

Bradford District

Early Education and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment - Refresh

2025/26

Bradford Early Education and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2025

Introduction

Purpose of the Early Education and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)

The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities in England to ensure sufficiency of childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, parents who are studying or training and for disabled children. To meet the needs of families' childcare, provision should be accessible, affordable and delivered flexibly in a range of high quality settings.

This report provides a summary of the availability of childcare in Bradford using information on provision as of September 2025, and the Department for Education January 2025 Early Years Census to enable where possible for national and regional comparison to be made.

A robust early years and childcare sector is essential to enable parents to go out to work or participate in education and training. Early education and childcare provision offer paid for childcare services and government funded early years entitlements.

The constant changing level, nature, and quality of provision in the Bradford District means it is often a difficult market to predict in terms of gaps and over-provision as the picture can look very different within a few short months.

The early education and childcare market is fluid and the continuous changing picture means changes will have occurred since the writing of this report, therefore early education and childcare providers and prospective providers should always undertake their own market research to understand local childcare needs and use the information in this report as a guide only.

Please note that the CSA 2025/26 is a refresh of the previous 2024/25 assessment. In 2026/27, we will be carrying out a full overhaul of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment with a 3 year view and adjustments to the format.

1. Child Population

In January 2025 there were 159,852 children aged 0 -18 years. (Data source Bradford Health Authority data registered with the NHS within the Bradford District.) This was a 0.42% increase from January 2024

Age of children as of 1 st January	0-18 years
2021	157,498
2022	158,030
2023	158,412
2024	159,180
2025	159,852

The overall 0-4 population increased across the Bradford district by 0.79% from January 2024. However, 11 of the 30 Bradford wards showed a decline in births in the same period, the greatest decline was in the Wyke, Bingley Rural and Worth Valley Wards.

Children aged 0-4 years - Data source Bradford Health Authority data						
Age of children as of 1 st January	0	1	2	3	4	0 - 4
2021	6,944	7,425	7,574	7,875	8,318	38,136
2022	6,658	6,969	7,496	7,614	7,995	37,032
2023	6,871	7,137	7,084	7,591	7,787	36,470
2024	7,040	7,072	7,324	7,279	7,826	36,541
2025	7,262	7,205	7,317	7,499	7,548	36,831

Ward	Age 0 1st January 2024	Age 0 1st January 2025	Percentage change
Baildon	108	117	8.33%
Bingley	111	118	6.31%
Bingley Rural	191	172	-9.95%
Bolton and Undercliffe	238	262	10.08%
Bowling and Barkerend	415	423	1.93%
Bradford Moor	360	386	7.22%
City	430	440	2.33%
Clayton and Fairweather Green	224	219	-2.23%
Craven	138	157	13.77%
Eccleshill	298	304	2.01%
Great Horton	309	319	3.24%
Heaton	284	316	11.27%

Idle and Thackley	194	184	-5.15%
Ilkley	73	66	-9.59%
Keighley Central	259	282	8.88%
Keighley East	213	199	-6.57%
Keighley West	185	193	4.32%
Little Horton	362	384	6.08%
Manningham	354	371	4.80%
Queensbury	167	169	1.20%
Royds	227	210	-7.49%
Shipley	143	142	-0.70%
Thornton and Allerton	235	219	-6.81%
Toller	317	350	10.41%
Tong	262	259	-1.15%
Unknown	229	277	20.96%
Wharfedale	107	122	14.02%
Wibsey	201	206	2.49%
Windhill and Wrose	159	182	14.47%
Worth Valley	104	91	-12.50%
Wyke	143	123	-13.99%

2. Types of early years and childcare services in Bradford

Childminders (with Domestic Premises) are registered and inspected by Ofsted or a Childminding Agency. Childminders work in their own home or the home of someone else providing paid for childcare for children of all ages. Most childminders offer funded early education entitlement places for eligible children under the age of 5. Some childminders work with up to and including 4 persons. Some Childminders can offer a drop off and pick up services from schools and other childcare providers.

Childminders (without Domestic Premises) is a childminder who works solely from somewhere else other than a home (domestic premises). Childminders without Domestic Premises are registered and inspected by Ofsted or a Childminding Agency. They can provide paid for childcare for children of all ages and funded early education entitlement places for children eligible children under the age of 5. A Childminder without Domestic Premises can work with up to and including 4 persons. Some may offer a drop off and pick up services from schools and other childcare providers.

