

Essex Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

**Early Years and Childcare
Schools, Children and Families
Essex County Council**

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Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 required local authorities to:

- secure sufficient childcare for the needs of working parents in their area for children up to 1st September after their 14th birthday, or until they reach the age of 18 years in the case of children with a disability
- carry out a sufficiency assessment of all the childcare in their area at least every 3 years. (Local authorities carried out their first assessment in 2008 and the next ones were required to be completed by April 2011)
- publish details of their assessments by placing them on their website; and making copies available in public libraries, premises of childcare providers, schools and places to which the public have access, as they consider appropriate.

Local authorities, including Essex County Council, published their first Childcare Sufficiency Assessments in 2008. This report is the second county Childcare Sufficiency Assessment published by Essex County Council in accordance with the guidance given in the document *Securing Sufficient Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in Carrying out their Childcare Sufficiency Duties*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010.

The guidance stated that local authorities should consult with local partners, Job Centre Plus, parents, childcare providers, schools, neighbouring authorities and other relevant stakeholders as part of their childcare sufficiency assessment. In assessing supply of childcare the local authority should take account of the number of places, the times of day available, availability over the year, vacancies, session lengths, charges, and provision for children with special needs. In assessing demand the local authority should consider the number of childcare places required by working or training parents, the times of day required and demand for flexible care, the number of free early years places required for 3 and 4 year olds and any specific requirements for children with special needs. Local authorities are then required to undertake an analysis of the gaps between supply and demand.

1. The County of Essex

Essex is a large and diverse county comprising twelve District or Borough Councils, these being:

- Basildon
- Braintree
- Brentwood
- Castle Point
- Chelmsford
- Colchester
- Epping Forest
- Harlow
- Maldon
- Rochford
- Tendring
- Uttlesford

A map of Essex showing the boundaries of the District / Borough Councils and the main towns is shown in Appendix 1.

Essex borders Southend and Thurrock unitary authorities to the South East, Suffolk to the North East, Hertfordshire to the West, Cambridgeshire to the North, and the London boroughs of Greater London to the South West.

In many respects, apart from the south east of the county, Essex is still predominantly rural with small market towns, traditional villages and hamlets. The main towns of Saffron Walden and Braintree to the north west of the county in particular are surrounded by a large number of smaller communities. Although the second most populated non-metropolitan local authority in England, Essex does not contain a city. To the east Essex has 350 miles of coastline which includes the port of Harwich and the seaside towns of Frinton, Walton on the Naze and Clacton within the district of Tendring. Rivers in Essex include the Crouch and the Blackwater and along them lie towns with a strong sailing and fishing tradition including Burnham on Crouch, Maldon, Mersea Island, and Wivenhoe.

Brentwood and Epping Forest districts have strong transport links into London and are home to large numbers of commuters, although also include a rural population. Generally regarded as the more affluent areas of Essex, they do include pockets of deprivation and suffer high property prices. Chelmsford is the administrative centre of Essex, in addition to being a busy retail, commercial and commuter town. Colchester is one of the three largest towns in Essex with a strong historic and cultural tradition, and houses the Colchester Garrison.

Basildon and Harlow are densely populated 'New Towns' developed after the war to house large numbers of families moving out from the East End of London. These towns have developed their own particular characters but also have specific challenges. Basildon District Council has the highest number of children of all the twelve districts of Essex. The towns of Rochford, Rayleigh and Canvey Island are also within the more urban south east of the county.

2. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Process within Essex

Within Essex, a multi-agency County Childcare Sufficiency Strategy Group meets on a termly basis to consider new information and issues affecting childcare sufficiency, and to make action plans as appropriate. Membership of this group includes strategic managers from Essex County Council Early Years and Childcare, National Childminding Association (NCMA), National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), 4Children, Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA), Job Centre Plus, and from Essex County Council's Schools Programme, Family Information Service and Library Service. Feeding into this county group and also meeting on a termly basis are local area Childcare Sufficiency Groups: one for each of the twelve District Councils / Boroughs within Essex.

The local Childcare Sufficiency Group membership comprises Children's Community Development Officers (the lead Essex County Council officers for childcare sufficiency within each district), Childcare Development Officers / Consultants from Essex County Council Partners: 4Children, National Childminding Association, Pre-school Learning Alliance, National Day Nurseries Association, Schools representatives, and in some districts representatives from children's centres and Job Centre Plus.

The local Childcare Sufficiency Groups look at childcare occupancy data, which is collected from childcare providers on a termly basis, any local parental consultation data, information on proposed housing developments, and local knowledge of the childcare settings within the district. There are 267 administrative wards within the twelve District / Borough Councils of Essex, and local childcare sufficiency analysis is undertaken down to the ward level.

Local Childcare Sufficiency Action Plans are formulated to address any identified childcare sufficiency issues, and reviewed termly.

The most recent local childcare sufficiency action plans are available to view on the Early Years and Childcare pages of the Essex County Council website <http://www.essex.gov.uk>

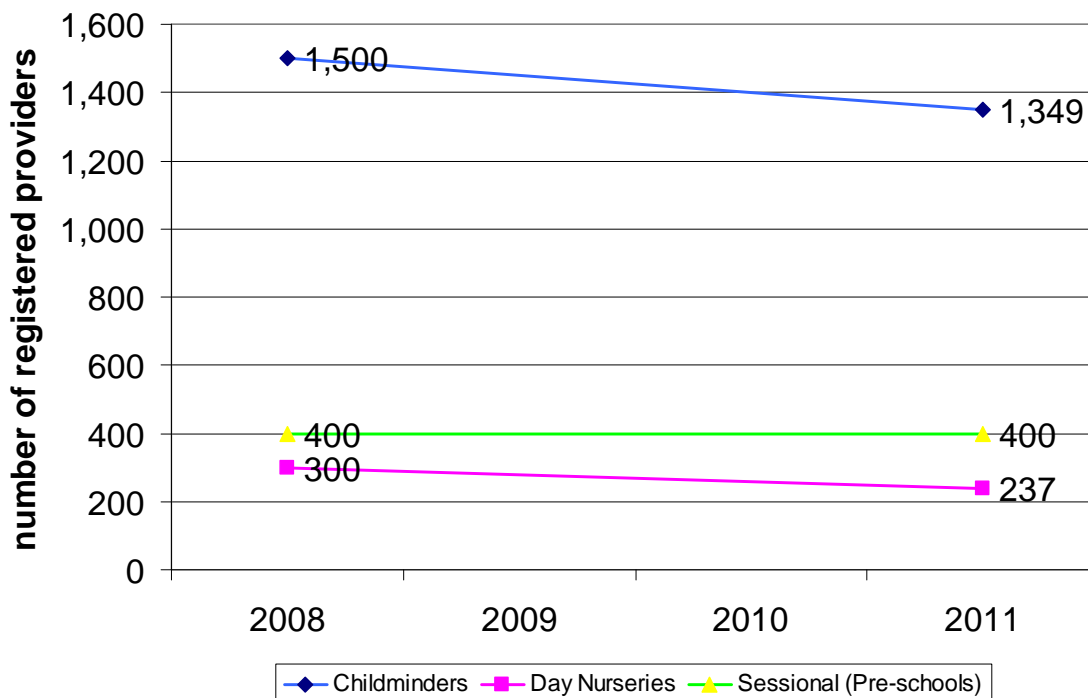
3. The Supply of Childcare in Essex

3.1 Childminders, day nurseries and pre-schools

In line with the national trend, the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2008 had a significant impact on early years and childcare providers in Essex, and in particular on childminders who were now being required to evidence how they were working towards learning and development targets with their children, in addition to providing childcare. These extra requirements led to a significant number of childminders leaving the profession in the first few years following the new Ofsted inspection criteria. However, as new childminders now enter the profession with a knowledge of the EYFS and its requirements, the drop off in childminder numbers in Essex which has been seen since 2008, is now lessening.

The number of daycare providers in Essex has decreased since 2008, although the number of pre-schools has remained constant. The following charts illustrate the changes in the number of childminders, day nurseries and pre-schools registered with Ofsted between 2008 and 2011, and the number of places.

Changes in number of providers 2008 - 2011



2008 data source: Ofsted report of registered providers and places 2011 data source: Essex QA early years and childcare database

Childcare provider turnover (new registrations and de-registrations) during 2010

	Childminder turnover during 2010	Day nurseries turnover during 2010	Pre-schools turnover during 2010
Basildon	-4	1	0
Braintree	-9	-1	-2
Brentwood	0	0	-1
Castle Point	-6	1	-2
Chelmsford	-21	-2	-2
Colchester	-14	-2	-2
Epping Forest	-14	-6	0
Harlow	0	0	-4
Maldon	3	-1	-1
Rochford	8	0	-2
Tendring	4	0	-1
Uttlesford	-6	0	1
Essex	-59	-10	-16

Source: Essex Early Years and Childcare registered childcare database January 2011

The table above presents data showing that there was a net reduction in the number of childminders, day nurseries and pre-school providers in Essex between the beginning and the end of 2010.

The data indicates the greatest changes per provision type to be:

- Childminders within the Chelmsford district (a net reduction of 21 childminders in 2010)
- Day nurseries within the Epping Forest district (a net reduction of 6)
- Pre-schools to be within the Harlow district (a net reduction of 4)

3.2 Breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs

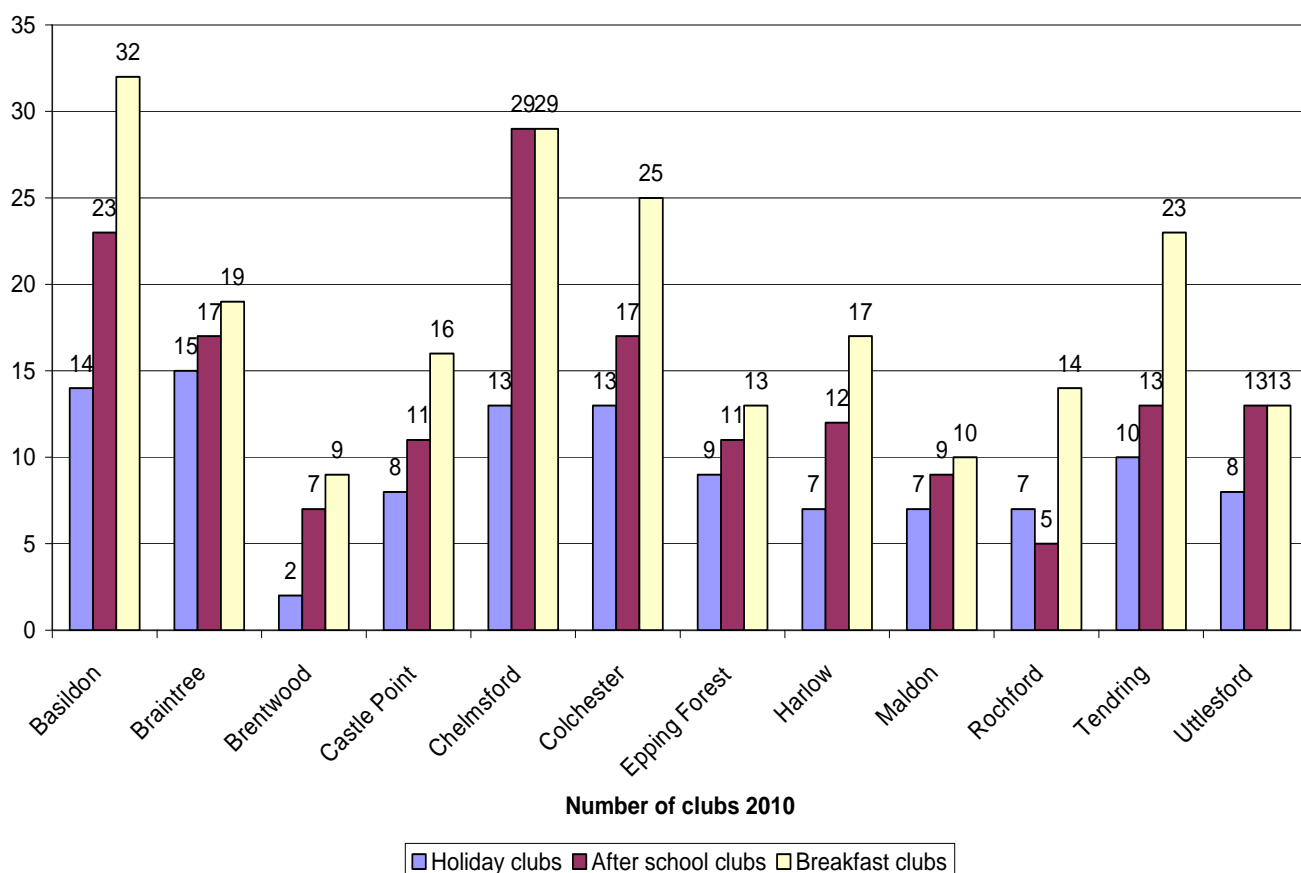
There has been a significant increase in out of school provision year on -year; however breakfast clubs have seen the greatest rise. In 2005 Essex County Council and its partner organisation 4Children supported an average of 200 clubs across Essex; now they support an average of more than 500 clubs, and this is a mixture of breakfast, after school and holiday clubs.

The increase in club provision has been fuelled by parental need as well as the schools having to fulfil their full core offer. Schools were tasked with either providing childcare on site or signposting to local childcare. As a result many schools decided to open their own out of school provision with breakfast clubs at the forefront of development.

The increase in out of school development has also been fuelled in recent years with fuller access to the start up grant offered by Early Years and Childcare as well as discussions around childcare sufficiency which aid local development officers in planning where the gaps in provision are and supporting development where appropriate.

Parental consultation has been high on the agenda and over the last couple of years there has seen a general pattern in childcare increasingly being offered for longer periods of time to fit in with changing lifestyles and parental demand, such as the prosperity of parents to work longer and less typical hours.

