000.00
Wheldrake OOSC	Expansion of places	8	Jan 26	£6000.00
Premier Sports	Creation of places	30	April 26	£30,000.00
POPSOC*	Expansion of places	30	TBC	£18,000.00

*awaiting confirmation of additional premises, to enable expanded places to be delivered.

Early Years Reforms (capital funding updates)

Childcare Expansion Capital Grant (Total allocation £333,636 of which 80% is expected to be used for early years and 20% for wraparound)
 Early Years allocation = £266908.80

Name/ Provider Type	No. of places created	Date agreed /Contracts signed	When will places be available	Funding amount	Remaining grant for early years
Footprints Home Nursery	12 places	Funding agreement sealed: 8 th May 2025	September / October 25	£73,008	£193,900.80
York Montessori Fulford	12 places	Funding agreement signed October 2025	Summer term 2026	£55,800	£138,100.80

School Based Nursery Capital Grant – Direct funding from DfE to support schools to develop early years places.

Round	Name/ Provider Type	No. of places created	When will places be available
1 – Summer 2025	Poppleton Road School	26 places	September 2025
2 – Autumn 2025	1 school has applied	10	September 2026 (if agreed)
3 – To be announced Spring 2026	-	-	-

S106 Developer Contributions – Chocolate Works Development (Total funding available: £193,963)

Name/ Provider Type	No. of places created	Date agreed /Contracts signed	When will places be available	Funding amount
St Pauls Nursery School	18 places	Summer 2025	Spring 2026	£61,937