

CROYDON'S CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

2025

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1. Introduction

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare for parents and report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting the duty. This report is prepared to show how Croydon is meeting this duty. Having sufficient childcare means that families can access affordable, high-quality childcare that meets their child's learning and development needs, is available at the right times and locations, and enables parents to make informed choices about work and training. This applies to all children from birth to age 14, and up to 18 for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Sufficiency is assessed for different age groups, rather than for all children in the local authority.

In this report, an assessment of sufficiency is made using data around the need (demand) for childcare and the number and type of childcare providers available (supply).

Sufficiency data is a key tool for strengthening Croydon's childcare market. By identifying gaps in provision, particularly for under 2s and children with SEND, the Council can target resources and capital funding to areas of greatest need. This evidence informs strategic planning, supports providers to expand sustainably, and promotes market confidence by highlighting demand trends. It also ensures that the local childcare economy remains resilient and responsive to families' needs.

This report was compiled using data from the Office for National Statistics; Ofsted; the Department for Education (DfE); funding data from Synergy and feedback from parents/carers and provider surveys undertaken by the Council's Early Years Sufficiency Team.

The final phase of the childcare reforms was implemented in September 2025, extending the funded entitlement to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks a year to eligible working parents of children aged from 9 months up to school age. This marks the completion of the government's expansion announced in the March 2023 Budget, ensuring comprehensive support across the early years. Alongside this, preparations continue for the introduction of universal wraparound care for primary-aged children by September 2026, supported by additional capital funding to create new places and strengthen provider sustainability. According to our data, currently there is sufficient childcare available across the borough for all age groups. Further details can be found in section 5 of this report.

To qualify for the working families entitlement, each parent needs to be working and earning the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum/living wage and under £100,000 adjusted net income per year. This means that each parent needs to earn from £10,158 to be eligible for 15 hours a week of childcare during term time. Coupled with the current eligibility criteria for receiving funding (families in receipt of certain benefits and with a household income of £15,400 a year or less after tax), it is likely that the majority of 2-year-olds will be entitled to 15 hours a week of funded childcare.

The Department for Education has provided funding to support local authorities with the expansion of childcare places and “wraparound care” for parents and carers of primary aged children. This is to ensure that there is affordable childcare for working parents of children under the age of 5 and that all parents of primary school-age children can access wraparound care in their local area Monday to Friday from 8am – 6pm term-time. It is expected that, by September 2026, the new/expanded wraparound provision will be self-sustaining by continued parental demand and payments.

There is a growing number of young children being identified as having SEND in Croydon. The needs of these children have been taken into account when considering both early years childcare and school “wraparound” childcare. All early education and childcare providers are required to fulfil their obligations under the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#), [the Equality Act 2010](#), and the [SEN Code of Practice \(2015\)](#). This includes ensuring arrangements are in place to identify and support children with SEND and promote equality of opportunity.

The Council’s Early Learning Team continue to work to support early years settings in offering high quality early education and childcare to all of Croydon’s young children. The Council’s Early Years Team and Best Start Family Hubs is working collaboratively to support the ambition of the government strategy for improving child development and meeting the ambition that the proportion of children in Croydon achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the 2027/28 academic year is at least 78.3%; and disadvantaged children have benefitted at least equally from this improvement; that is, that the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the 2027/28 academic year is at least 66.6%.”

‘Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life’ aims to provide support from pregnancy to age five through integrated services, high-quality early education, and a focus on their health, development, and early learning.

Whilst it is not compulsory for every child to attend an early year setting, registered early years providers are required to comply with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which is a statutory framework for providers of early years care and education for children from birth to 5 years old. There is a wealth of research about the benefits of early education, however, ultimately it is still a parental choice that determines whether places are taken up in early years settings. From September 2025 the majority of eligible working parent/carers needing early education / childcare will be accessing mostly government funded hours which is likely to decrease the number of privately paid hours providers will deliver. The funding rates for 2026-27 have not yet been released and so therefore it is not possible to tell the full impact of this on providers who prior to September 2025 relied on privately paid places in addition to funded hours. However, there remains a level of anxiety within the early years sector in relation to their financial sustainability with the increase in funded provision and the recent announcement of rises in the minimum wage and employers national insurance contribution.

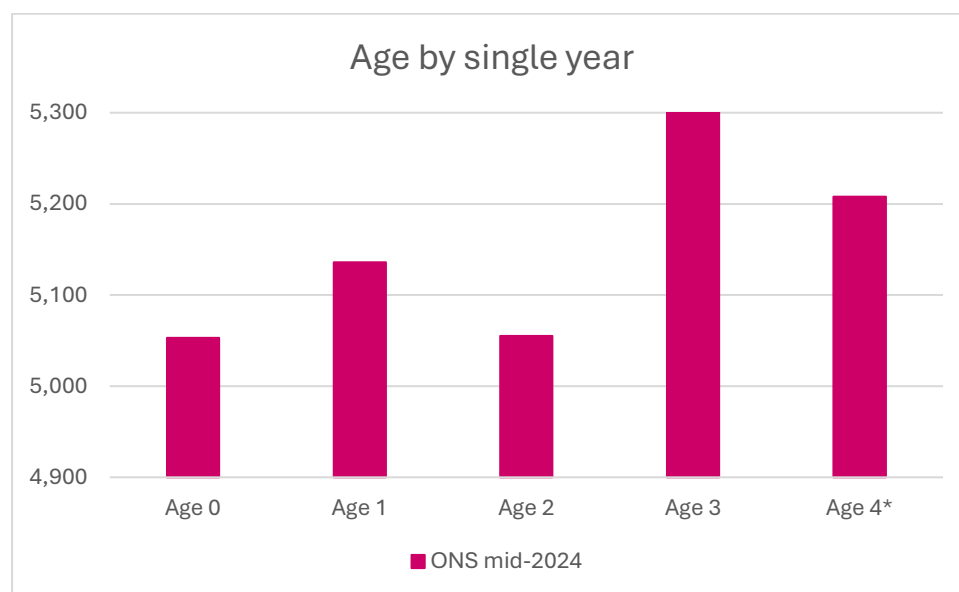
2. Demand for childcare

2.1 Population of early years children

As outlined at table 1 and graph 1, in total there are 25,755 children under the age of 5 living in Croydon¹. These children may require early years funding, however, please note, some four-year olds will have started reception.