Childcare on Domestic premises are registered and inspected by Ofsted or a Childminding Agency. Childcare on Domestic Premises is where 5 or more people provide the care in a domestic premises (homes). They provide paid for childcare for children of all ages and can provide funded early education entitlement places for children eligible children under the age of 5. Some Childcare on Domestic providers can offer a drop off

Day Nurseries are registered and inspected by Ofsted, they provide children from birth to five years with early education and paid for childcare. Usually, Day Nurseries provide part time or full time places. All Day Nurseries offer funded early education entitlement places for eligible children under the age of 5. Some Day Nurseries provide before/after school and holiday care for children

of school age and may offer drop off and pick up services from schools and other childcare providers.

Independent School Nurseries are registered with either Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, they provide children aged two to five years with early education and paid for childcare. Usually, Independent School Nurseries offer part time or full time places. All Independent School Nurseries offer funded early education entitlement places for three and four year olds. Some can provide early education places for two year olds.

Nursery Schools are registered and inspected by Ofsted, they provide children aged two to five years with early education and paid for childcare. Usually, Nursery Schools offer part time or full time places. Some Nursery Schools can provide paid for childcare for children under the age of twos.

Out of School Childcare or Wraparound Childcare settings providers caring for children under the age of 8 for more than 2 hours a day must be registered with Ofsted (with the exception of schools that are registered under their school registration). Out of School Childcare/Wraparound Childcare providers offer childcare to school age children and provide one or more service types, before school, after school and during school holidays. Most providers offer a pick up and drop off service to local schools.

Pre Schools are registered and inspected by Ofsted; they provide children aged two to five years with funded early education entitlement places. Usually, Pre Schools offer mornings or afternoon sessions with some are able to provide full days and also additional paid for hours.

Primary School Nurseries are registered and inspected by Ofsted; they provide children aged three to four years old with funded early education. Some Primary School Nurseries offer funded early education entitlement places to eligible two year olds. Usually, Primary School Nurseries offer mornings or afternoon sessions with some able to provide full school days and some offering additional paid for hours.

2. Supply

The supply of early education and childcare places required across the district is managed according to the age range of the children. Demand for early education and childcare places fluctuate according to employment trends as well as population trends. The Private, Voluntary, and Independent sector provision provides much of the flexibility needed to meet demand. Bradford Council seeks to influence market development within the Early Education and Childcare Sector by the provision of data and information which highlights areas of possible unmet demand or over supply across the district. The Early Education and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment uses current and historic information regarding the availability and take up of places by different age ranges, rather than a forecasting approach.

Number of Childcare Providers in Bradford

In September 2025 there were 753 early education and childcare providers across the Bradford District.

Since September 2024 there has been an overall decrease in the early education and market of 2.46%. The period has seen further closures in the pre school sector. The continued decline in childminders remains of concern. The significant increase in out of school childcare is due to gathering information from schools on wraparound childcare services they provide, primarily breakfast clubs.

Closed providers cited reasons for closure as, planned retirement, lack of parental demand, insufficiency early education government funding to cover their business costs.

Early Education and Childcare is available to families through a range of provision types, the table below shows the breakdown by type and number of providers.

Type of early education and childcare provider	Number of Providers 01/09/2022	Number of Providers 01/09/2023	Number of Providers 01/09/2024	Number of Providers 01/09/2025	Percentage change from 2024 to 2025
Childcare on Domestic Premises	7	6	5	6	+20%
Childminder	298	263	242	224	-7.44%
Day Nursery	101	96	99	103	+4.04
Independent School Nursery	7	7	6	6	0%
Primary School Nursery	126	126	128	128	0%
Nursery School	7	7	7	7	0%
Out of School Childcare/Tutoring	170	162	245	251	+2.44%
Pre School	37	32	30	28	-6.67%
TOTAL	752	699	772	753	-2.46%

The table below shows the number of providers that have open and closed within the period September 2024 and September 2025

Type of early education and childcare provider	Number of providers that opened between September 2024 and September 2025	Number of providers that closed between September 2024 and September 2025
Childcare on Domestic Premises	1	0
Childminder	11	33
Day Nursery	6	4
Independent School Nursery	0	0
Primary School Nursery	0	0
Nursery School	0	0
Out of School Childcare/Tutoring	19	13
Pre School/Playgroup	0	1

3. Quality of Childcare Provision

There are no sufficiency issues related to quality of early education and childcare. Quality of Ofsted registered early education and childcare provision in the private, voluntary and independent sector across the Bradford District is high.