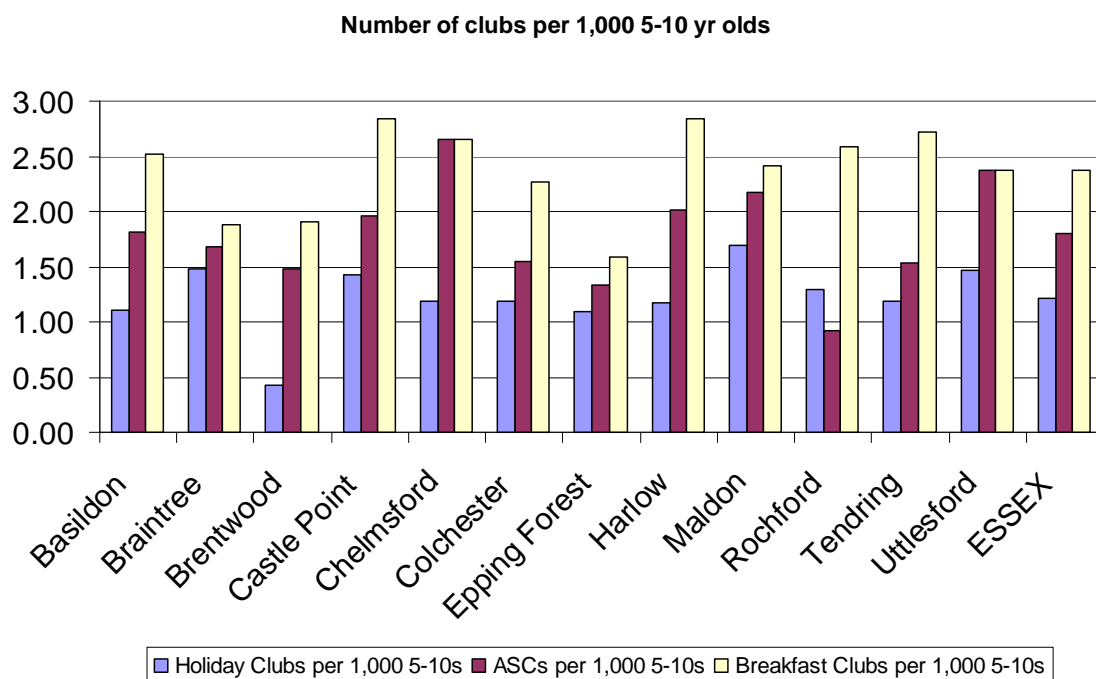
The following chart shows the number of out of school clubs operating within state schools or within the PVI sector in each district as at December 2010.



Number of clubs per 1,000 5 – 10 year olds in the population

Looking at the number of out of school clubs in Essex in relation to the number of 5-10 year olds, it can be seen from the following chart that for every 1,000 5 – 10 year olds in each of the areas:

- Brentwood District has the lowest number of holiday clubs.
- Rochford District has the lowest number of after school clubs.
- Epping Forest District has the lowest number of breakfast clubs.



3.3 Distribution of childcare

All forms of childcare in Essex are concentrated primarily within the main towns, where families will experience the greatest choice, and the number of families requiring childcare will be greatest. However, with large parts of Essex being rural and consisting of small villages and hamlets, it is important to assess whether there is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of families living in these more isolated areas.

The maps located in the Appendices of this report show the distribution of different types of childcare across Essex. The maps showing after school clubs, breakfast clubs and childminders also show the location of primary schools, as in many cases childminders pick up from local schools, and out of school clubs operate from schools. It should be noted that the number and distribution of childcare providers is constantly changing and that this data is only accurate for the date stated on the map.

In the rural areas of Essex to the north of the county, and to the east in the Dengie area, it can be seen there are primary schools which do not have childminders living close by, and do not have breakfast club or after school club provision at or close to the school. These areas have been identified by the local Childcare Sufficiency Groups, who work with the local childcare providers and schools to assess the need for childcare provision in these areas, and whether it can be sustainable. In some rural areas in order to ensure that childcare provision is sustainable,

transport arrangements have been set up to pick children up from rural schools and take them to an after school club in a more central location.

3.4 Affordability

Recent national research (Day Care Trust 2010) found that there had been a rise in costs above the rate of inflation for all types of childcare, despite the UK being in recession. In England the cost of a nursery place for children aged 2 years and over had risen by 5.1% - almost double inflation. Average childcare costs for 25 hours per week were £88 in England (£3.52 an hour), which is more than half gross average part-time earnings of £153 per week. The typical cost of a place for a child in a local authority-run summer holiday clubs was £82.60 per week in England (£16.52 a day). The typical cost for private, voluntary and independent-run provision is £104.55 per week (£20.91 a day) in England.

In Essex, information from childcare providers on their charges has been collected on a voluntary basis each term since 2008, as part of their termly childcare sufficiency audit. However, as this is voluntary not all providers have supplied this information. The following table shows the average charges made by each childcare type, collating together the responses received from the termly childcare sufficiency audit for the last two terms. This provides a useful indication of the differences in charges between different districts of Essex, although inevitably masks the considerable variation in charging which exists between providers.

District	June and November 2010 average after school club session charges	June and November 2010 average breakfast club session charges	April and August 2010 average holiday club full day charges	June and November 2010 average childminder average charges	June and November 2010 average day nursery hourly charges	June and November 2010 average pre-school hourly charge
Basildon	£8.45	£2.53	£24.19	£4.20	£4.35	£3.22
Braintree	£7.55	£2.57	£18.34	£3.69	£3.99	£3.42
Brentwood	£11.43	£4.29	£27.60	£4.26	£3.99	£4.34
Castle Point	£12.03	£3.68	£23.42	£4.12	£4.94	£2.83
Chelmsford	£9.16	£3.64	£23.57	£3.80	£4.22	£3.66
Colchester	£8.68	£2.77	£22.45	£3.80	£4.60	£4.10
Epping Forest	£8.23	£3.73	£14.00	£4.48	£5.61	£3.98
Harlow	£7.34	£3.04	£20.38	£3.54	£4.97	£3.19
Maldon	£7.75	£2.85	£25.38	£3.67	£4.96	£3.34
Rochford	£9.88	£2.92	£23.95	£4.01	£3.79	£3.46
Tendring	£6.60	£2.59	£22.06	£3.70	£3.94	£3.42
Uttlesford	£9.39	£3.40	£23.82	£4.26	£4.38	£3.75
ESSEX	£8.88	£3.17	£22.43	£3.96	£4.48	£3.61

It is clear that Brentwood and Epping Forest districts (areas of Essex with strong transport links to London and a high proportion of London commuters) are charging the highest childcare prices. However, salaries in these districts are also, on average, higher than in other parts of Essex, and childcare providers also have to take into account the wages of their employees and other running costs which may be more expensive in these parts of Essex. Salary costs across the childcare sector are increasing, partly as a result of the workforce becoming more highly skilled and qualified and therefore requiring a higher rate of pay.

Within Essex, childcare development staff are working with local childcare providers to help make childcare affordable to parents. Out of school childcare can be expensive so clubs are finding innovative ways of supporting parents as well as being flexible and affordable.

Most clubs around the county will offer sibling rates, which helps those parents with more than one child of school age needing to use the service. Others will set up payment plans for parents such as paying weekly rather than on a monthly basis, however this would be at the discretion of the individual club.

Holiday clubs will charge a day rate but also a weekly rate and try to be as flexible as possible. If parents book the whole week it is often cheaper than paying on a day-to-day basis. Some clubs will also offer the holiday club service to parents on school non-pupil days for example the amount parents are paying for the day will be deducted from the holiday club session (for example if you are paying £13 for an after school club session you will only be invoiced £12 for the day).

Other clubs in Essex have tried offering the service to fit round working parents shift patterns and will adjust the price accordingly, also if the club is closed due to bad weather a letter will be sent to parents explaining the unfortunate situation. If they then require credit or a replacement session they are entitled to inform the club.

Fundraising will also keep costs down especially if the club is a community interest company. One club in particular has set up an internet link, which means that whenever people buy goods from Debenhams, Argos etc. using the designated linked website a donation goes to the club. Also they have set up a search function so that every time someone searches the internet using this particular website again a donation is made. For example if the website gets 10 hits a day they could generate £35 a year.

More recently schools have had access to a pot of funding through their local delivery groups, which allows Headteachers to identify those children who would benefit from accessing a club but who may not be able to afford the service regularly. For example if a child is generally late to school they could pay for the child to attend a breakfast club, therefore making sure the child is fed and in school on time. Schools can also subsidise rent to ensure sustainability of the club which means the cost of fees can be kept lower and continuity of care will still remain for parents and children alike.

Within other areas of the childcare sector in Essex there are also examples of good practice around affordability. Some childminders, for example, spread their charges across the whole year in equal instalments, thereby making the childcare costs more manageable for parents who need it during the holidays as well as term time

3.5 The supply of high quality childcare in Essex

The progress in improving quality childcare has continued with two main indicators of quality that are used to assess childcare settings within Essex. The first of these is the Ofsted inspection judgments which address issues of physical safety, child protection and provision for special needs as well as care and learning.

The internal quality assurance grade is the second of the quality indicators used in Essex. This is given to childcare settings on an annual basis by childcare professionals working with Essex Early Years and the Childcare Service and is known as a RAG judgment. Settings are given a Red, Amber or Green grade for a number of different quality criteria to improve the quality of childcare provision, and one overall grade, Red indicating areas where action is required, and Green indicating consistent high quality.

- Out of school provision

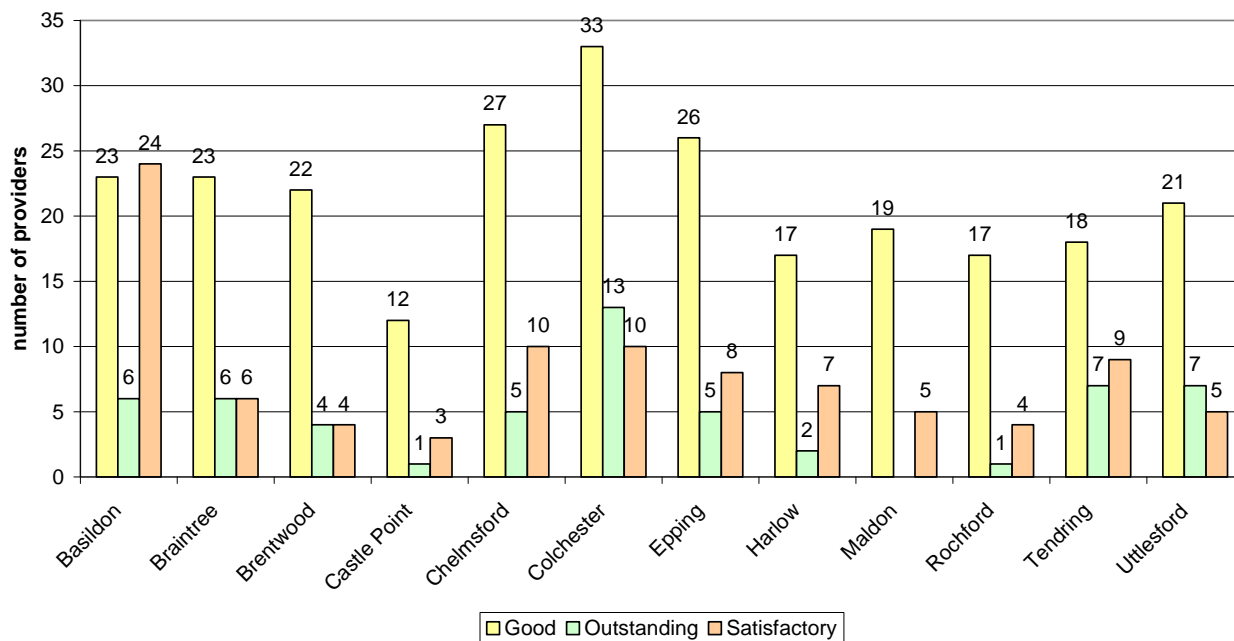
The results of the out of school provisions RAG grade is now being evaluated to ensure consistency is given to those provisions where the greatest need is required to improve quality. One of the main quality areas has been to increase the number of skilled and qualified childcare workers with the focus on professional qualifications and continuous professional development. Increasing the number of skilled and qualified childcare workers is a key aspect for Essex. Furthermore the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms for providers themselves has resulted in a rise in out of school provisions being invited to quality workshops proactively increasing the number of accredited provisions across Essex.

School links in out of school provision has seen an increase in quality partnership working with agreements for the provision of childcare on school premises. For those provisions that have links with more than one school there are agreements to provide supervised transport between schools or a walking bus service.

- Childminding provision, and daycare provision for under 5's in non-domestic premises

As with out of school provision in Essex, both the internal RAG judgements and the Ofsted ratings are used to identify any providers where there are areas of weakness, and to put an action plan in place to address this with them. The chart overleaf shows the current Ofsted outcomes for all the full day care and sessional provision for under 5's in Essex, by geographical area.

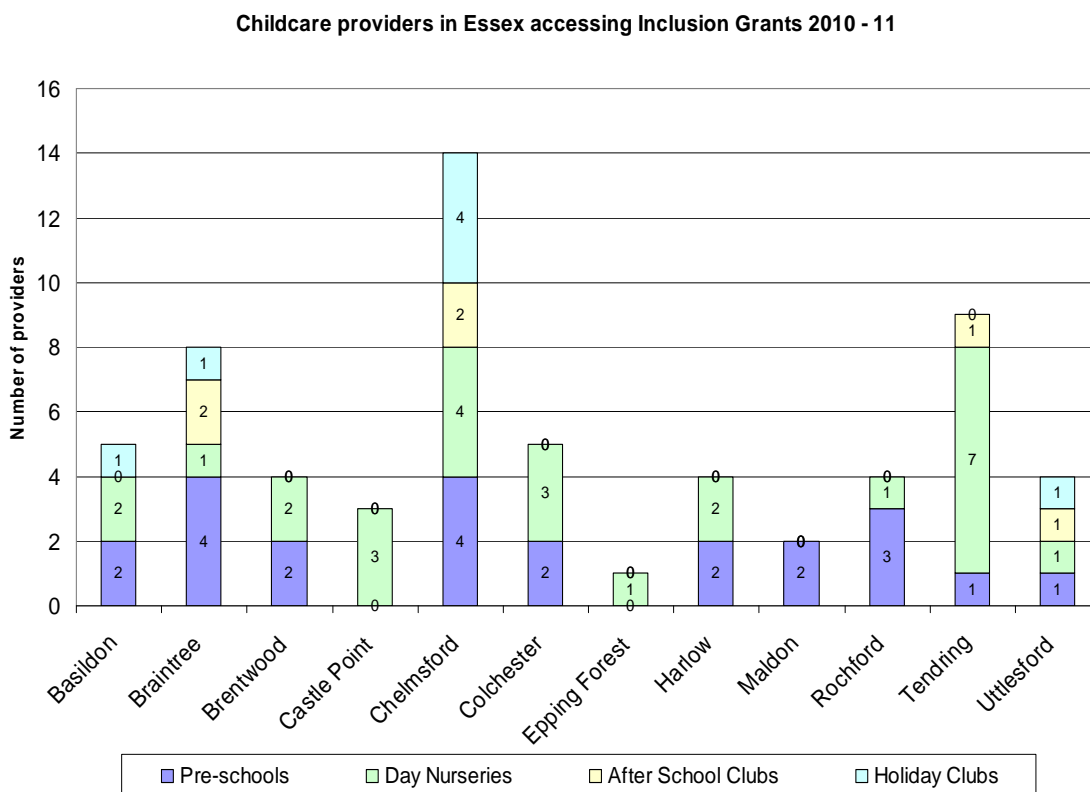
Overall Ofsted outcome for full day care and pre-school Early Years provision



3.6 Inclusion and provision for children with special needs or disabilities

All early years settings in Essex have a named SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) and are encouraged to have an ENCO (Equality Named Co-ordinator). Early years and childcare settings are able to access information, support and training from the Early Years and Childcare Service, and specialist development support staff. Private, voluntary and independent childcare settings are encouraged and resourced, wherever possible, to be able to offer childcare to all children, including those with additional needs or disabilities. As part of this, early years and childcare settings are able to apply for funding from the local authority (an 'Inclusion Grant') for the specific purpose of enabling the inclusion of a child or children with additional needs, through the funding of additional training, equipment or staffing that is considered necessary to meet that child's needs.