Population estimates mid-2024	Age 0 5,053	Age 1 5,136	Age 2 5,055	Age 3 5,303	Age 4 5,208
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Table 1: Population age 0-4



Graph 1: Population age 0-4

2.2 Population of school age children

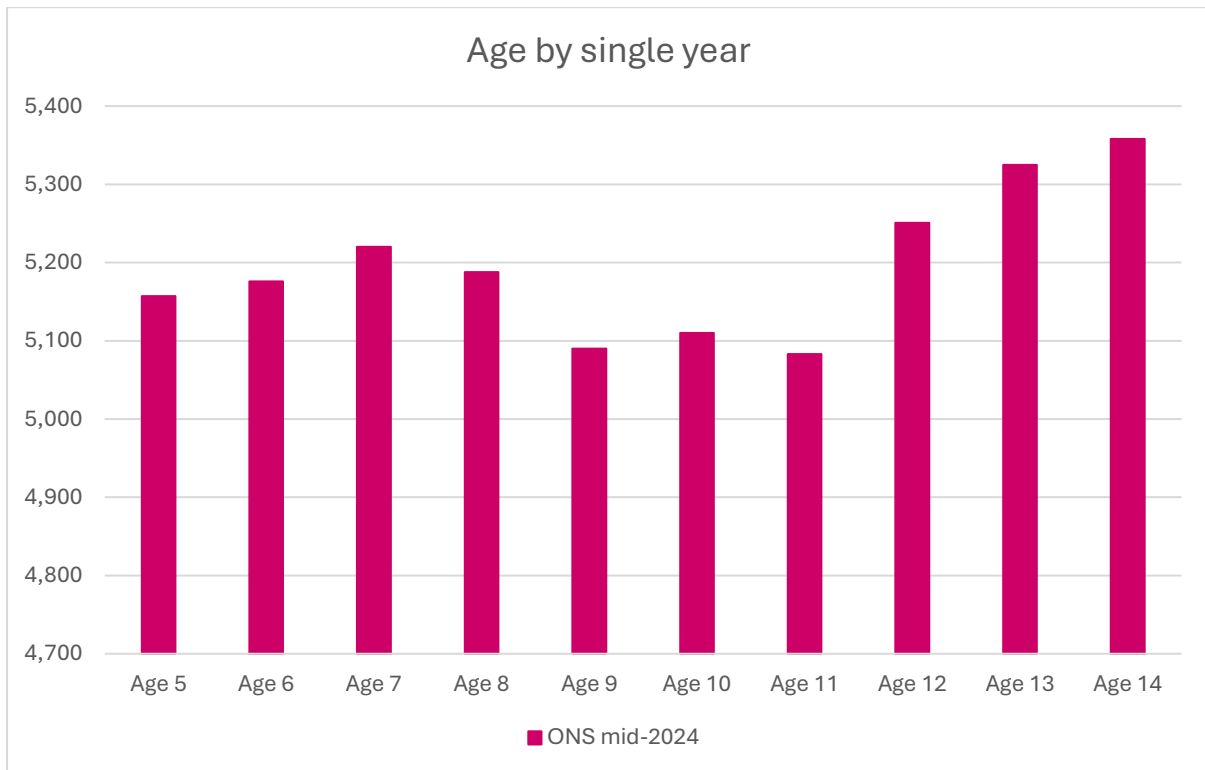
In total, there are 36,024 children aged 5-11, and 15,934 children aged 12-14 living in Croydon². These children may require wraparound childcare - before and after school, and/or during the school holidays. Table 2 and graph 2 show a breakdown of the ages:

Population estimates mid-2024	Age 5 5,157	Age 6 5,176	Age 7 5,220	Age 8 5,188	Age 9 5,090	Age 10 5,110	Age 11 5,083	Age 12 5,251	Age 13 5,325	Age 14 5,358
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Table 2: Population age 5-14

¹ ONS population estimates mid-2024

² ONS population estimates mid-2024



Graph 2: Population age 5-14

2.3 Number of children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with SEND are entitled to support with childcare up to the age of 18. The number of children/young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan in our local authority of January 2025 was: 5,232³

Age	Number of children with an EHCP
Children aged 0-4 years	279
Children aged 5-10 years	1,745
Children aged 11-15 years	1,726
Young people aged 16-19 years	1,027
Young people aged 20-25 years	455

Table 3: Children/young people with an EHCP

Children's needs change over time and are identified at different ages. Among the youngest children, SEND may only be identified when they start in a setting or

³ 'Number of education, health (EHC) plans as at January each year' from 'Education, health and care plans', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK, January 2025

school, and it can take some time from needs being identified to an EHC plan being issued. Currently there are 57 children where a statutory assessment to consider an EHCP has been agreed by the LA in the 0-4 age group and 23 with final EHC plans.

In Croydon there is an Early Years SEND (EYSEND) team which consists of portage advisors who work with children with complex needs and their families in the home and setting support advisors who work with practitioners in childcare settings to support children with a range of additional needs. The advisors provide advice, guidance, and support along with monitoring of child progress.

The EYSEND Team also support children with Medical Needs Care Plans (MNCP). These children have complex medical needs (i.e. more than one health need). There are currently 26⁴ children with MNCPs known to be attending early years settings. The Tulip neuro-disability nursing team also support children with MNCP directly with the settings and there may be more for children who are not known to SEND as they will have medical needs only, such as diabetes or epilepsy for example.

St Giles School, in the south of the Borough, offers 6 full time equivalent (fte) early years places for children with complex medical needs, complex physical disabilities and / or Severe (SLD) or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) Learning Difficulties.

Many children have SEND but do not have an EHC plan. Early years childcare settings apply to the LA for Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) to support children with additional needs. All of these children in Private, Voluntary and Independent settings (PVI's) are known to and referred to the locality lead in SEND for that area and receive SEND support visits in addition to the setting receiving SENIF. The breakdown of children receiving SENIF is as follows:

- September 2023 – August 2024 – 364 pre-school children received SENIF
- September 2024 – August 2025 – 211 pre-school children in PVI settings and 175 children in Maintained Nursery schools and school-based nurseries received SENIF (**total of 386 children**).
- September 2025 – October 2025 – 86 pre-school children in PVI settings and 32 children in Maintained Nursery schools and school-based nurseries have been awarded SENIF (**total 118 children for the year to date**).

In addition to the 118 children currently receiving SENIF, there are 172 children that attend PVI's and childminders. These children are recorded on the settings' SEND register and the setting have sought advice from the team regarding supporting the child, but they do not currently receive SENIF or have an EHCP. A further 85 children are being supported in the home by the portage team.