As of March 2025 99% of providers on the Ofsted Early Years Register receiving a good or outstanding Ofsted inspection outcome at their most recent inspection. This is higher than the national average of 91%.

Providers who are registered on the Ofsted Childcare Compulsory or Voluntary Register are not routinely inspected by Ofsted. Ofsted inspected a proportion of providers at random and as a result of a complaint raised by the public.

Data source [Main findings: childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Independent Schools can choose to be registered with the Inspectorate School Inspectorate (ISI). ISI do not make a single overarching judgement on a school and the inspections result in a binary judgement of 'met' or 'not met' against each standard. Independent Schools providing early years' provision are inspected against the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage.

As of the 1st September 2025 100% of providers were graded met.

Data source: ISI website. Individual school reports 1st September 2025

Childminders and Childcare on domestic providers can choose to register with a childminder agency. The childminding agency registers and inspects the provider. Childminding agencies are registered and inspected by Ofsted and can be graded either effective or ineffective.

As of 1st September 2025 100% of providers were registered with a childminder agency judged as effective.

Data source – Ofsted inspection reports 1st September 2025.

Schools providing out of school childcare are not separately inspected, all before after and holiday care services operated by the school are deemed part of the schools Ofsted school registration.

4. Providing information and advice parents

Local Authorities have a statutory duty under Schedule 1 to the Childcare Act 2006 to maintain a service that provides information for parents and prospective parents on the provision of early education and childcare.

Parents, carers and professionals can access up to date early education childcare information using informative website pages [Main findings: childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#) an online childcare search tool the [Bradford Childcare Finder](#), a telephone helpline and bespoke brokerage support from an Early Education & Childcare Access and Take Up Officer.

5. Providing information, advice and training to early education and childcare providers

Local authorities are required by legislation to secure information, advice and training for early years and childcare providers. Private, voluntary and independent early years and childcare sector providers receive form the Early Education & Childcare quality team information, advice and guidance on a regular basis via a range of methods, providers are also offered an annual formal contact. Priority support is offered to providers who are graded less than good and those who are due an Ofsted inspection. 82% of providers took up a formal contact during the period October 2024 and September 2025.

6. Childcare Costs

The cost of childcare represents a substantial out-going for parents; support is available to parents towards the cost of childcare through a variety of government support schemes. Parents can access information on the ways to support their childcare costs through Childcare Choices www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

- Universal Credit Pays up to 85% of childcare costs.
- Tax Free Childcare covers 20% of childcare costs.
- Early education funded entitlement funding supports parents to reduce their childcare costs by the number of government funded hours a child can receive.

Early Education and Childcare providers set their own fee structures. Providers are asked to share their childcare fees with Bradford Council, this is voluntary, and the information used solely to estimate average hourly childcare costs. The hourly cost do not include additional costs that provider may charge for additional services and consumables.

Childminder Costs

Childminders opening times vary widely

The lowest cost per hour at £3.50 and the highest at £10, with the average being £4.48 per hour.

Average hourly costs have decreased by 1.32% since September 2024.

Pre School Costs

A pre school session is generally 3 hours in length, however some pre schools open for day sessions for 6 hours or more hours.

The lowest cost per hour at £3.33 and the highest at £10, with the average being £5.53 per hour.

Average hourly costs have increased by 21.8% since September 2024.

Day Nursery Costs

A day nursery full day session ranges from 9 hours to 12 hours in length, with the average being 10.5 hrs.

The average cost per hour for children aged 0 - 2 years is £5.22 per hour. The lowest cost per hour at £2.86 and the highest at £9. Costs have increased 4.4% since September 2024.

The average cost per day for children aged 2 - 4 years is £5.33 per hour. The lowest cost per hour at £2.81 and the highest at £13.50. Costs have increased 9.44% since September 2024.

Out of School Childcare Costs

Out of School Childcare providers operate sessions of different lengths so the cost varies widely. Before school sessions range from 30 mins hour to 1 hour 45 minutes with a cost per session ranging from £0.50 to £27.50.

After school sessions range from 1 hour 30 minutes to 3 hours, with a cost per session ranging from £0.50 to £31.50.