The following chart shows childcare providers in Essex who were awarded Inclusion Grants from April 2010 – March 2011.



Take up of the Inclusion Grant varies across Essex, and differences may be due to a range of factors, including the number of providers and childcare places in those districts, the prevalence of children with special needs in their locality and their awareness of the Grants that are available to them. Chelmsford district was found to have the largest number of providers overall who accessed an Inclusion Grant, with Braintree and Tendring districts having the second and third largest.

Analysis of the Essex Early Years Census 2011 (which contains information on children accessing the Free Early Education Entitlement within full daycare and sessional daycare settings) shows that 286 of the 645 non-domestic early years providers in Essex recorded on the Early Years Census i.e. 44%, were providing care to 3 and 4 year old children who were

recorded as having either a Statement of Special Educational Needs or were recorded as having Early Years Action, or Early Years Action Plus status, indicating an additional need. This illustrates the work taking place across Essex within the mainstream early years providers to include children with a range of additional needs.

Specialist provision

A number of maintained sector nursery schools and nursery classes in Essex have specialist units for pre-school children with special needs. They are located in the following districts:

District	
Chelmsford:	3 nursery schools / classes
Colchester:	1 nursery school / class
Tendring:	1 nursery school / class
Harlow:	2 nursery schools / classes

The following districts have special maintained state schools catering for children with a range of complex and profound learning needs from age 3 years:

- Basildon
- Braintree
- Epping Forest
- Castle Point
- Tendring
- Harlow
- Chelmsford
- Colchester

The districts of Brentwood, Maldon, Rochford and Uttlesford have no specialist pre-school provision for children with special needs within the maintained school sector.

In addition to mainstream after school clubs and holiday clubs, which cater for children with special needs or disabilities with the aid of Inclusion Grants and specialist support, there are a number of clubs for school-age children which cater specifically for children with special needs. Some are operated by the special schools, and some by the PVI sector:

District	Specialist out of school childcare for school age children with disabilities or additional needs
Basildon:	3 after school clubs 2 holiday clubs
Braintree:	1 after school club 3 holiday clubs
Chelmsford:	1 after school club 1 holiday play scheme
Colchester:	1 breakfast club 2 after school clubs 1 holiday club
Epping Forest:	1 holiday club
Harlow:	1 holiday club
Rochford:	1 holiday club
Tendring:	2 after school clubs 2 holiday clubs

3.7 3 & 4 Year Old Free Early Education Entitlement Funding (FEEE)

Supply

The 2010/11 Free Early Education Entitlement contract between Essex County Council and childcare providers summarises the National Code of Practice and Essex guidance to ensure compliance.

There is an expectation that all providers should be able to offer 15 hours of funding over 38 weeks of the year in line with a parent's maximum entitlement and choice to access through a single provider. There may be legitimate reasons why they are not able to, such as limitations around the premises and independent schools who offer less than 38 weeks. These reasons need to be supplied in writing to Essex County Council to ensure that this offer complements the sufficiency of childcare within an area. The offer and take-up of the 15 hour Free Early Education Entitlement will continue to be monitored in detail throughout 2011 to ensure that there is sufficient sustainable provision which meets local demand.

Full daycare (nurseries) and sessions offered during term time (predominantly pre-schools) who offer the Free Early Education Entitlement were contacted by the Early Years and Childcare Service in the summer of 2010 and asked whether they were offering or intended to offer parents the full 15 hours.

Offering 15 Hours	Full daycare	Sessional care	Total
No	1	45	46
Yes	195	289	484
Data not available	38	52	90
Total	234	386	620

Of the data available for analysis, it can be seen that in 2010 all but one of full daycare settings offered 15 hours to parents. There were less sessional settings offering 15 hours based on the data received, but 87% is representative as some providers had plans in place to extend to 15 hours by April 2011 or were restricted by premises.

The daycare providers reported that the 15 hours would be made available either as a flexible offer to parents, or as 5 x 3 hour sessions (in line with the minimum guarantee as summarised in the National Code of Practice).

The main reasons for not offering the 15 hour Free Early Education Entitlement included limitations around the premises, which particularly affected sessional daycare providers who were operating out of community buildings, for example village halls, church halls or community centres. These pre-schools could be restricted in the days of the week or the times of day that they were able to hire the buildings. Other reasons for not offering the 15 hour Free Early Education Entitlement was that there was insufficient parental demand that was substantiated by local consultation with parents currently accessing childcare.

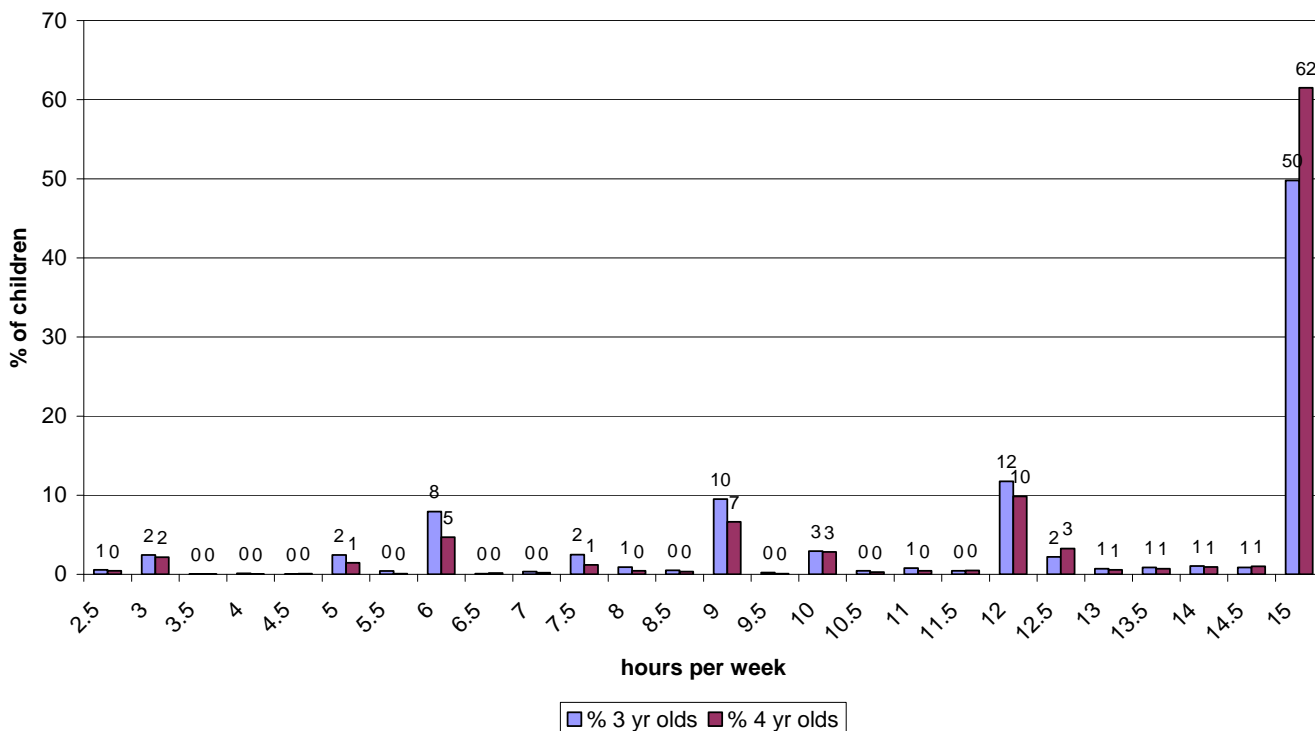
Take-up of the 15 hrs Free Early Education Entitlement

Analysis of the January 2011 Early Years Census shows that 14,641 three year olds and 5,399 four year olds were accessing the Free Early Education Entitlement in private, voluntary and independent sector full daycare or sessional non-domestic settings.

This figure excludes children who were in the two Essex maintained school nurseries or the 64 maintained school nursery classes. A total of 2,571 children were recorded on the school census as being registered in maintained school nursery provision in autumn 2010.

The chart below looks at data from the January 2011 Early Years census for Essex and shows that 50% of 3 year olds and just over 62% of 4 year olds within the PVI childcare sector were taking up the full 15 hours.

Take up of the Free Early Education Entitlement January 2011



4. Demand for Childcare

4.1 Current and projected child population of Essex

Population data from Child Benefit take up, GP registrations, and registrations of live births is all used by Essex County Council to build up a picture of the number of children within the localities of Essex. Current and projected child population data is used at a Ward and District level by the local Childcare Sufficiency Groups to inform their planning around current and future childcare demand.

The following table shows the number of live births registered in the academic years 2004-5 to 2008-9 at the District level.

District	Live births registered academic year 2004-2005	Live births registered academic year 2005-2006	Live births registered academic year 2006-2007	Live births registered academic year 2007-2008	Live births registered academic year 2008-2009
Basildon	2133	2304	2266	2416	2354
Braintree	1647	1599	1778	1790	1744
Brentwood	701	738	727	762	742
Castle Point	803	841	761	883	776
Chelmsford	1805	1839	1819	1944	1903
Colchester	1844	1917	1975	2133	2096
Epping Forest	1416	1383	1517	1465	1496
Harlow	1106	1151	1212	1282	1257
Maldon	632	553	564	593	590
Rochford	766	817	807	771	821
Tendring	1143	1212	1317	1298	1370
Uttlesford	711	764	828	776	750
Essex	14,707	15,118	15,571	16,113	15,899

Data source: Essex County Council School Organisation and Planning Team 2010

The table below presents District level population projections from the Office for National Statistics for the 0-4 and 5-9 age groups

AREA	AGE GROUP	2008 (000's)	2009 (000's)	2010 (000's)	2011 (000's)	2012 (000's)	2013 (000's)	2014 (000's)	Difference 2011-14
Essex	0-4	80.2	81.8	83.2	84.1	84.7	84.7	84.8	700
Essex	5-9	78.9	79.1	79.9	81.5	83.6	86.2	88.0	6500
Basildon	0-4	11.6	11.9	12.1	12.1	12.3	12.3	12.3	200
Basildon	5-9	10.5	10.6	10.8	11.2	11.4	11.7	12.0	800
Braintree	0-4	8.8	9.0	9.2	9.3	9.3	9.2	9.2	-100
Braintree	5-9	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.9	9.1	9.4	9.6	700
Brentwood	0-4	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	100
Brentwood	5-9	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	300
Castle Point	0-4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4	-100
Castle Point	5-9	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.0	200
Chelmsford	0-4	9.7	9.9	10.0	10.1	10.2	10.2	10.2	100
Chelmsford	5-9	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.9	10.1	10.4	10.6	700
Colchester	0-4	10.1	10.5	10.8	11.1	11.4	11.6	11.7	600
Colchester	5-9	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.8	10.2	10.8	11.1	1300
Epping Forest	0-4	7.2	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.4	-100
Epping Forest	5-9	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.3	7.5	7.7	600
Harlow	0-4	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.9	-100
Harlow	5-9	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.1	5.4	5.5	500
Maldon	0-4	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3	0
Maldon	5-9	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8	100
Rochford	0-4	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	0
Rochford	5-9	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.0	300
Tendring	0-4	6.6	6.7	6.9	7.0	7.1	7.1	7.2	200
Tendring	5-9	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.3	7.5	7.7	500
Uttlesford	0-4	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.5	-100
Uttlesford	5-9	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.9	5.0	5.2	5.3	400

Source: 2008-based sub-national population projections, ONS

Essex population projections for the next three years which are taken from the Office for National Statistics 2008 population projections show increases for the Essex under 5 years population of approximately **700** children between 2011 and 2014.

The 5-9 years population shows considerably larger estimated increases between 2011 and 2014 of approximately **6,500** children. This will have an impact on the demand for breakfast, after school and holiday clubs in particular.

The district of Colchester has the largest projected increases in the 5-9 years' population between 2011 and 2014 of an estimated 1,300 children.

The following population projections have been calculated by Essex County Council Schools Planning and Admissions for the School Organisation Plan 2010 – 2015 and take into account local factors such as planned new housing.

While Castle Point and Maldon districts are showing a reduction in the primary school roll over the next 5 years, significant increases are shown for Basildon, Colchester, Chelmsford and Harlow.

District	Number on primary school roll (reception to Yr6) May 2010	Forecast including adjustment for new housing 2015	Difference between 2015 and 2010
Basildon	13799	15029	1230
Braintree	11051	11729	678
Brentwood	5299	5329	30
Castle Point	5857	5485	-372
Chelmsford	12648	13804	1156
Colchester	12249	14092	1843
Epping Forest	7941	8833	892
Harlow	6734	8081	1347
Maldon	4265	4127	-138
Rochford	5636	5637	1
Tendring	9954	10089	135
Uttlesford	5847	6448	601
Essex	101280	108683	7403

4.2 Occupancy data

Each term childcare providers within Essex are asked to complete an audit for a particular week, providing the number of places taken up each day for different age groups and times of day. This information is provided voluntarily by the settings, and a response rate of 80 – 90% is usually achieved. The information is broken down to ward level and analysed by the local Childcare Sufficiency Groups as one of the key indicators of childcare demand in each locality.