⁴ As of November 2025

3. Supply of childcare

3.1 Number of early years providers and places

There are a number of different types of Early Education and Childcare providers, each offering a variety of option for families, as detailed in table 4:

	Provision	Description of offer	Ofsted
PVI's	Day Nursery	Generally, open all year round; usual core hours 8am – 6pm; registered with Ofsted to take children from 3 months – 5 years; can be a stand-alone setting or part of a chain of nurseries; often privately run with a single proprietor.	Must join the Early Years register if caring for children aged from birth to 31 August after their fifth birthday. Need to meet all the safeguarding and welfare and the learning and development requirements of the Statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage.
	Pre-school	Usually operate in line with school hours so open term time only, 9am – 3.30pm; often run from church / community halls; often “pack-away” (need to clear rooms on a daily or weekly basis to allow for other uses); often committee run.	
	Independent	Operate as part of an independent school; term-time only; hours based on the school day.	Not required to register on early years register unless taking children under 2 years.
Childminder	Childminder	Most commonly a lone practitioner working from own home; all year-round provision; usually core hours 8am-6pm; able to work with assistants; several now affiliated to a Childminding Agency.	Must join the Early Years register if caring for children aged from birth to 31 August after their fifth birthday. Need to meet all the safeguarding and welfare and the learning and development requirements of the Statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage.
School	Maintained Nursery School	Stand-alone nursery school with head teacher and at least one Qualified Teacher Status staff member; qualified school SENDCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator); term-time only; usual hours 9am-3.30pm,	Not required to register on early years register unless taking children under 2 years.

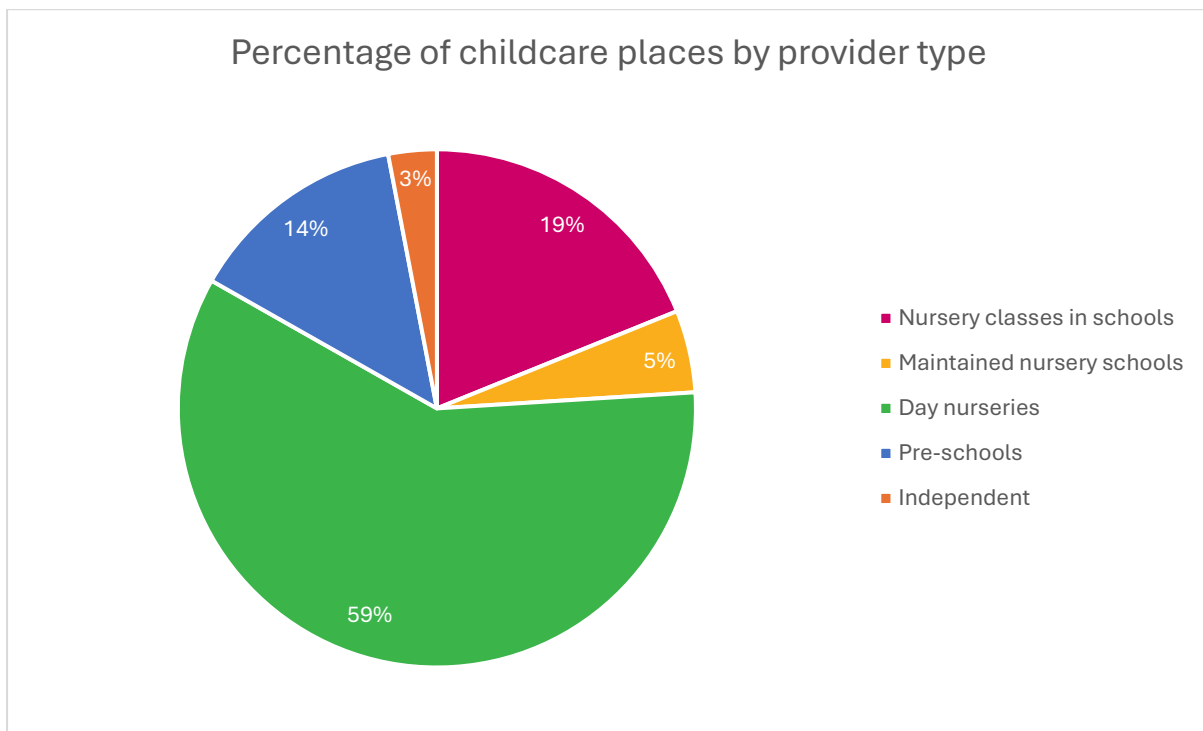
	Nursery Class	Operate as part of a school or academy, led by school headteacher / principal; term-time only; usual hours 9am-3.30pm.	
	Nanny / Au pair	Also known as 'home childcarers'; look after children of any age in the child's own home. Can look after children from 2 different families at the home of one of the families.	Only need to register on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register if want parents to be able to get help with childcare costs.

Table 4: Types of Early Education and Childcare providers

There are 539 early years childcare providers in our local authority, including 325 childminders. Childminders are typically registered to care for up to six children under the age of five at any one time, and they may work alone or with an assistant. During the summer 2025/26 term, the average number of funded children per childminder was seven children, however not all of these children would be attending at the same time. The number of places varies depending on whether a childminder works alone or with an assistant, therefore registered place figures for childminders are not shown in table 5. Other types of providers collectively offer up to 10,563 full-time equivalent early years childcare places, as shown in table 5 and graph 3: -

Type of provision	Number of providers	Number of registered places
Childminders	325	N/A
Nursery classes in schools	48	1,994
Maintained nursery schools	5	542
Day nurseries	109	6,253
Pre-schools	42	1,455
Independent schools	10	319
TOTAL	539	10,563

Table 5: Number of providers and registered place, November 2025



Graph 3: Percentage of places by setting type

For all of the provider types in graph 3, the number of registered places represents the maximum number of children who can be on the premises at any given time. In practice, whilst many providers choose to operate below their number of registered places, for many there is also the challenge of recruiting and retaining staff which can limit the number of children that can attend at any given time.

3.2 Early years vacancies

In Croydon we ask providers to report vacancies to us so we can help promote them. Not all choose to do this and therefore we do not have current data on the number of vacancies each setting type has. In the Autumn term 2024/25 we went live with this section of the provider portal on Synergy which now enables providers to update their vacancies directly. We hope this will give providers more autonomy for keeping their information up-to-date. In general, vacancy rates are higher in the autumn, after older children have moved to school. As stated above, many providers do not operate at capacity numbers to ensure a lower adult : child ratio.

3.3 Early years atypical hours

Childcare is mostly delivered during the typical working day – between 8am and 6pm on weekdays. Some parents require childcare outside these times in order to fit with their work or other responsibilities.

75 childcare providers (not including childminders) in Croydon offer atypical hours on weekdays, with the majority of these settings operating from 7.00/7.30am and/or until 6.30pm. All these settings are day nurseries. There are no known settings operating

at weekends. It is unknown how many childminders offer childcare outside of the typical hours or at weekends.

3.4 Number of primary school age providers and places

There are 54 Ofsted registered providers offering breakfast club childcare and 57 providers offering after-school childcare for primary school age children during term time. These providers consist of PVI settings, maintained schools and academies. Within this number many schools offer full wraparound provision. Local data indicates that all but 5 primary schools in Croydon have provision for full wraparound care, providing both breakfast and after-school care in readiness for the ambition that all primary schools will provide wraparound care by September 2026. There are 14 providers offering out of school care, for example drama and art groups and 29 providers offering childcare during the holidays.