Holiday childcare sessions range from 6 hours to 11 hours, with a cost per session ranging from £6.00 to £45.00.

Many providers have increased their costs since September 2024, however, actuate costs increased cannot be calculated due to inclusion of wraparound childcare of provision operated by schools.

7. Early Education Funded Entitlements

Local authorities must secure availability of government funded early education entitlement hours for all eligible children.

- Two Year Olds receiving additional forms of support - Terrific Twos - 570 hours of funded provision over at least 38 weeks for each qualifying 2 year olds. Two-year-old children are eligible the term following their 2nd birthday if their parent/s access out of work benefits, meet government prescribed low income criteria, or if the child has a Health and Care Plan, or is/has been looked after by the Local Authority, or have No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Universal entitlement Three and Four Year Olds - 570 hours of funded provision over at least 38 weeks for each qualifying three and four-year-old in each 12-month period from the date at which the child's entitlement starts until the child reaches compulsory school age. This works out at 15 hours per week if spread over 38 weeks (fewer hours per week if stretched over more than 38 weeks).
- From September 2025 - Working families entitlement - 570 hours over at least 38 weeks for children from the age of 9 months to 5 years for qualifying working parents with an HMRC working families eligibility code.

It should be noted that while Bradford Council have a duty to ensure sufficiency of early education places and promote take up, there is no legal obligation for parents to take up their child's pre-statutory school age early years provision.

Number of Providers and Places

In September 2025 there were 451 early education funded providers with 19,457 available places for children under the age of five. Places are available in all types of childcare provision; the majority of places are available in day nurseries and primary school nurseries.

The table below shows the number of providers who provide the different types of early education entitlement places as of September 2025.

Provider Type	Number of providers offering funded places	Number offering 0-2 year old places	Number offering 2 year old places	Number offering 3 & 4 year old places
Childcare on Domestic Premises	6	4	6	6
Childminder	182	91	176	176
Day Nursery	100	92	98	98
Independent School Nursery	6	1	4	6
Primary School Nursery	123	0	24	123
Nursery School	7	0	7	7
Pre School Playgroup	27	2	24	26
TOTAL	451	190	339	442

The table below shows the number of available early education entitlement places as of September 2025. Please note a full time place can be used by more than 1 child.

Provider Type	Number of 0-2 year old places	Number of 2 year old places	Number of 3 & 4 year old places
Childcare on Domestic Premises	33	91	115
Childminder	257	358	476
Day Nursery	1,377	2,819	3,955
Independent School Nursery	10	74	222
Primary School Nursery	0	182	7,421
Nursery School	0	306	574
Pre School Playgroup	16	453	718
TOTAL	1,693	4,283	13,481

Number of children assessing their early education entitlement place

The number of children accessing their early education place is assessed using the total number of eligible children against the number of children on roll at the termly census in January, May and October of each year. A national comparison can be made using the Spring/January census.

The estimated number of eligible two year olds children is derived from data supplied by the Department for Work and Pensions each November. It represents the best data available on the number of children meeting the benefit and tax credit eligibility criteria.

The number of eligible two year old children in Bradford continues to decline, with 186 (7%) less eligible children compared with the January 2024.

	Estimated population of eligible two year children
January 2021	3,539
January 2022	3,262
January 2023	2,873
January 2024	2,647
January 2025	2,461

The estimated number of eligible three and four year olds children is derived from birth data using the dates of birth as parameters. It represents the best data available on the number of children of eligibility age.

	Estimated population of eligible three and four children
January 2021	15,878
January 2022	15,178
January 2023	15,378
January 2024	15,111
January 2025	15,047

Number of eligible two year olds **Terrific Twos receiving additional forms of support - children accessing an early education entitlement place**

In January 2025 the percentage of children taking up a place was 61.2%, which was a decrease since January 2024 (73.3%). This was below the England rate of 65% (January 2025)

Date	Bradford	England
January 2021	58%	62%
January 2022	70%	72%
January 2023	69.9%	74%
January 2024	73.3%	74.8%
January 2025	61.2%	65%

Working Families Funded Entitlements Hours

From September 2025, working families with a child aged 9 months to school-age are now entitled to 30 hours per week of childcare for up to 38 weeks a year.

In Autumn 2025, 6,654 children accessed funded entitlement hours under the working families entitlement. The number of eligible families is not known to enable the percentage take up to be reported.