Occupancy figures at District level (November 2010)

	Day nurseries (full daycare) for under 5's		Sessional term time only daycare for under 5's		Childminders		After school clubs		Breakfast clubs	
	Places	Av. take-up	Places	Av. take-up	Places	Av. take-up	Places	Av. take-up	Places	Av. take-up
Basildon	1187	1008	1355	1131	580	188	529	337	730	516
Braintree	1156	859	1158	933	736	426	497	422	580	428
Brentwood	633	525	920	693	344	241	186	153	234	128
Castle Point	534	371	547	423	215	170	252	180	613	317
Chelmsford	1450	1185	1624	1068	925	601	700	500	839	445
Colchester	1452	1154	1381	1091	894	589	403	213	667	392
Epping Forest	809	711	1115	1037	516	331	234	163	280	114
Harlow	714	410	579	479	441	275	289	156	439	253
Maldon	238	193	795	467	155	82	178	114	176	122
Rochford	505	375	655	471	346	228	148	98	324	188
Tendring	822	602	964	746	398	217	250	112	458	352
Uttlesford	933	614	857	589	333	194	351	238	314	124

The table below converts the number of registered places (or maximum available) and the average take-up of places into a percentage capacity.

	Full daycare under 5's	Sessional term time only daycare under 5's	Childminders	After school	Breakfast clubs
Basildon	85%	83%	32%	64%	71%
Braintree	74%	81%	58%	85%	74%
Brentwood	83%	75%	70%	82%	55%
Castle Point	69%	77%	79%	71%	52%
Chelmsford	82%	66%	65%	71%	53%
Colchester	79%	79%	66%	53%	59%
Epping Forest	88%	93%	64%	70%	41%
Harlow	57%	83%	62%	54%	58%
Maldon	81%	59%	53%	64%	69%

	Full daycare under 5's	Sessional term time only daycare under 5's	Childminders	After school	Breakfast clubs
Rochford	74%	72%	66%	66%	58%
Tendring	73%	77%	55%	45%	77%
Uttlesford	66%	69%	58%	68%	39%

Ward level data on registered places and the average take-up of places is available as separate documents on the Essex County Council website, Early Years and Childcare Pages.

[Childcare places term time November 2010](#)

[Childcare places holiday August 2010](#)

4.3 Consultation with parents

Methodology

The Essex Parents' Childcare Survey was carried out between July and December 2010. The questionnaire was made available to parents and carers online via the Essex County Council Engage Essex online consultation portal, and the web link was publicised through a wide range of avenues including the Essex County Council intranet, the five Essex PCTs, district councils, the Essex Schools Infolink, Job Centres, children's centres and Essex childcare providers. In addition, paper copies of the questionnaire were used to consult with parents face-to-face at a range of community events such as the Tendring Show, Chelmsford Three Foot High Festival, children's centre fun days and Teddy Bears' picnics. Parents were also invited to complete the paper questionnaires at a number of libraries, Job Centre Plus offices, childcare providers, schools and children's centres across Essex. The collection of these face-to-face responses in each district was co-ordinated by members of the local Childcare Sufficiency Working Group, in liaison with the Early Years and Childcare Communications Team.

Efforts were made to obtain survey responses from parents of pre-school age children and also those whose children were school age. Both current registered childcare users and those who were not using registered childcare provision were included in the survey, across the twelve districts of Essex. It should be noted that the sample was opportunistic rather than probabilistic i.e. was not randomly selected, therefore it is not possible to generalise the survey results to the population as a whole using probabilistic sampling levels of confidence. Nevertheless, the findings provide a valuable source of data on Essex parents' current use of childcare and possible future demand.

The survey results were extracted from the Engage Essex website as an excel file and then analysed using the SPSS (PASW) data analysis package.

Response rate to survey

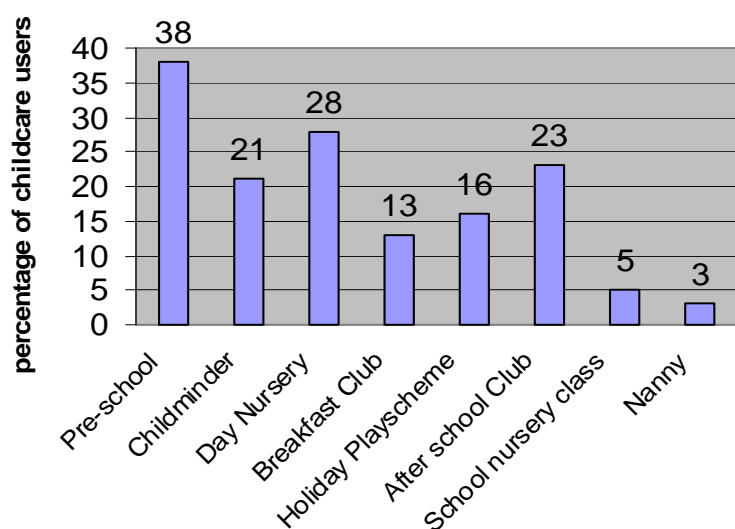
A total of 1,573 responses were received to the survey. The following table shows the number of responses that were received from parents within the twelve District Councils within Essex. There were 142 responses received where it was not possible to know the district, or the respondents were from out of Essex. The columns *No* and *Yes* show the number and percentage of respondents who were not currently using paid / registered childcare and those who were.

District Council	Childcare user	Non-childcare user	Total
Not known	90	53	142
Basildon	106	47	153
Braintree	93	15	108
Brentwood	42	11	53
Castle Point	32	22	54
Chelmsford	141	50	191
Colchester	224	84	308
Epping Forest	108	66	174
Harlow	28	14	42
Maldon	94	57	151
Rochford	66	17	83
Tendring	54	3	57
Uttlesford	40	14	54
Total	1118	452	1570

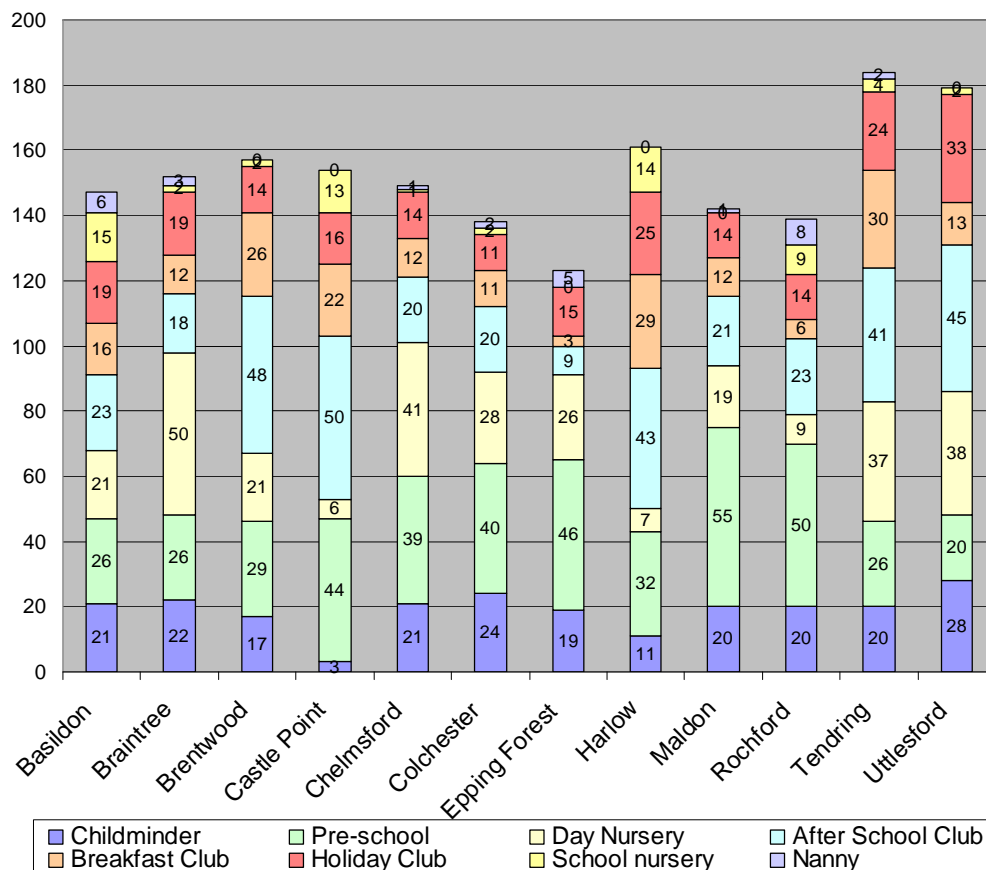
As can be seen from the table, just over 70% of the total responses were from current childcare users, and the remainder from non-users. The proportion of childcare users to non-users differed from district to district, depending on the sample of parents which was obtained in each. This is in part the result of the consultation methodology which provided a range of opportunities for parents across Essex to give feedback, but which did not stipulate a specific number of responses that had to be achieved in each district. The limitations of the approach were that some districts were represented to a lesser extent than others, however there is now the opportunity to use the questionnaire in each district on an on-going basis to gather parents' views on local childcare.

4.3.1 Types of childcare used by respondents

Of the 71% who were using some type of formal childcare, the percentage of respondents using the different types is shown in the following chart.



Current childcare use by district

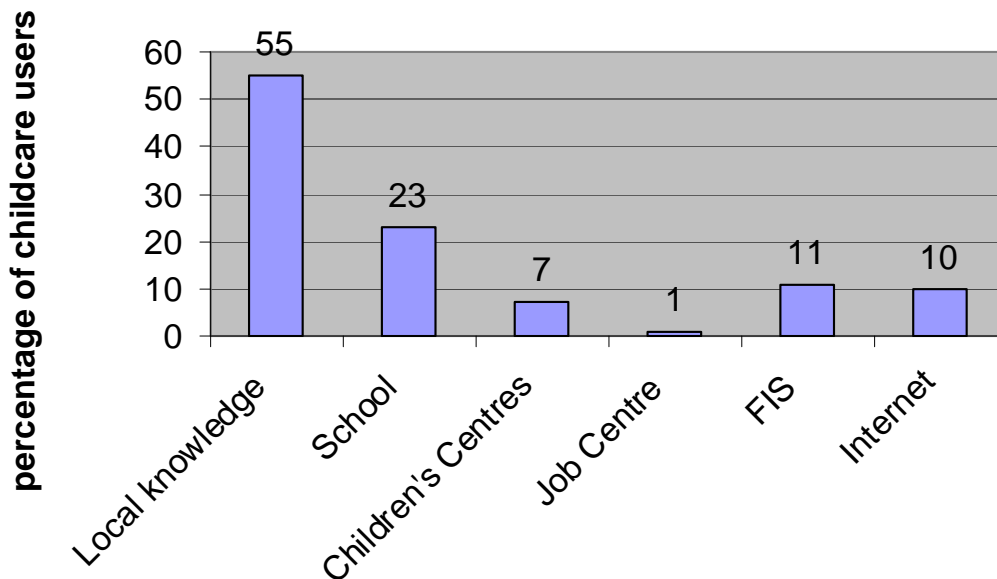


The survey respondents include users of all the different types of formal childcare, and a small number (34) who employ nannies in their own home.

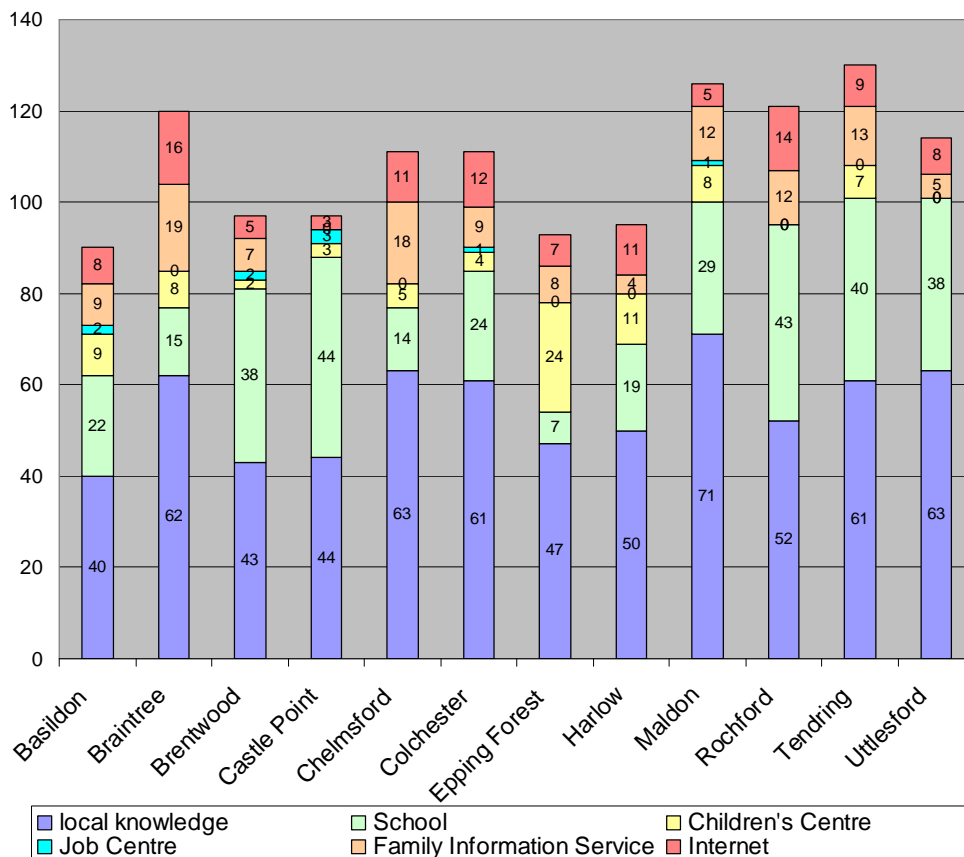
The proportion of respondents using the different types of registered / paid childcare differed between the districts, and this needs to be taken into consideration when examining the survey findings at a district level. For example, day nursery users were less well represented in Castle Point, Harlow and Rochford, and breakfast club and after school club users in Epping Forest.