Type of provision	Number of providers	Number of registered places
Breakfast club – primary school or PVI	54	2,285
After-school club – primary school or PVI	57	2,518
Holiday club	29	1,254
Out of school care	14	44
Childminders	325	N/A
TOTAL	490	6,101

Table 6: Number of school age providers and registered place, November 2025

Other Ofsted registered provision for school aged children includes tuition centres. In Croydon there are 20 settings in this category.

4. Funded early education

4.1 Introduction for funded early education and childcare

9-month-old – working families

Children from eligible families who are aged from 9 months, where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to 30 funded hours per week over 38 weeks per academic year (totalling 1,140 hours). Children are eligible from the term after they turn 9 months old.

2-year-old funding for families receiving some additional government support⁵

Some children aged 2 are entitled to 15 hours per week, over 38 weeks per academic year totalling 570 hours). The criteria for these funded hours is:

- Families are in receipt of certain benefits (including low-income families in receipt of in-work benefits)
- Child is looked after by a local authority
- Child has an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- Child gets Disability Living Allowance
- Child has left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order
- Some families who have 'no recourse to public funds' linked to an economic criteria.

2-year-old – working families

Children from eligible families who are aged 2-year-olds, where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to 30 funded hours per week over 38 weeks per academic year (totalling 1,140 hours). Children are eligible from the term after they turn 2 years old.

3- & 4-year-old – universal offer

All children aged 3 and 4 are entitled to 15 funded hours per week over 38 weeks per academic year (570 hours) until they start reception class in a maintained school or academy. This is known as the 'universal offer'. Children are eligible from the term after they turn 3 years old.

3- & 4-year-old – working families

Children from eligible families who are aged 3 and 4, where both parents are working, or from lone parent families where that parent is working, are entitled to an additional 15 funded hours per week over 38 weeks per academic year (totalling 1,140 hours) until they start reception class in a maintained school or academy.

Parents can access the hours over more weeks, with less hours per week, depending on each setting's offer. This is known as a 'stretched offer'.

Parents do not have to use all the hours of their funded entitlement, and they may choose to split them between providers.

⁵ Also referred to as 2-year-old disadvantaged funding

The Childcare Reforms introduced a number of significant changes to early years education and childcare with an extended entitlement. Table 7 explains the changes the reforms have brought and the timeline for when they were implemented. In addition to the childcare reforms, the government announced in the October 2024 budget that it plans to provide breakfast clubs in every primary school, and provide 300 new nurseries in schools. At the time of writing this report there is one school taking part adopter breakfast club programme and two schools who were successful in their bid for phase 1 of School Based Nursery Programme Capital Grant.

Timeline	Reforms
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childminder grants became available to those entering the profession.
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 hours of childcare each week for 38 weeks a year for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds was launched.
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 hours a week of childcare for 38 weeks a year for eligible working parents of children aged 9 months plus was launched. The National Wraparound Care support began.
September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 hours of childcare each week for 38 weeks a year for eligible working parents of children aged from 9 months to school age was launched.
September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools able to offer 8am-6pm wraparound on their own or in partnership.

Table 7: timeline for childcare reforms

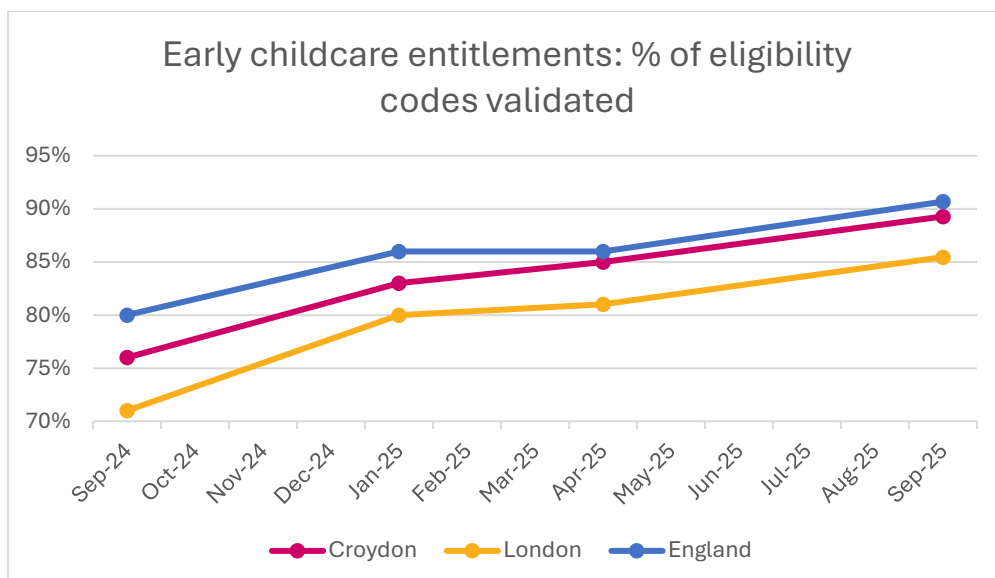
4.2 Take up of funded early education – code validation

Table 8 and graph 4 show the percentage of codes validated each term for children aged 2 and under 2. The take up has increased steadily since September 2024 from 76% of codes validated in September 2024 to 89% in September 2025.

	September 2024	January 2025	April 2025	September 2025
Croydon	76%	83%	85%	89%
London	71%	80%	81%	85%
England	80%	86%	86%	91%

Table 8: Autumn 2025 Local Authority Codes issued and validated for 2 and under 2⁶

⁶ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/8ae9bd9d-c48d-4e71-ad9c-08dcedcfecfd>



Graph 4: Autumn 2025 Local Authority Codes issued and validated for 2 and under 2⁷