- 2025 children aged 9-23months
- 2217 children aged 2 Years
- 2412 children aged 3 and 4 years

In order for Bradford Council to ensure that there are sufficient places for eligible children, data was collected and analyse to assess the supply and demand of existing under 5s places in order to identify potential gaps in places to meet current and future funded entitlements places.

Based on this analysis, we have identified areas where there is unmet demand for childcare places for children under 2 years old and 2-year-olds. These areas are shown in the list and table below:

- Under 2 Years Old Unmet Demand in:** Baildon, Bingley Rural, Clayton and Fairweather Green, Craven, Eccleshill, Great Horton, Idle and Thackley, Ilkley, Keighley Central, Keighley East, Keighley West, Little Horton, Queensbury, Royds, Thornton and Allerton, Tong, Wharfedale, Wibsey, Windhill and Wrose, Worth Valley, Wyke.
- Two Year Old Unmet Demand in:** Idle and Thackley, Queensbury, Wibsey, Windhill and Wrose, Worth Valley and Wyke

Our data indicates that there is currently no unmet demand for childcare places for 3- and 4-year-olds across the Bradford District

Ward	9 month - 2 years (term after 9 month date)	2 year olds (term after 2 nd Birthday)	3 and 4 year olds (term after 3 rd Birthday)
Baildon	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Bingley	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Bingley Rural	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Bolton and Undercliffe	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Bowling and Barkerend	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Bradford Moor	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
City	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Clayton & Fairweather Green	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Craven	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Eccleshill	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Great Horton	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Heaton	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Idle and Thackley	Insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient
Ilkley	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Keighley Central	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Keighley East	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Keighley West	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Little Horton	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Mannigham	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Queensbury	Insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient
Royds	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Shipley	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Thornton and Allerton	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Toller	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Tong	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Wharfedale	Insufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient
Wibsey	Insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient
Windhill and Wrose	Insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient
Worth Valley	Insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient
Wyke	Insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient

8. Wraparound Childcare

The government announced the Wraparound Childcare Programme in the Spring 2023 budget. The government's ambition is that by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time paid for childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm.

From 2026 all primary schools are required to provide wraparound childcare for working families either delivered by the school or in partnership with local provider/s. Wraparound childcare is childcare that 'wraps around' the conventional school day.

Local authorities are required to identify gaps in provision and support the development of wraparound places. Wraparound childcare is provided by schools on school sites, Ofsted registered out of school childcare providers on school site and in private and community premises, and by childminders in the home. In September 2025 there were approximately 8,110 before school places and 5,270 after school places.

9. Key Findings

The main findings of this Early Education and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment are:

- There has been a decrease in the overall number of childcare providers, this also includes a decrease in the number of early education funded providers. Namely, among childminders.
- There has been a decrease in the number of 2-year-olds eligible for an early education funded place under the 2YO FRAS entitlement
- The percentage of children accessing their early education entitlement for 2YO FRAS has decreased (12.1% reduction), however the national average also decreased (9.8% reduction)
- There are sufficient early education and childcare places for 3–4-year-olds across the Bradford District.
- There are sufficient places to meet the working families entitlements for January 2026
- There are wards within Bradford where additional places for under 3s will be required to meet the working families entitlements for Summer 2026.
- There are sufficient quality early education and childcare provision in the Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector.
- The average cost of childcare continues to increase.
- The number of Out of School childcare continues to increase due to work around the National Wraparound Programme.
- The number of Childminders continues to decrease; the local authority is planning a recruitment campaign in this area to combat the decline.

Key areas for action September 2025-September 2026.

- Continue to monitor the under 5s population using the monthly Health Authority data.
- Continue to monitor the closures at ward and provider type to ascertain the impact on the sufficiency of places.
- Continue to monitor changes in parental demand for childcare due to expansion of the working families funded entitlements.
- Implement place creation strategies where additional under 3s places are required.
- Continue to work on the Wraparound Programme to ensure all primary school age childcare can access wraparound childcare 8am-6pm if families require it.

- Improve the intelligence of occupancy of childcare places across the Bradford District.
- Continue to support providers with advice and guidance relating to sufficient quality early years and childcare provision and places.
- Monitor the decline in the number of eligible for the 2YO FRAS entitlement
- Develop further all digital communication for parents and professionals.
- Monitor the decline of Childminding provision and start a recruitment campaign to combat the decline.