4.3.2 How parents found out about the childcare

The survey respondents found out about the childcare they were using in a number of different ways, and the methods that were used were influenced by the type of childcare. Overall, the percentage of childcare users using different methods to find out about childcare was as follows:



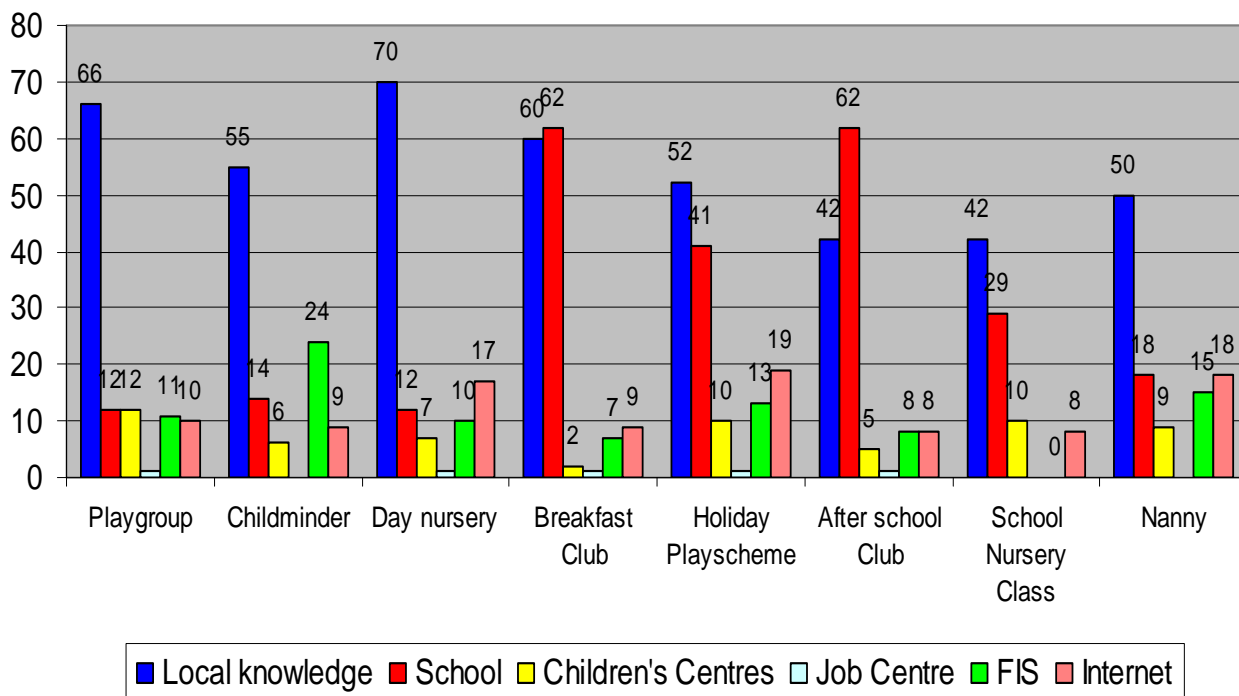
Method of finding out about childcare by district



From the sample of parents responding to the survey it can be seen that local knowledge was the predominant means by which they found out about childcare, with schools also being an important source of information. The internet and the Family Information Service are used by parents to a similar degree – being used by approximately 10%.

From the chart below showing the percentage of childcare users and the means by which they found out about their childcare, it can be seen that local knowledge is the primary means for parents to find out about local playgroups, day nurseries, childminders, nannies, holiday clubs

and school nursery classes. Parents who have lived in an area for a while will become aware of the location of local playgroups and day nurseries, for example. Talking to other parents at baby and toddler groups, other community groups and in the school playground are all ways in which parents can find out about local childcare options.



Schools were the primary means by which the survey respondents became informed about breakfast clubs and after school clubs (which often are based at the school), and to a lesser extent about other local childcare.

The Family Information Service had a role to play in informing parents about all forms of childcare other than nursery classes in maintained schools, however it was particularly important for parents who needed information on registered childminders – approximately 25% of respondents who were using a childminder had obtained information from FIS.

The internet was also a means by which parents informed themselves about the location and quality of childcare settings, and the websites used were as follows:

- Google
- Essex County Council
- Gumtree
- Aupair.co.uk
- Ofsted
- Childlink
- Yellow pages
- Nursery websites
- Direct.gov.uk
- NCMA
- Mumsnet
- Internetmums

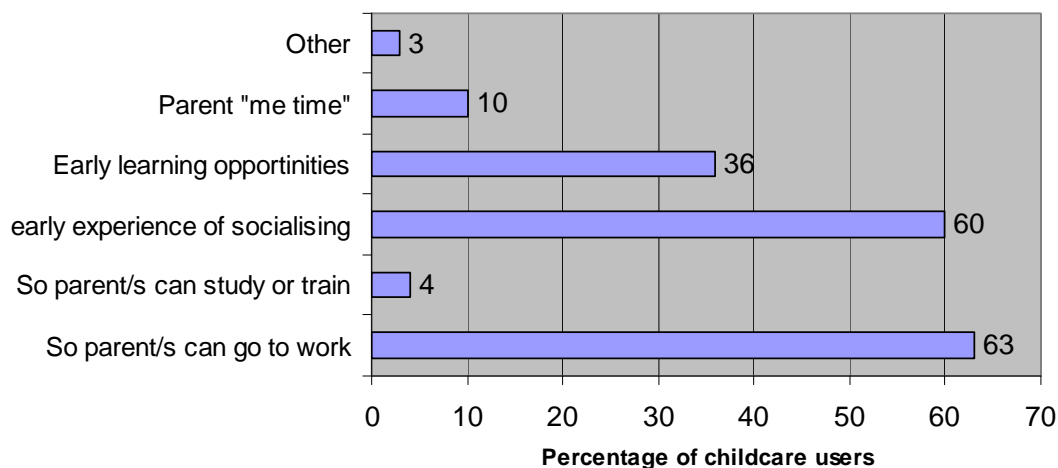
From parents' comments it was apparent that some parents were not aware how to find out about childcare, and did not know about the Family Information Service. Others, although they had found out about childcare, felt that this information should be more widely publicised and more easily available, for example:

"It would be useful if more information could be more widely publicised about available holiday clubs. Breakfast clubs and after school clubs are essential for working parents."

"Did not know about childcare and the children's centre in the area."

4.3.3 Use of formal childcare

The respondents were using formal childcare for a variety of reasons. For those using daycare nurseries, childminders, breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs, the overriding reason was for the parents to work or train / study, although other benefits were also noted. For parents who used pre-schools and school nursery classes, it was much more for the social benefits the experience gave to the child, and the early learning.



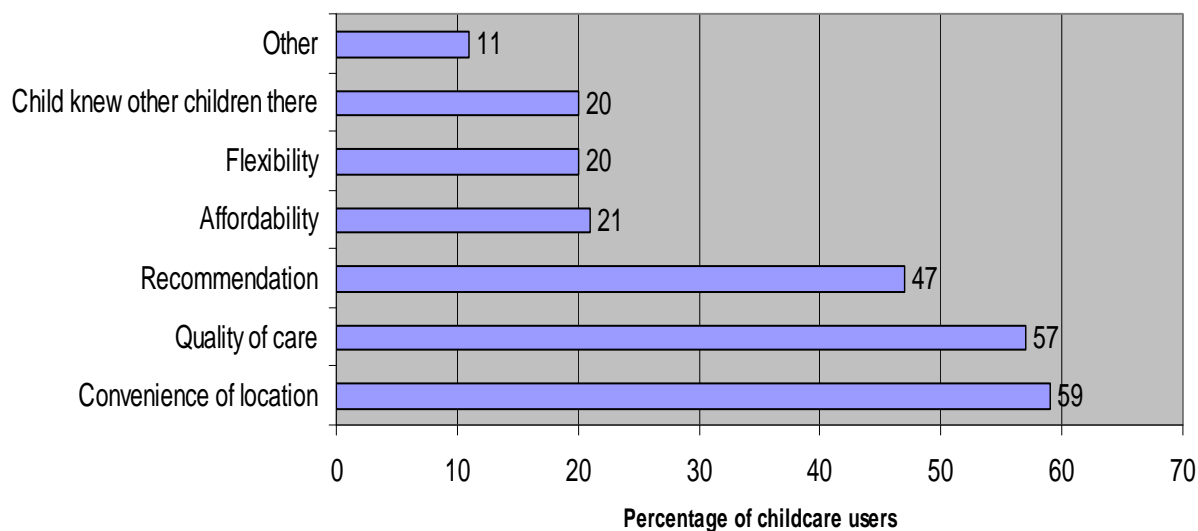
The table below gives the percentage of childcare user respondents giving each reason:

	For parent/s to work	For parent/s to study or train	For child to socialise	For child to have early learning opportunities	Parents' "Me Time"
Pre-school	36	4	79	61	16
Childminder	91	6	35	23	6
Day nursery	86	5	53	40	8
Breakfast club	95	5	31	13	2
After school club	78	5	51	17	10
Holiday club	78	5	49	16	8
Nursery class or school	33	8	71	65	14

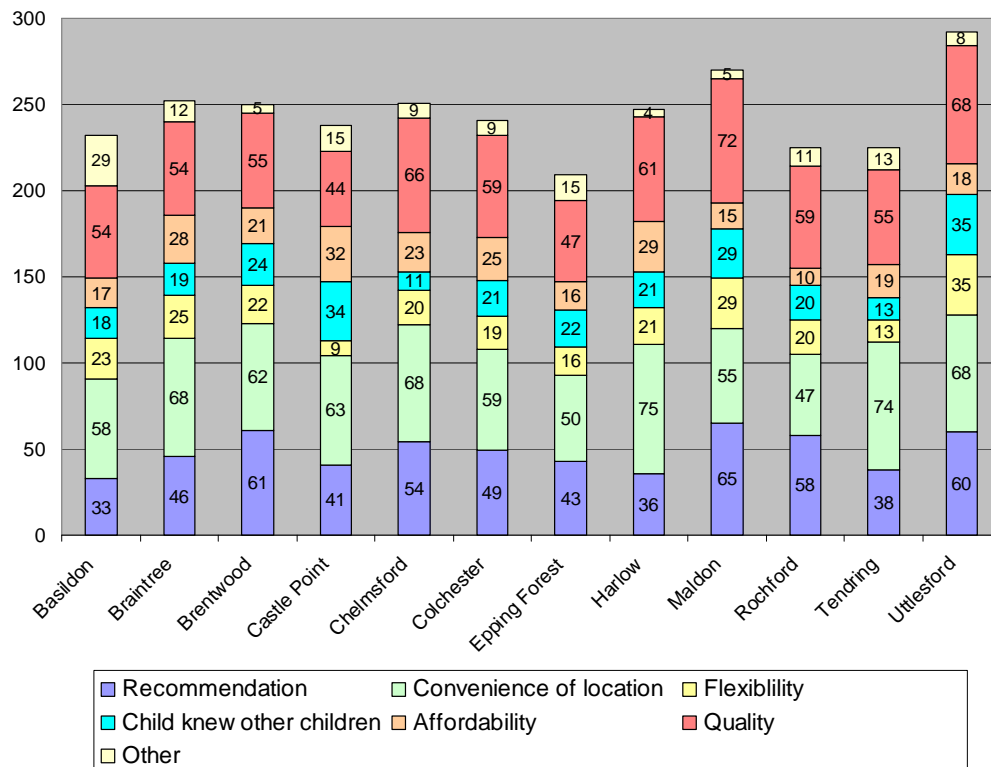
What influenced the choice of childcare?

Those who were using registered / paid childcare were asked to indicate which of the following reasons influenced their choice: recommendation from others, convenience of location, flexibility, their child knew others there, affordability, the quality of care, or other reason.

Reasons for choice of childcare



Factors influencing childcare: percentage of respondents from each district



Convenience of location was consistently of high importance for parents in all the district areas, however was given most frequently as a reason by the samples of parents from Tendring and from Harlow.

Parents from Basildon were least likely to give 'recommendation' as a reason for choosing childcare, whereas the Maldon district parents were most likely to. The rurality of the Maldon district may be a factor here, as parents may be more reliant on hearing about good childcare from other people, rather than being aware of it from local knowledge.

Differences in response due to the type of childcare chosen were apparent as can be seen from the table below which gives the percentage of respondents by the type of childcare used.

	Recommen dation	Location	Flexibility	Child knew other children there	Affordabilit y	Quality	Other
Play-group	57	54	10	21	16	59	11
Childminder	54	56	42	21	23	61	12
Day nursery	50	66	26	9	19	74	13
Breakfast club	39	81	24	32	26	59	9
After school club	38	68	20	31	34	55	13
Holiday club	45	67	24	31	38	61	10
Nursery class or school	37	53	12	20	16	51	22
Nanny	52	39	24	24	24	49	21

Convenient location was the primary reason for choice, followed by the quality for breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

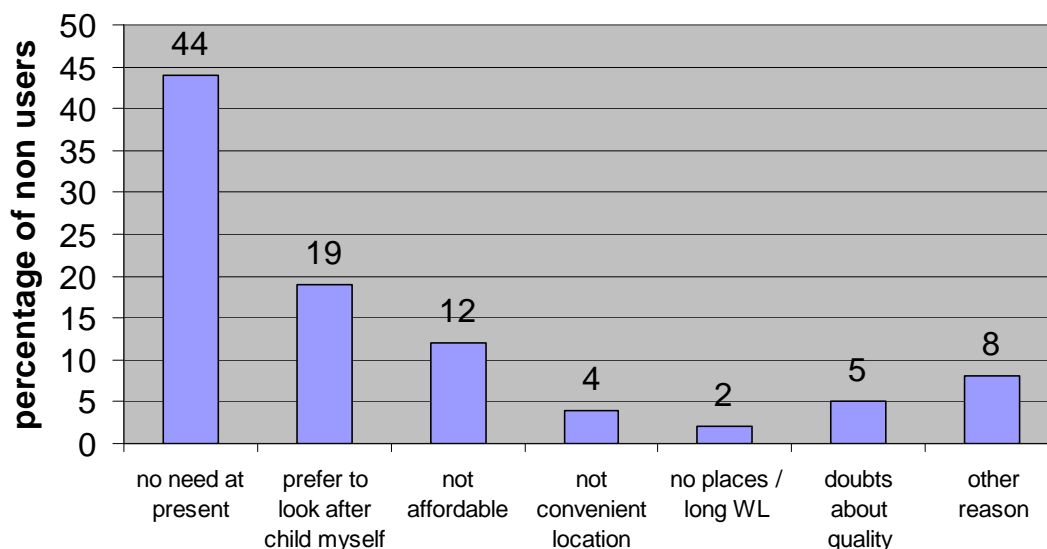
The *quality of the care* was the most frequently given reason by respondents using childminders, day nurseries and pre-school play-groups, followed by convenience of location and recommendation from others.