4.3 Take up of funded early education – 2-year-olds (2YOs) from families receiving some additional government support

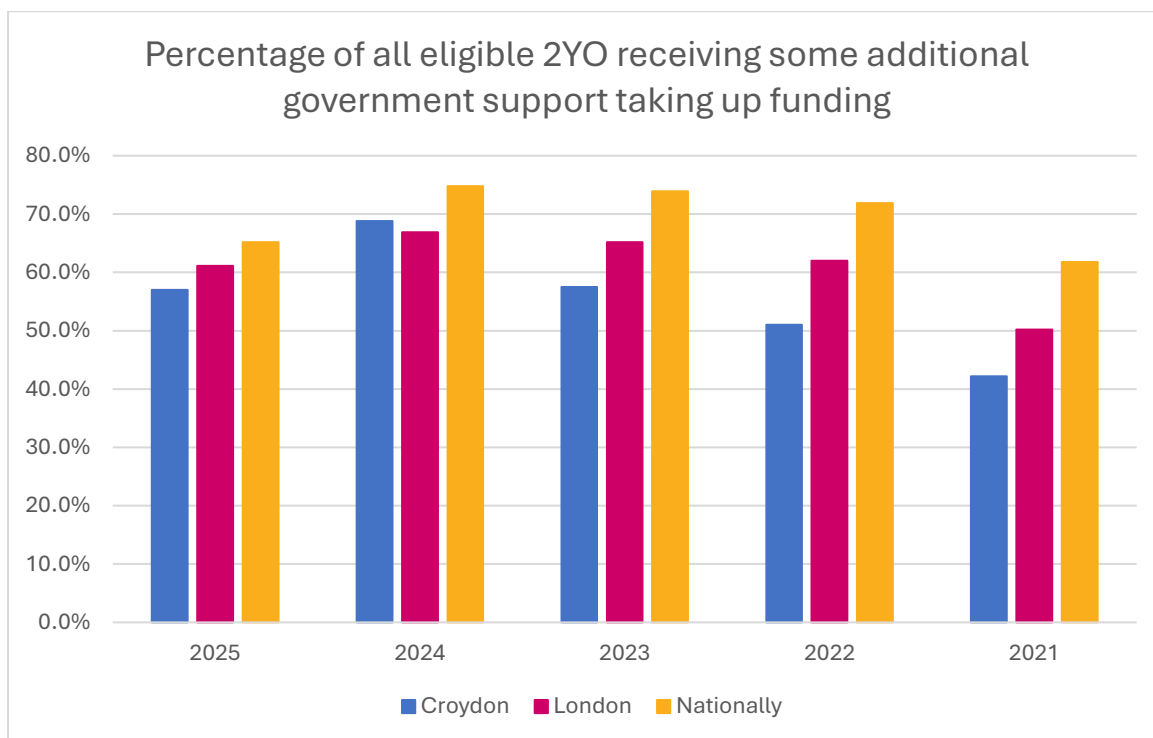
The published data for the take-up of 2YO funded places for children from families receiving some additional government funding (RAS funding) is shown in table 9. Until 2025, the percentage of children in Croydon that are taking up this entitlement had increased year on year since 2021. In 2025, the percentage of 2YO taking up this entitlement had dropped to 57% however a decrease was also seen regionally and nationally at 61.1% and 65.2% respectively. The decrease does not necessarily indicate that fewer children are accessing places. Some two-year-olds are eligible for both RAS funding and working families entitlement, but not all families claim both codes. We are working closely with providers to raise awareness that some families may qualify for both types of funding, and we are encouraging them to check for a RAS code when submitting their funding claims. Table 11 presents local data from synergy on the number of children taking up each type of funding by term.

Year	Estimate of 2YOs eligible for funding Croydon	Number of funded 2YOs Croydon	Percentage of all eligible 2YOs Croydon	Percentage of all eligible 2YOs London	Percentage of all eligible 2YOs Nationally
2025	1,337	762	57.0%	61.1%	65.2%
2024	1,322	910	68.8%	66.9%	74.8%
2023	1,549	890	57.5%	65.2%	73.9%
2022	1,680	857	51.0%	62.0%	71.9%
2021	1,801	760	42.2%	50.2%	61.8%

Table 9: take-up of 2-year-old funding⁸

⁷ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/8ae9bd9d-c48d-4e71-ad9c-08dcedcfecfd>

⁸ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/education-provision-children-under-5>



Graph 5: percentage of all eligible 2YO taking up funding⁹

4.4 Take up of funded early education – 3- and 4-year-olds – universal offer (15 hours per week) and additional 15 hours

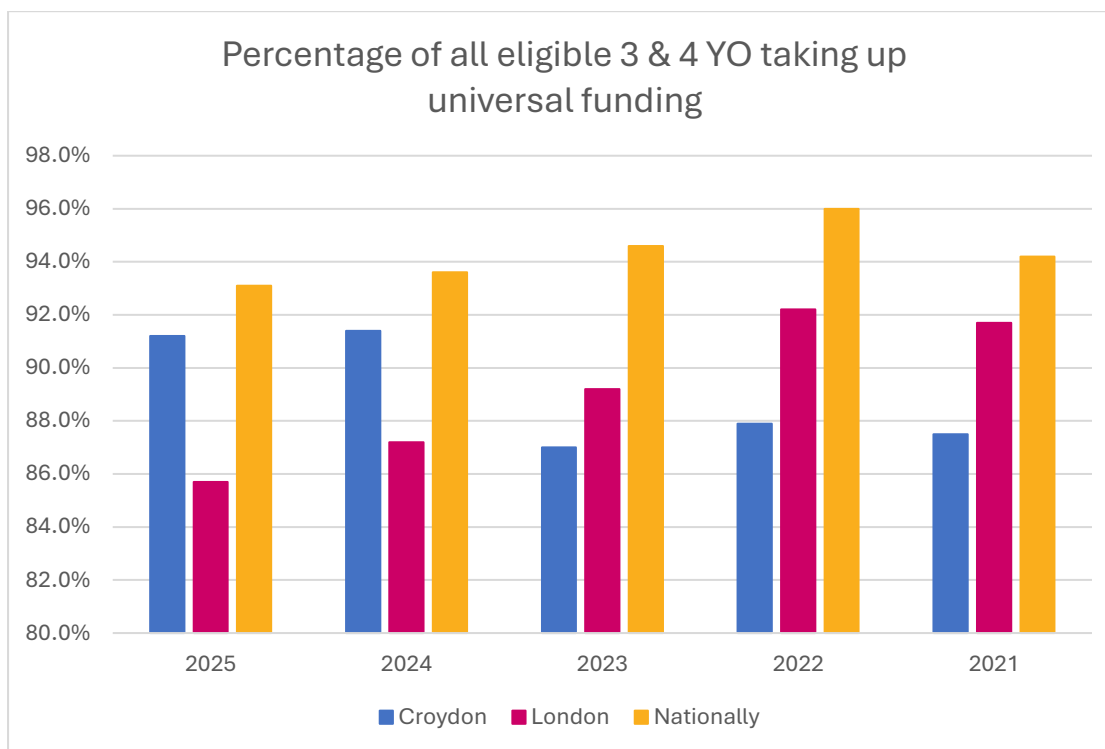
The percentage of children in Croydon that are taking up 3 & 4YO funding has increased year on year since 2021. The published data on the take-up of 3 & 4YO funded places is shown in table 10. For the last three years, the percentage of 3 & 4YO taking up places was higher in Croydon compared to the London figure but lower than the National figure.

Year	Estimate of 3 & 4YOs eligible for funding Croydon	Number of funded 3 & 4YOs Croydon	Percentage of all eligible 3 & 4YOs - Croydon	Percentage of all eligible 3 & 4YOs - London	Percentage of all eligible 3 & 4YOs - Nationally
2025	9,777	8,913	91.2%	85.7%	93.1%
2024	9,853	9,010	91.4%	87.2%	93.6%
2023	10,136	8,819	87.0%	89.2%	94.6%
2022	10,141	8,915	87.9%	92.2%	96.0%
2021	10,207	8,935	87.5%	91.7%	94.2%

Table 10: take-up of 3-and 4-year-old funding¹⁰

⁹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/education-provision-children-under-5>

¹⁰ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/education-provision-children-under-5>



Graph 6: percentage of all eligible 3 & 4 YO taking up funding¹¹

4.5 Take up of all funded entitlements – local termly data

The 30 hours of childcare funding is for eligible working parents and is known as working family entitlement. Parents who believe they are entitled to the working family entitlement apply for this online through the Government's Best Start in Life website. The same website is used to apply for universal credit childcare and tax-free childcare. If a parent is eligible for the working family entitlement, the system creates a code which parents can use with their chosen childcare provider. If ineligible, parents may still be eligible for the 2-year-old funding for families receiving some additional support government funding, or the universal 15 hours of early education and childcare for 3- & 4-year-olds, depending on the age of their child.

Term	Under 2 WF funding	2YO RAS funding	2YO WF funding	3&4YO universal funding	3&4YO WF funding
Summer 2024/25	N/A	838	1,369	7,196	6,514
Spring 2023/24	1,429	790	1,563	5,359	4,885
Autumn 2023/24	1,444	645	1,575	5,736	5,398
Summer 2023/24	1,569	710	1,668	6,756	6,324

Table 11: local data on the number of children taking up funding from synergy

¹¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/education-provision-children-under-5>

4.6 Providers offering funded early education places

Providers are paid directly by the government for delivering funded early education and childcare. This funding is allocated via the council and calculated at an hourly rate which varies by age group and entitlement type. Providers are not required to offer funded places to parents, but most do as parents may choose to use a different provider if they do not. Some providers offer a restricted number of funded places.

5. Sufficiency of places

5.1 Places required for September 2025

The Department for Education (DfE) supplied all local authorities with predictions of the number of places which could be required to fulfil the demand of the expanded funding streams available to children of working families from April 2024. It was estimated that in Croydon, 363 places would need to be created by September 2025 which was an estimated 7% increase in the estimated supply of childcare hours for under 2's. It was estimated that there would be sufficient places for over 2's. The modelling from the DfE considered demand, supply and need in terms of hours which was then converted to places.

September 2025

363 places needed
+7%

The DfE provided childcare expansion capital funding to all local authorities, based on the number of places that needed to be created for September 2025. The Council delivered two rounds of grant applications to fund projects that expanded early years childcare capacity, creating additional places for the 30-hour entitlement for children aged 9 months to 3 years. As a result, a total of 456 new places were created across the borough—exceeding the Department for Education's estimated requirement of 363 places—and helping to address gaps in provision for younger children.

The first round in autumn 2024 resulted in 352 new places being created and the second round in summer 2025 resulted in an additional 104 places. The two rounds of bids created new places for under 2's and over 2's. Table 12 provides the breakdown by Wards:

	Under 2's places created autumn 2024	Under 2's places created summer 2025	Over 2's places created autumn 2024	Over 2's places created summer 2025
CENTRAL				
Broad Green	28	1	30	2
Fairfield	2	3	2	5
Selhurst	n/a ¹²	12	n/a	18
Shirley North	n/a	3	n/a	6
South Croydon	26	n/a	37	n/a
Waddon	18	n/a	25	n/a
Woodside	34	n/a	37	n/a
NORTH				
Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
SOUTH				
New Addington South	n/a	n/a	13	n/a
Old Coulsdon	17	18	16	18
Purley & Woodcote	9	n/a	6	n/a
Sanderstead	n/a	9	n/a	n/a
Selsdon & Addington Village	11	n/a	n/a	n/a
Selsdon Vale & Forestdale	9	9	27	n/a
TOTAL	159	55	193	49

Table 12: local data on the number of places created through capital grant funding

We are aware that not all of the places created are the right type of places needed and in the right areas. We are working with providers where there are gaps to support them to increase their capacity to take younger children.

¹² n/a (not applicable) indicates that no new places were created through the capital grant funding

6. Prices

6.1 Prices of early years childcare

The Government funding is paid at an hourly rate. Currently the rates in Croydon are:

Working families Under 2's £13.48 per hour	Working families 2-year-olds £9.86 per hour	Disadvantaged 2-year-olds £10.54 per hour	Universal offer 3- & 4-year-olds £6.66 per hour	Working families 3- & 4-year-olds £6.66 per hour
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For early years childcare outside the funded entitlements, most settings offer a range of options for families. Table 13 below shows the average hourly rates, as reported to us by settings. There may be variations to prices based on the number of hours a family uses, with reductions for longer hours, or discounts for sibling groups. There may be additional payments for additional services and consumables, e.g. lunch, snacks, nappies, wipes sun cream etc. which are not included in these prices.

Generally, the charges vary by age group in line with statutory adult to child ratios which are 1:3 for 0–2-year-olds; 1:5 for 2–3-year-olds and 1:8 for 3–4-year-olds (1:13 when a qualified teacher or Early Years teacher is present). Table 13 shows the average hourly rates by provider type and locality. We are aware there are some anomalies however this data is based on an average of the hourly rate of the current information from providers.

Setting type	0–2-year-olds			Average hourly rate			3–4-year-olds		
	South	Central	North	South	Central	North	South	Central	North
Day Nursery	£9.00	£8.70	£10.33	£8.54	£8.56	£9.62	£8.85	£8.55	£9.08
Pre-school	£8.52	£8.47	£9.95	£8.03	£8.33	£8.70	£7.60	£7.69	£8.44
School	N/A	N/A	N/A	£8.44	£9.20	£5.17	£6.02	£5.98	£5.40
Childminder	£7.42	£6.36	£8.51	£7.12	£6.19	£8.16	£6.95	£6.39	£7.59

Table 13: average hourly rates of early years childcare by setting type

6.2 Prices of school age childcare

For school age children, families can access childcare through breakfast clubs (these are usually run by schools); after-school clubs (again, usually run by schools); childminders and holiday clubs (often using schools as the venue but run by independent businesses). The average cost per hour for each of these services is detailed below in localities. This data is based on an average of the hourly rate of the current information from providers:

Provision type	Average hourly rate		
	South	Central	North
Breakfast club	£5.00	£5.24	£5.27
After school club	£6.10	£6.26	£6.96
School age childminder	£10.44	£7.75	£8.24
Holiday club	£6.57	£5.28	£5.99

Table 14: average hourly rates of school age childcare by setting type

In addition, a small number of tuition centres offer places for children after school and at the weekends or during school holidays. These include academic tuition centres and art centres. Prices vary considerably but are £25 per hour on average.