Affordability was an issue for over one third of the respondents who were using after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

4.3.4 Non-use of formal childcare

Approximately one third of the survey respondents were those who were not currently using registered/ paid (formal) childcare. Those who were not using childcare were asked to give the reason/s why, and the responses were as follows:

Reasons for non-use of formal childcare



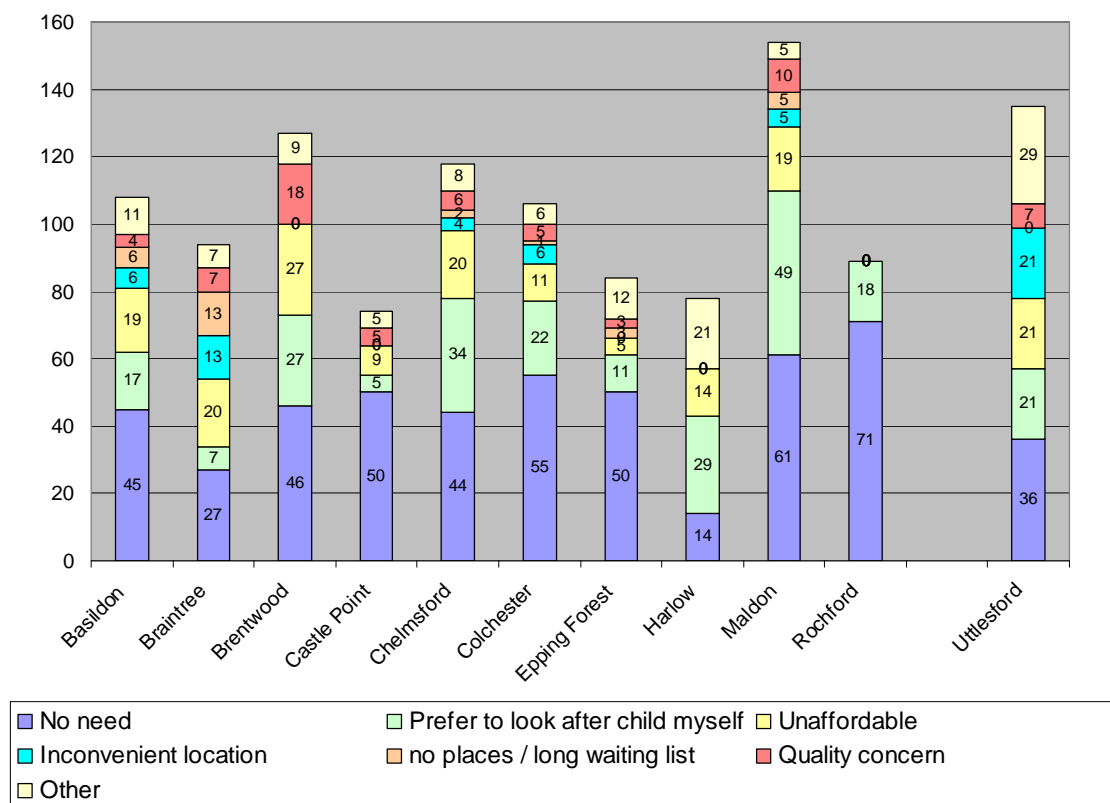
It can be seen that the most frequently given reason for not using formal childcare was that there was no need at present. This did not necessarily mean that these parent/s were not working, however, as it can be seen that they were not all looking after their children themselves. They may have been able to arrange other forms of informal childcare to enable them to work, or to have flexible employment that worked around their child's school day.

Doubts about childcare quality were only given as a reason by a small percentage, suggesting that most parents are reassured by the inspection and quality assurance processes in place for formal childcare.

Affordability continued to be a significant factor in whether or not parents made use of registered childcare – this being the most commonly given reason after having no need for formal childcare or preferring to look after children themselves.

A relatively small percentage of the non-user respondents (5%) gave lack of places for example at existing provision or long waiting lists as a reason for not using formal childcare, and 4% gave the reason that the childcare was not in a convenient location. Nevertheless, in the comments provided by parents on the survey, a lack of childcare in particular locations was highlighted.

Reasons for non-use of formal childcare by district



It can be seen that for respondents from Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford districts were most likely to give a lack of affordability as a reason for not using registered / paid childcare.

Quality concerns were most likely to be given as a reason by respondents from the Brentwood district.

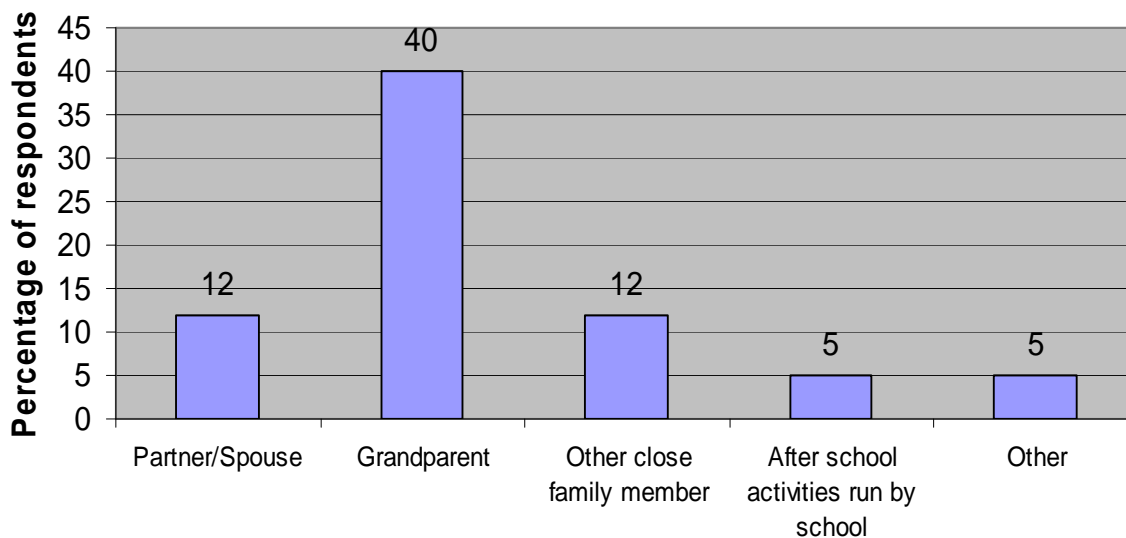
In Castle Point and Braintree districts, parents were least likely to give as a reason that they preferred to look after their children themselves, whereas for the Maldon respondents this was a significant reason (49%).

There were insufficient non-childcare users in the sample of Tendring parents to undertake a district analysis.

4.8 Use of informal childcare

Just over half of all the parents who responded to the survey (54%) were using informal childcare (unpaid) to enable them to go to work, showing just how important this type of care is to working parents. The carer is most commonly the child's grandparent, as national studies have also shown, but the parents, other family members, friends and neighbours are also provide care, as is illustrated by the chart overleaf.

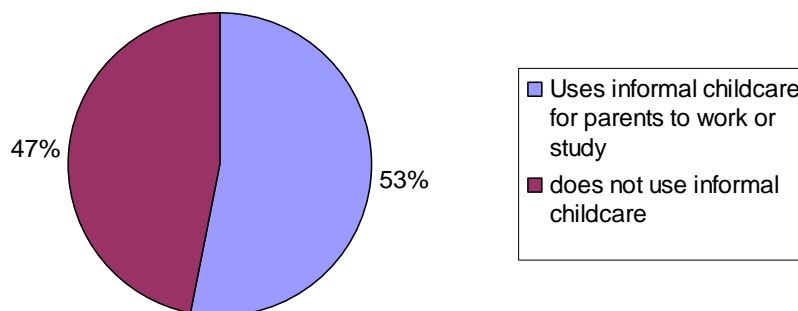
Type of informal childcare used



The use of informal childcare in addition to paid / registered childcare

Informal, unpaid childcare is used by just over half the parents who were also using formal childcare (53%), to enable them to go to work or study. Financially this is often necessary to make employment worthwhile, and for many parents, childcare provided by ones own family best provides the child with the familiarity and security that is needed. Feedback from parents indicates that they use a range of childcare options depending on their individual work patterns, the age of the child, the availability of family and friends to offer childcare, and the affordability and availability of paid childcare locally.

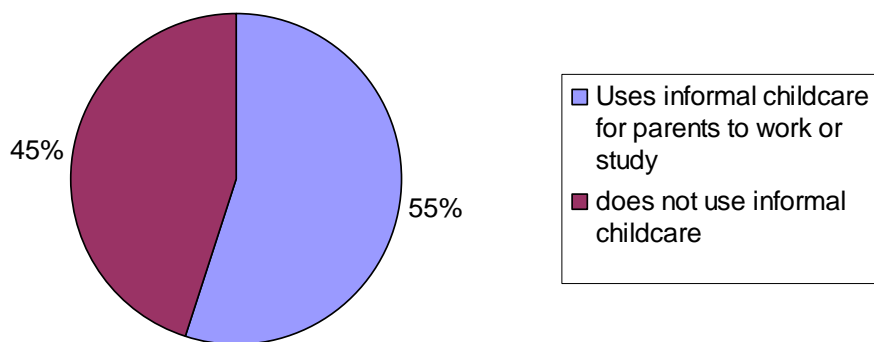
Users of formal childcare



The sole use of informal childcare to enable parents to work or study

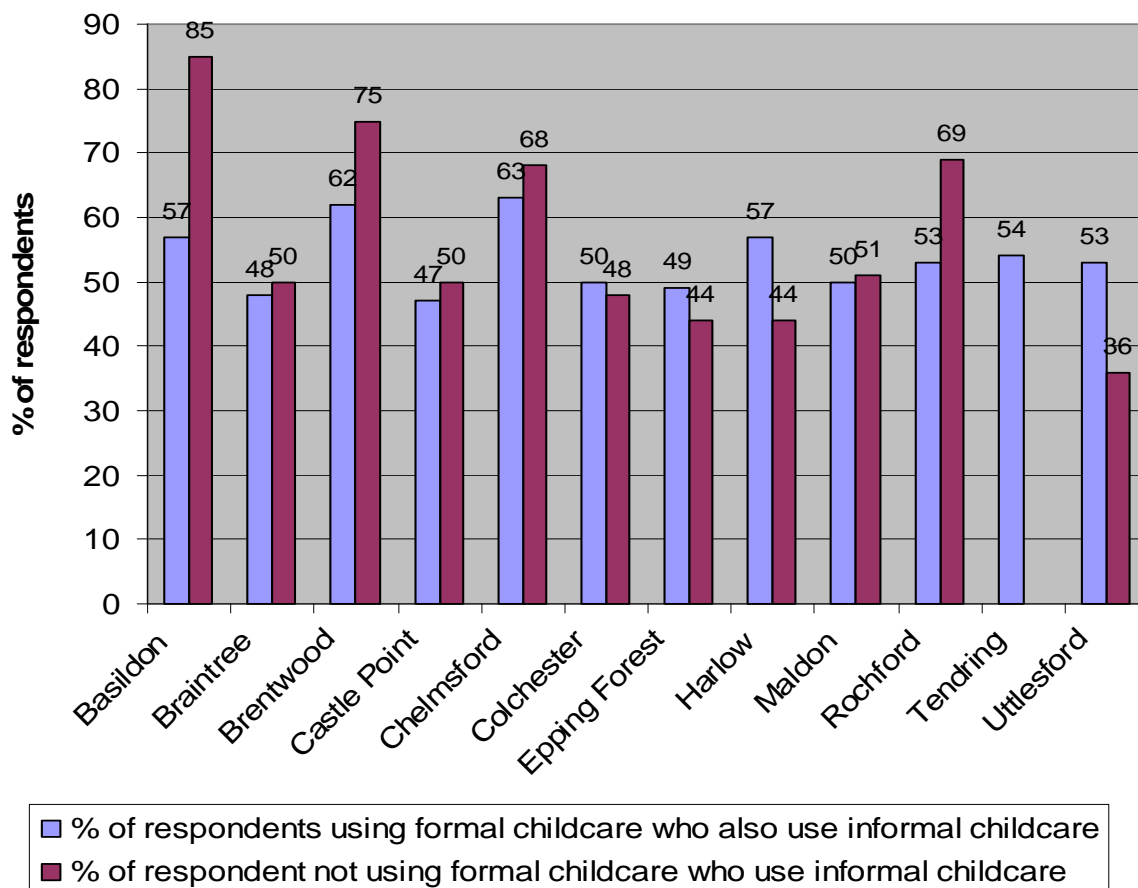
Of those respondents who were not using any formal childcare just over half were relying on family, friends or other informal unpaid childcare arrangements to enable them to work or study. This is an almost identical proportion to those parents who were using formal childcare.

Non-users of formal childcare



The use of informal childcare to work or study – district comparison

The following chart shows the percentage of respondents in each District Council area who use a) both informal and formal childcare and b) only informal childcare in order to work or study.



As can be seen, the respondents from Basildon district who were not using formal childcare showed the greatest amount of informal childcare use to enable them to go to work (85%). Respondents from Uttlesford district showed the lowest percentage (36%). This may reflect the differences in proximity to family members in different parts of the county, with families living in more densely populated urban areas being more likely to have relations or friends nearby to

assist with childcare. It may also reflect differences in the ability to afford registered childcare, with parents in the more affluent Uttlesford district being more able to pay the childcare costs.

These findings illustrate the crucial role of informal childcare in supporting the employment market. They also highlight the difficulties involved in predicting future demand for informal childcare, without taking into account the numerous factors which could affect the availability of informal childcare. Increased part-time as opposed to full-time working amongst fathers, for example, could reduce the demand for formal childcare. The age of first time motherhood has been steadily increasing, suggesting that the age of becoming a grandparent will also be. As grandparents become older they may be less able to look after their young grandchildren. Many grandparents may also be working until at least 65 years of age, therefore limiting their ability to be able to offer informal childcare to their grandchildren.

No significant differences were found between the type of formal childcare that was used, and whether the parents also benefited from informal childcare to help them to work.

Feedback by parents clearly show that grandparents provide childcare because some parents cannot afford the cost of registered childcare, and that some parents choose this option out of necessity, rather than choice, as these comments illustrate:

“I would like to access childminder but not affordable, would like to give grandparent a rest.”

“I could not afford to work without support of mother for childcare.”

“More financial help so can put both children in childcare - older one during school holidays - as concerned what will happen if we lost my mum as she is house bound and in her late seventies but we can not afford for me not to work and cannot afford all the childcare costs.”

“Would like to give grandparents a break but can't afford nursery fees five days a week.”

4.3.6 3 & 4 Year Old Free Early Education Entitlement

Respondents were asked whether they were aware that 3 and 4 year olds were entitled to free early education, equivalent to 15 hrs a week term-time from September 2010, known as the Free Early Education Entitlement.

Please note the survey was carried out in the summer of 2010, prior to the introduction of the flexible and extended offer.

Overall, 85% of the respondents were aware of the Free Entitlement. Among current formal childcare users it was 88%, and among those not using formal childcare it was 75%.