7. Quality of childcare in Croydon

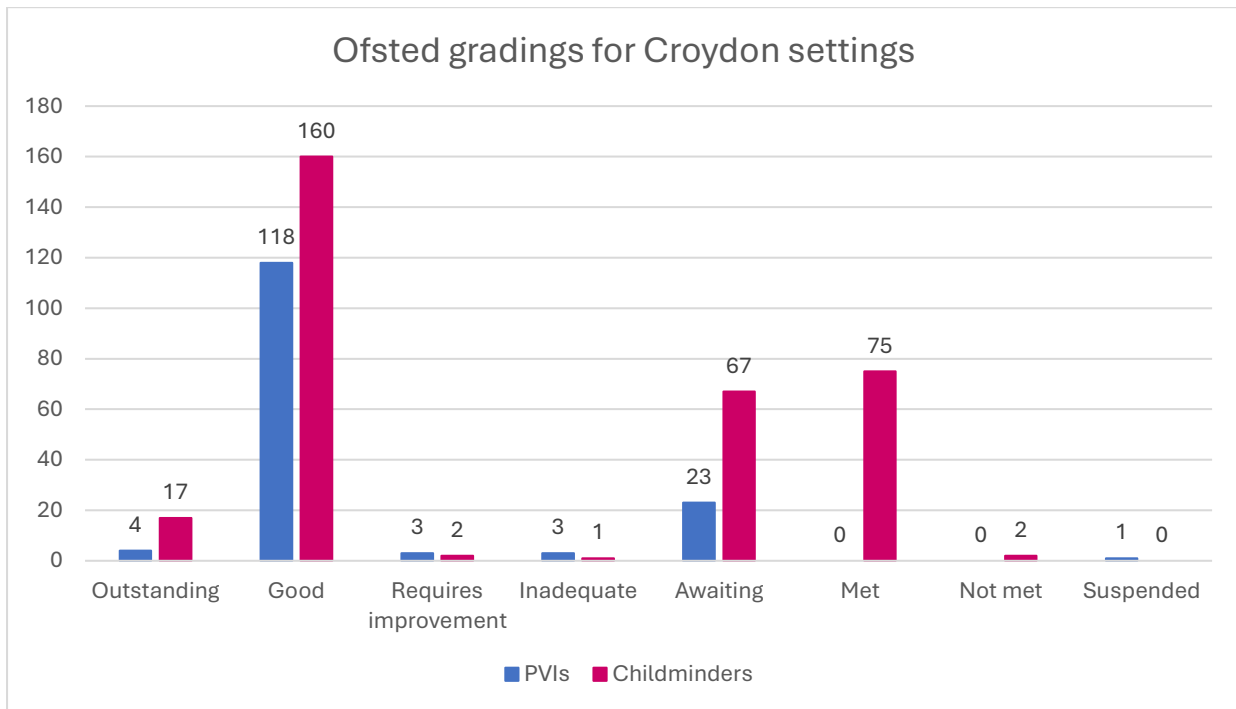
7.1 Ofsted inspection grades

All childcare providers must register with and be inspected by Ofsted, who also grade the quality of their provision. Childminders and private and voluntary providers are on the Early Years Register, schools and standalone maintained nursery schools are on the schools' register. The grades for both registers are equivalent.

Prior to September 2025, both schools and early years providers had four possible Ofsted grades: 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement', and 'inadequate'. From November 2025, the inspection outcomes changed with the removal of the grade for overall effectiveness, however Ofsted will grade seven sub-areas (Leadership and Governance; Curriculum and Teaching; Achievement; Inclusion; Behaviour, Attitudes and Establishing Routines; Children's Welfare and Well-being; and Safeguarding). Each of the seven sub-areas will be graded one of the new Ofsted grades: 'exceptional', 'expected standard', 'strong standard', 'needs attention' and 'urgent improvement', and safeguarding will be graded 'met' or 'not met'.

It is expected that from January 2026 to receive funding from the Local Authority, settings cannot be graded as 'urgent improvement' in the sub-area 'Leadership and Governance' and 'not met' in the sub-area 'Safeguarding'. To receive funding for 2-year-old funding for families receiving some additional government support places, settings must be judged 'expected standard' or above. Settings are able to offer funded places for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds whilst they are awaiting their first Ofsted grading. This will be confirmed once the government release the updated version of the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance in January 2026.

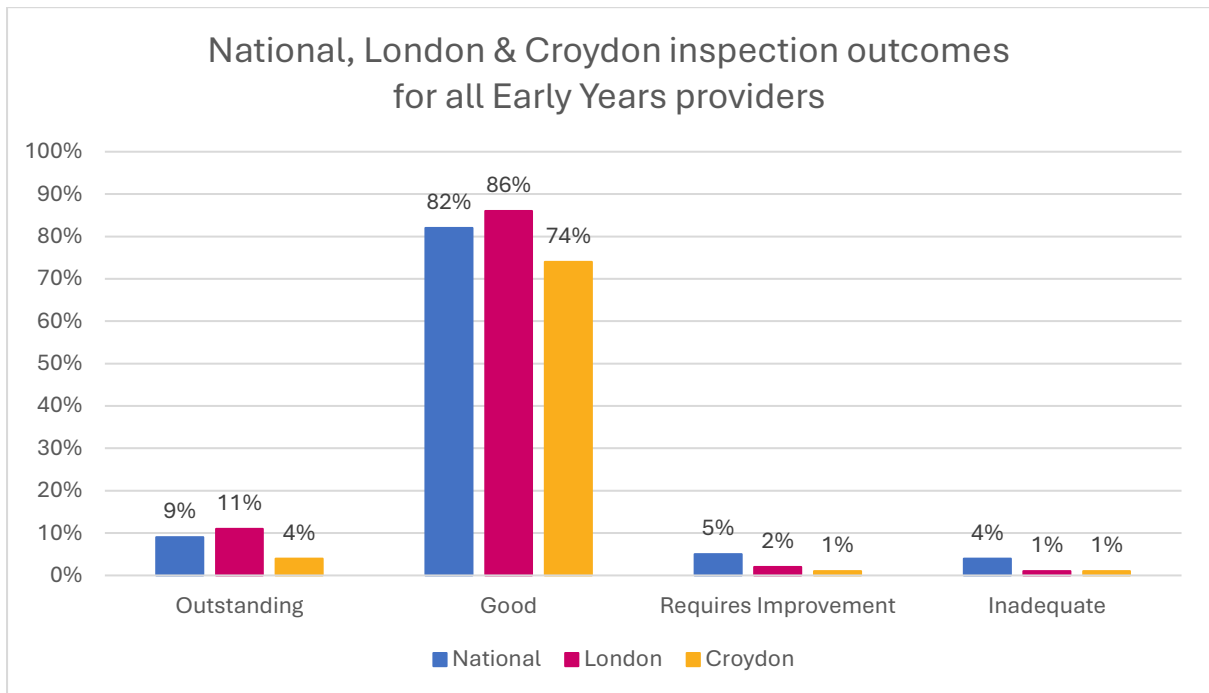
When providers do not have any children on site at the time of their inspection, they are given an Ofsted grade of 'met' or 'not met'. This shows whether they are meeting the requirements for Ofsted registration. Graph 7 below shows the number of Ofsted gradings for Croydon settings:



Graph 7: Ofsted gradings for Croydon settings as of summer term 2025

Of the 308 settings which have received an Ofsted grading, 97% are ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ and 3% are ‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’. Two settings were graded as ‘not met’.

As at the end of the summer term of 2025, Croydon has less early years settings judged to be ‘outstanding’ and ‘good’ in comparison to national and London figures, as represented in graph 8 below. This was also the position at the end of the summer term of 2024. Nationally, there has been a decline in the proportion of providers judged ‘outstanding’ as is it an exacting judgement, therefore more challenging to achieve and maintain. Whilst data shows grades are lower than national or London figures, Croydon has maintained a consistent level of ‘good’ providers.



Graph 8: National, London and Croydon early years inspection outcomes, summer 2025

8. Parents/carers and providers views of sufficiency in Croydon

8.1 Parent/carers survey

We used an online survey to invite parents/carers to tell us about their childcare needs, and their experiences of childcare in Croydon. The survey was advertised through Croydon's Get Involved Platform; Croydon's Social Media channels; Family Hub and Children's Centre users and Croydon's childcare providers.

The findings provide insight into current usage, barriers, and satisfaction levels, informing sufficiency planning. There were a total of 174 responses and of these, 153 (88%) use childcare.

Key findings:

- 82% of respondents are mothers and 16% are fathers
- 80% live with a partner and 15% are single parents
- 59% work 30+ hours per week and 21% work part-time
- 7.5% of respondents have a child with a SEND diagnosis and 8.7% suspect their child has SEND needs but no diagnosis.

Childcare usage:

- 88% of respondents currently use childcare
- The most common type of childcare used are nurseries (school and non-school based) at 55% and informal childcare at 17%
- Monday – Friday are the days where childcare is mostly needed with minimal demand for weekend childcare
- The dominant reason for using childcare is to enable parents to work (78%) followed by providing opportunities for child development and socialisation.

Barriers:

- The cost of childcare was cited as the greatest barrier for not using childcare or limiting use of childcare (48%)
- Childcare not available at the times needed (12%)
- Difficulty accessing clear guidance on funding options (7%).

Affordability and satisfaction:

- 72% of respondents reported that they are happy with the quality of the childcare available to them
- 47% of respondents reported that childcare is not affordable
- The majority of respondents are satisfied with the quality and location of childcare but there are concerns about the flexibility and costs.

Impact of increased government funding from September 2025:

- 21% of respondents have increased their childcare use

- 32% maintained same level
- 13% decreased use
- For 24%, the changes were not applicable.

Finding childcare:

- Nearly a quarter of the respondents reported finding it difficult to find childcare
- Respondents made suggestions of a dedicated website and better promotion via schools and/or social media.

Implications for sufficiency:

- Affordability remains a critical barrier despite the government funded hours
- Information gaps hinder uptake of support

Family Space is Croydon's website which provides a childcare search facility for families to find childcare in Croydon and also provides information about all the funding options available. This survey has highlighted that there is a need for greater promotion and advertising of this resource.

8.2 Provider survey

We used an online survey to invite childcare providers in Croydon to tell us about their childcare provision to help us understand the sector following the implementation of the last of the childcare reforms with the expansion to 30 hours of childcare per week. The survey was sent to all childcare providers in Croydon and communicated in our weekly bulletin.

There were 53 responses from the following breakdown of provider type: Childminders: 42.3%, PVI group settings: 40.4%, School-based settings: 15.4% and Maintained nursery school: 1.9%.

Capacity and demand:

- 34% of respondents have an operational capacity the same as their Ofsted registered capacity and are usually full to capacity
- 26% have an operational capacity the same as their Ofsted registered capacity but they usually have vacancies
- 15% operate below their Ofsted capacity due to staffing shortages
- 15% operate below their Ofsted capacity due to low demand
- 31% have definitive plans to expand whilst 67% would consider expanding if the demand exists

Funding:

- 89% of respondents offer funded places
- 97.9% are registered for Tax-free childcare

SEND provision:

- Just under half of respondents have children with SEND and they have between 1 and 15 children with SEND
- 24% of respondents have plans to increase or improve their provision for children with SEND and 33% are considering increasing or improving their provision for children with SEND
- 18% of respondents have over 75% of their staff that have received specialist SEND training and 20% have between 51% and 75% of their staff that have received specialist SEND training

Future outlook:

- Barriers to expansion include the need for more qualified staff, more physical space and financial constraints
- Market concerns include rising operational costs, recruitment difficulties and competition from school-based nurseries

Implications for sufficiency:

- There is a high willingness amongst respondents to expand if the demand and funding support exists
- There are affordability pressures and staffing shortages which could be key risks in terms of sustainability

8.3 Next steps

Conclusion

Croydon's childcare market is currently meeting statutory sufficiency requirements, with adequate provision for most age groups and significant progress made in expanding places for younger children. The Council has exceeded the Department for Education's target by creating 456 new places, helping to address gaps for under 2s and supporting the implementation of the final phase of childcare reforms. However, challenges remain around affordability, SEND provision, and provider sustainability, particularly in light of rising operational costs and workforce shortages. Parent and provider surveys highlight the need for greater flexibility, improved promotion of funding options, and continued investment in quality and inclusion.

To ensure the market remains resilient and responsive, the Council will:

- Review promotion of Family Space to enhance awareness of this resource
- Parent/carer survey to be repeated annually
- Implement termly census collection and submission from spring 2026.
- Develop annual data collection for the Sufficiency Assessment, commencing summer 2026.
- Review of wards where data identifies a shortfall of places to look at neighbouring wards and transport links for accessibility of places.
- Work with providers in areas of need to develop the childcare they offer and provide support with developing places for under 2's.

Through these actions, Croydon reaffirms its commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible, and inclusive childcare that meets the needs of families now and in the future.