If their child was, or shortly would be, aged 3-4 years old, parents were asked whether they would prefer to take up the Free Early Education Entitlement during school term-time only, or stretched over the year (50 weeks). For those for whom it was applicable it was found that similar percentages preferred each option

Prefer school term-time only	55%
Prefer stretched over the year	45%

Some working parents expressed the view that the Free Entitlement should be paid for 50 weeks a year (it is possible that some may have misunderstood the question to mean that the Free Entitlement would be paid across the whole year, rather than the same amount of money stretched.)

"Many parents work to support their families so that their children have opportunities to develop. Early Education Entitlement needs to be paid for 50 weeks a year and not for term time only as employers do not offer roles that are term time only."

"I think this should be all year round for working parents, not just in term time, as I have to work 52 weeks a year and would make it much more affordable for me."

"Only having funding during the term time is unhelpful for parents who need year round support through childminder's etc - year round funding would be far better."

"It would be handy to have Free Early Education Entitlement during the school holidays to help keep costs down."

Many parents expressed their gratitude for the Free Entitlement and the benefits it had brought both to the children and financially:

"Free early education for over 3's is very useful and invaluable to those who can't afford to pay. It really helps children to get used to going to a school-type environment before formal education starts."

"I think it's invaluable especially when one parent is working part time because it means that the income they are bringing home is used to benefit the family rather than spent on childcare."

"I find the Free Entitlement fantastic, it has given my child opportunities I could never have given her at home."

"Please do not get rid of it! It saves us a lot of money till the kids go to school."

"There would be no point in me continuing to work if I had to pay the full nursery price for two kids!"

Some of the respondents had comments to make about how the Free Entitlement was communicated to parents, for example:

"The "free" childcare places for my 3 year old has caused a lot of confusion as it seems to only apply to a limited number of weeks a year and seems to be for a contribution towards sessions rather than "free" sessions.

Free Early Education Entitlement programme has not been clearly communicated or seems to be a burden for nurseries and interpretation vary from nursery to nursery most of them still charging top up fees (although now called voluntary contribution)"

"Info sent direct to home address (via clinic/centres) once child is two would be helpful."

"How are parents informed that they are entitled to this?"

"It is not currently easy to find out how to access/apply for the Free Early Education Entitlement on the ECC [Essex County Council] website."

“Free Entitlement not well publicised (heard by word of mouth), still not clear how to get it direct.gov needs parent feedback/ opinions.”

A number of parents requested free childcare before the age of 3 years, as these comments illustrate:

“Childcare vouchers should be available to under 3’s as this will make it easier for parents to get back into work early on which will improve unemployment and improve babies development with interaction.”

“Would prefer 3 year old funding to come in place earlier - when they turn 3!”

“It would be great if the Early Education Entitlement started at 2.”

“I think the Free Early Learning Education Entitlement is good. I think there also needs to be some consideration for children 0-2 years. Money is often very tight at this age for some and families want and need to work.”

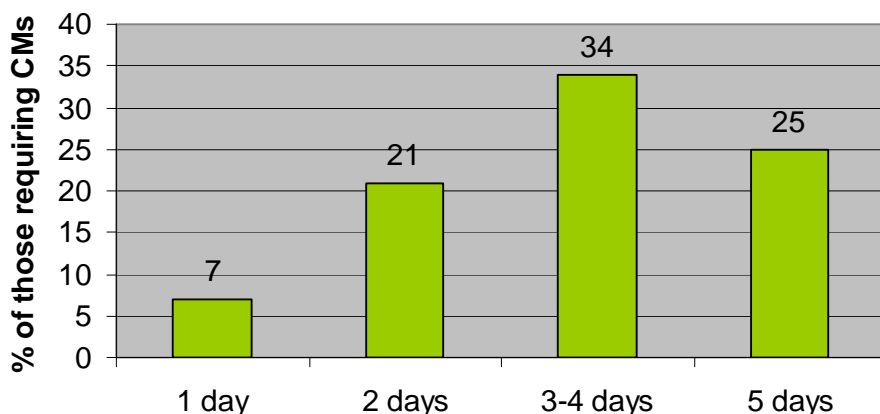
4.3.7 Preferred childcare arrangements

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what childcare would best suit their family’s needs, looking at the type of childcare, the age of the child / children and the number of days of care that they required. Responses were received both by those currently using childcare, and those who were not, but wanted to use it.

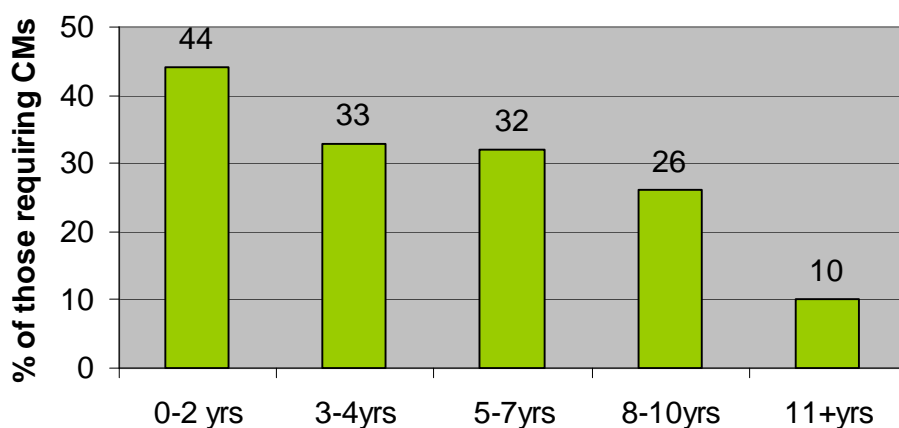
The following charts show for each of the six types of registered childcare, the distribution in the number of days required by parents, and for what age of child. Percentages sometimes add up to more than 100%, as parents have more than one child using childcare. (Percentages adding up to less than 100% are the result of respondents indicating demand for the childcare but not providing details of the age of child or number of days required).

Childminders

Number of days CMs required



Age of children for which CM required



It can be seen that there is considerable demand for childminders to look after children before and / or after school (68% of the parents who wanted to use childminders) and even when the child is at secondary school there is still an identified need. The majority of parents wanting childminders are not requiring 5 days a week, suggesting that they are not working full-time or that they are using some informal care as well, or both.

Demand from current non-users

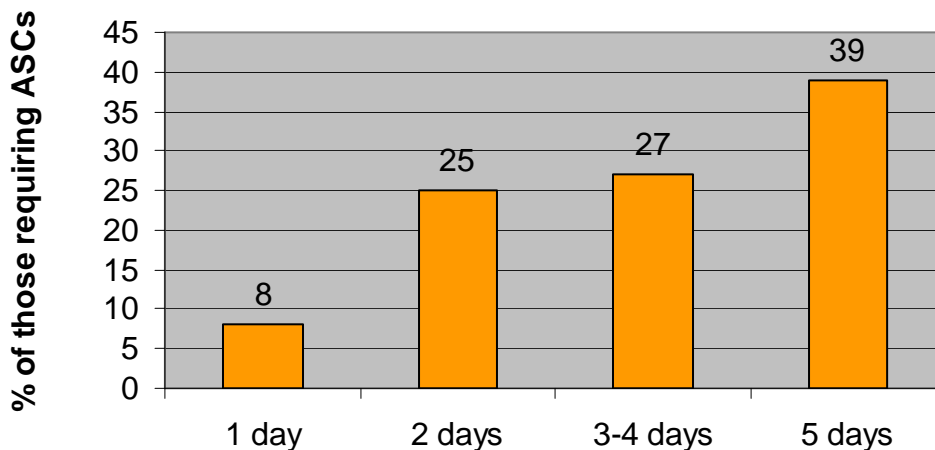
It was found that 4% of the survey respondents who were not current users of childminders indicated that using one would best suit their childcare needs.

The open-ended comments provided by some parents were analysed and the towns and wards where parents felt that there was a shortage of childminders were:

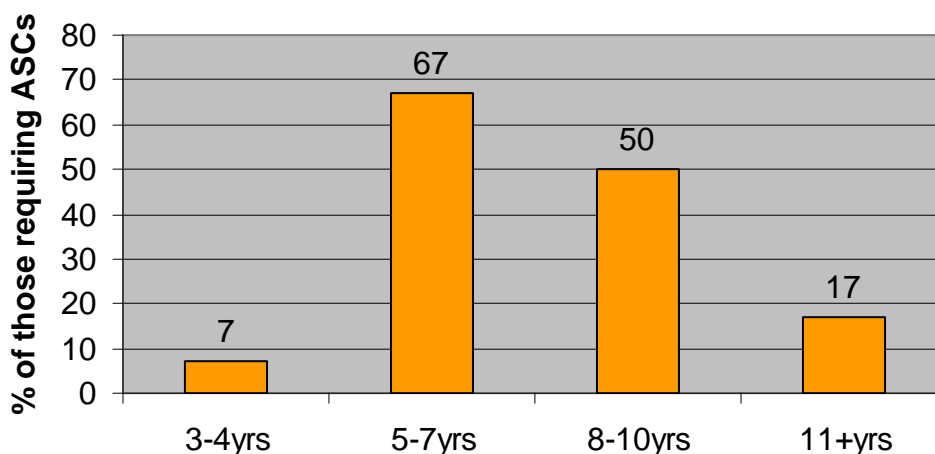
District	Ward
Colchester	Copford and West Stanway
Rochford	Sweyne Park
Chelmsford	Writtle
Maldon	Mayland

After school clubs

Number of days ASCs required



Age of children for which ASC required



Nearly 40% of the parents wanting an after school club for their children were requiring 5 days a week, indicating that this type of childcare caters to a large extent for parents who work full-time who require regular and reliable after school care. The main age group is primary school (infant and junior school children) however there is also a need for after school provision for some younger children and some older children, including those with special needs.

Demand from current non-users

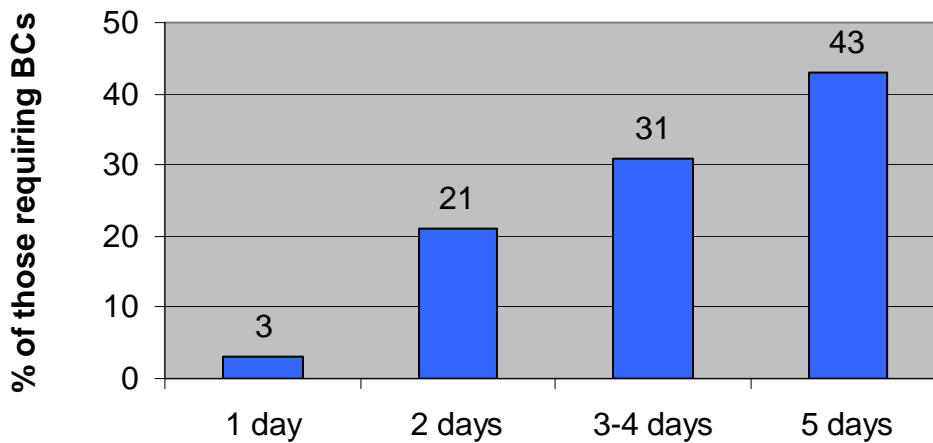
It was found that 11% of the survey respondents who were not current users of after school club indicated that using one would best suit their childcare needs.

Approximately 17% of the comments that were received by the survey respondents concerned after school childcare – the need for it in particular areas of Essex, or comments about cost or flexibility. The respondents who felt there was a need for after school childcare provision in their area lived in the following districts and wards:

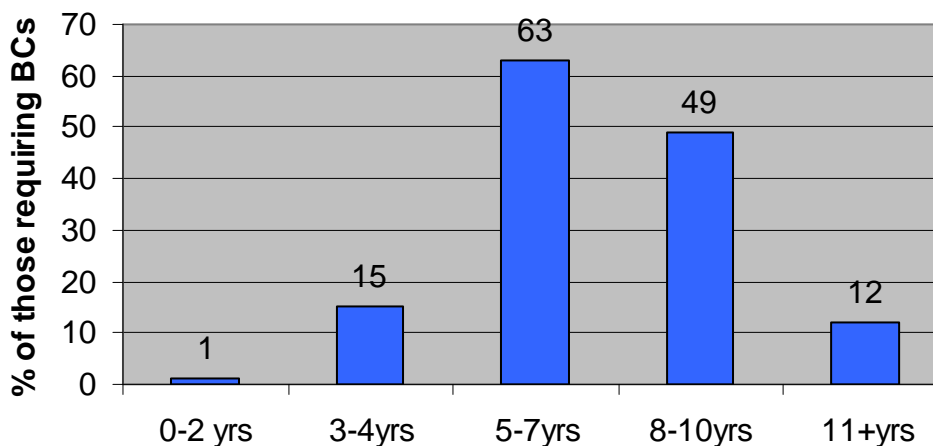
District	Ward
Basildon	Billericay West
Basildon	Burstead
Basildon	Billericay East
Basildon	Fryerns
Basildon	Crouch
Braintree	Braintree Central
Braintree	Halstead Trinity
Braintree	Great Notley and Braintree West
Braintree	Upper Colne
Braintree	Witham Chipping Hill and Central
Braintree	The Three Colnes
Braintree	Witham North
Chelmsford	Boreham and The Leighs
Chelmsford	Bicknacre and East and West Hanningfield
Chelmsford	Moulsham and Central
Chelmsford	Great Baddow East
Chelmsford	Great Baddow West
Chelmsford	South Woodham-Chetwood and Collingwood
Chelmsford	St Andrews
Colchester	Highwoods
Colchester	Mile End
Colchester	St Anne's
Colchester	East Donyland
Epping Forest	Loughton St John's
Epping Forest	Loughton Roding
Epping Forest	Buckhurst Hill West
Maldon	Heybridge East
Rochford	Trinity
Tendring	Ardleigh and Little Bromley
Uttlesford	Stansted South
Uttlesford	Stort Valley
Uttlesford	Felsted
Uttlesford	Stansted South
Uttlesford	Broad Oak and the Hallingburys
Uttlesford	Great Dunmow South

Breakfast clubs

Number of days Breakfast Club required



Age of children for which Breakfast Club required



The distribution for number of days required and age of children requiring breakfast club provision is similar to that for after school clubs, with approximately half the parents requiring breakfast club provision for five days a week. It is interesting to note that for those requiring breakfast club provision for their children, 12% need it for children who are 11 years or over i.e. are likely to be at secondary school.

Demand from current non-users

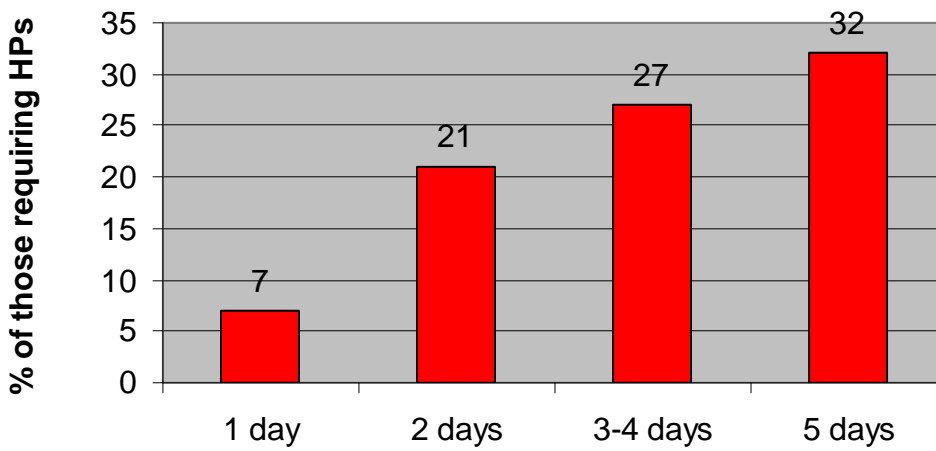
It was found that 8% of the survey respondents who were not current users of breakfast clubs indicated that using one would best suit their childcare needs.

Of the comments received by parents, nearly 20% related to breakfast club provision – either a need for it at a particular school, or a comment more generally about the need for schools to provide breakfast and after school clubs. The particular areas where parents requested breakfast clubs were:

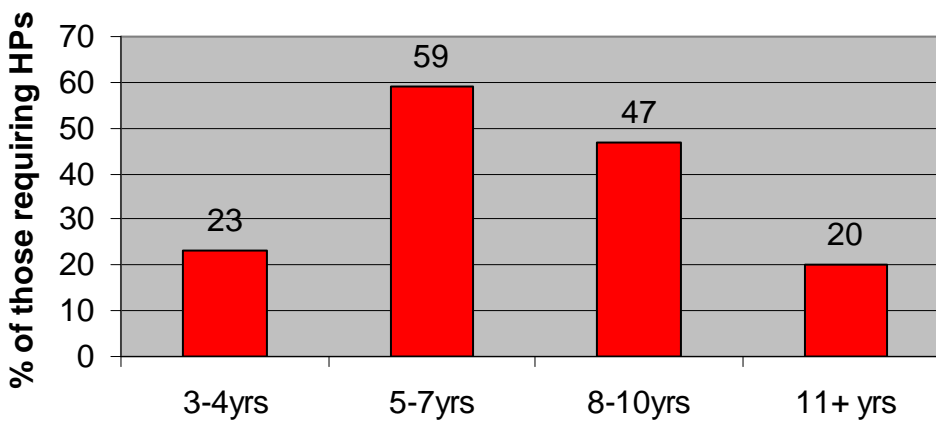
District	Ward
Basildon	Burstead
Basildon	Wickford North
Basildon	Wickford Castledon
Basildon	Billericay East
Uttlesford	Stort Valley
Uttlesford	Felsted
Uttlesford	Stansted South
Braintree	Boreham and The Leighs
Braintree	Great Notley and Braintree West
Braintree	Witham Chipping Hill and Central
Braintree	The Three Colnes
Braintree	Halstead Trinity
Braintree	Upper Colne
Braintree	Halstead St Andrew's
Braintree	Coggeshall and North Feering
Braintree	Braintree Central
Chelmsford	Moulsham and Central
Chelmsford	Great Baddow East
Colchester	Mile End
Colchester	East Donyland
Colchester	Highwoods
Maldon	Heybridge East
Maldon	Mayland
Epping Forest	Loughton Roding
Epping Forest	Buckhurst Hill West
Epping Forest	Theydon Bois
Epping Forest	Loughton St John's
Tendring	Bradfield, Wrabness and Wix

Holiday Clubs / Play-schemes

Number of days Holiday Playscheme required



Age of children for which Holiday Playscheme required



Holiday clubs / play-schemes were required for children across the whole age range from pre-school to secondary school.

Demand from current non-users

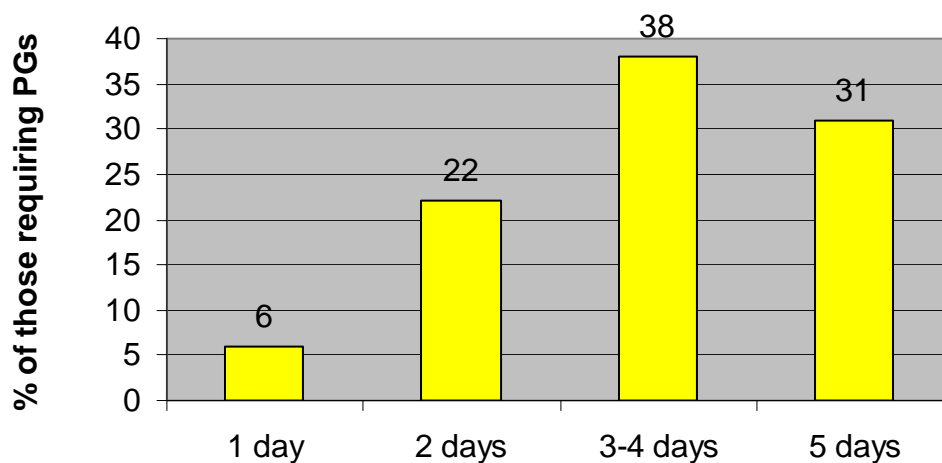
It was found that 11% of the survey respondents who were not current users of holiday clubs / play-schemes indicated that using one would best suit their childcare needs.

Of the 305 comments received, 48 (16%) were specifically regarding a need for holiday childcare. The areas of Essex where the respondents who requested holiday childcare were living were:

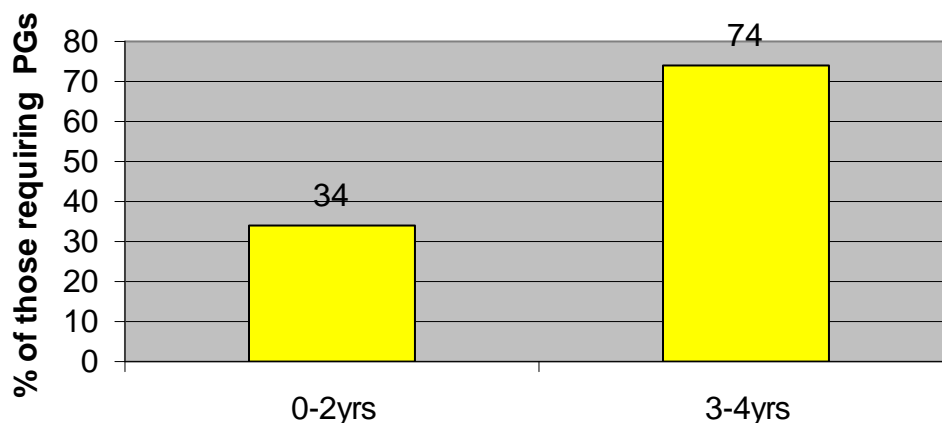
District	Ward
Basildon	Wickford Park
Basildon	Wickford Castledon
Basildon	Lee Chapel North
Basildon	Burstead
Basildon	Billericay East
Basildon	Billericay West
Basildon	Crouch
Braintree	Rayne
Braintree	Great Notley and Braintree West
Braintree	Braintree East
Braintree	Braintree South
Braintree	Hedingham and Maplestead
Braintree	Upper Colne
Braintree	Witham South
Braintree	Witham North
Braintree	Witham Chipping Hill and Central
Braintree	Great Dunmow North
Braintree	Boreham and The Leighs
Brentwood	Warley
Maldon	Tillingham
Maldon	Southminster
Maldon	Burnham-on-Crouch South
Chelmsford	Chelmer Village and Beaulieu Park
Chelmsford	Springfield North
Chelmsford	St Andrews
Chelmsford	Waterhouse Farm
Chelmsford	Great Baddow East
Chelmsford	Writtle
Chelmsford	Springfield North
Chelmsford	St Andrews
Colchester	Fordham and Stour
Colchester	Copford and West Stanway
Colchester	St Andrews
Epping Forest	North Weald Bassett
Epping Forest	Epping Hemnall
Epping Forest	Loughton Roding
Tendring	Lawford
Tendring	Brightlingsea
Tendring	Frinton
Rochford	Grange
Uttlesford	Newport

Pre-schools

Number of days Pre-school group required



Age of children for which Pre-school Group required



Parents who were or wanted to use pre-schools for their children are requiring a range of days/sessions as can be seen from the chart above. Approximately one third are wanting to take up the full 15 hours which would equate to five sessions. It is likely that parents will increase the number of sessions that their child attends at pre-school in preparation for them starting school.

The single entry age to school which comes into effect from September 2011 will have an impact on pre-schools and full daycare nurseries, as all children will be starting school in the September following their fourth birthday.

Demand from current non-users

It was found that 25% of the survey respondents who were not current users of pre-schools indicated that using one would best suit their childcare needs.

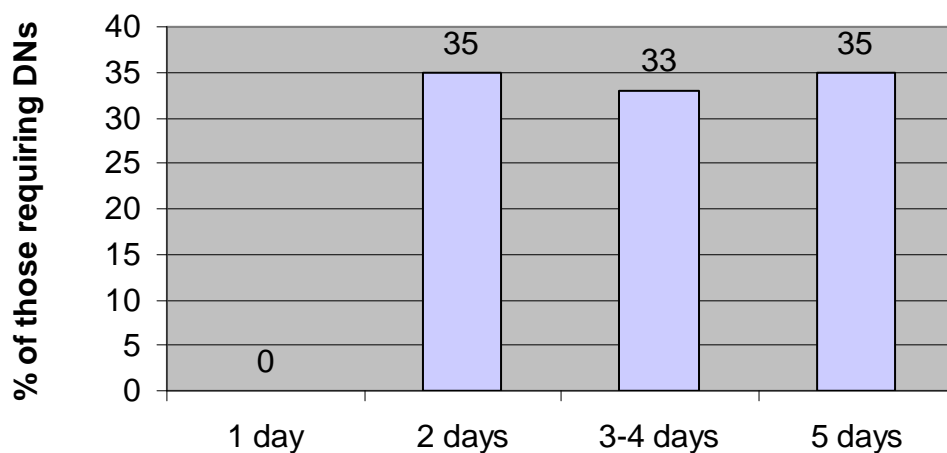
It is likely that this percentage included parents whose children were not yet old enough to access pre-schools, as well as those whose children were old enough but were on a waiting list, for example.

The areas mentioned by parents in the survey as having a shortage of pre-school places were:

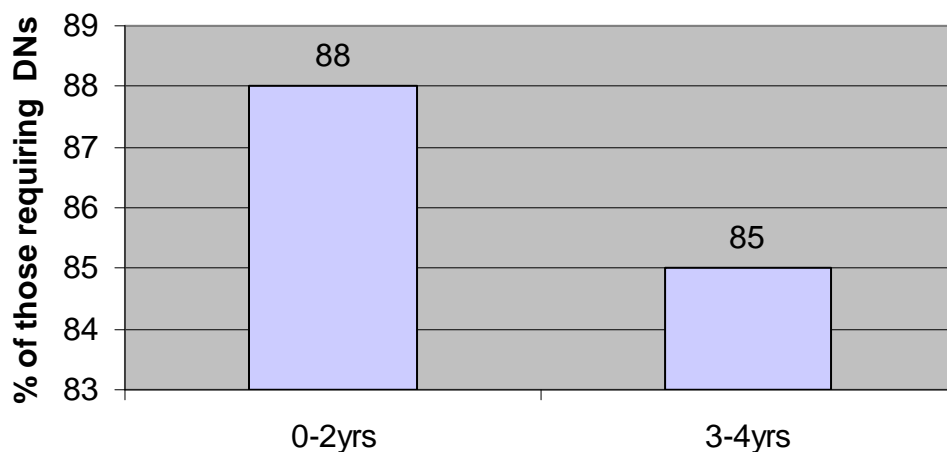
District	Ward
Chelmsford	Chelmer Village and Beaulieu Park
Colchester	Christ Church
Epping Forest	Buckhurst Hill East

Full daycare for under fives

Number of days Day Nursery required



Age of children for which Day Nursery required



It can be seen that approximately one third of the respondents who wanted to use full daycare were requiring it for five days a week, the remainder were requiring between two and four days. This indicates that these parents may be working part-time therefore not requiring a full week's care, but the more likely reason is that the parents are mixing registered full daycare with informal care. Comments received during the survey showed that the cost of full daycare was a significant issue for parents who required childcare.

Demand from current non-users

It was found that just 1% of the survey respondents who were not current users of full daycare indicated that using one would best suit their childcare needs.

The areas mentioned by respondents as having a shortage of flexible and good quality full daycare were:

District	Ward
Epping	Epping Lindsey and Thornwood Common
Maldon	Southminster
Braintree	Coggeshall and North Feering
Colchester	Wivenhoe Quay

5. Challenges or barriers to accessing childcare

5.1 Consultation with parents

In addition to the online and paper childcare questionnaire that was completed by 1, 570 parents across Essex, additional consultation was undertaken with groups of parents whom it was felt may experience particular barriers accessing registered childcare. The main groups were identified by the Local Area Childcare Sufficiency Groups as being:

- Rural parents
- Teenage / young parents
- Parents from Black or minority ethnic groups including Traveller or Roma families
- Parents with a child with special needs or a disability

As a detailed consultation with the latter group had been undertaken in Essex in April 2010, it was decided to focus face to face consultations with the first three groups. Between November and December 2010 Children's Community Development Officers liaised with local children's centres and local community groups and arranged informal childcare consultation meetings with groups of parents from these targeted groups. The groups contained a selection of parents who were currently using registered childcare, and those who were not. These were as follows:

Groups	No. of parents participating	Registered childcare use
Parents from rural areas		
Bradwell Stay and Play Session - Dengie Children's Centre	8	3 users 5 non users
Southminster Stay and Play session - Dengie Children's Centre	10	3 users 7 non-users
St Cedds Primary school	10	
Brentwood Outreach Stay and Play Session	4	2 users 2 non-users
Braintree rural parents – at Children's Centre	6	
Jo Jingles at Theydon Bois Baptist Church	9	4 users 5 non-users
Stay and Play at Morton Primary school	4	2 users 2 non-users
Black or Minority Ethnic parents		
Tendring children's centres Polish group	5	2 users 3 non-users
Braintree Revi group	2	1 user 1 non-user
Basildon Islamic Centre	2	2 non-users
Maldon Roma or Traveller families	1	1 user
Brentwood REACH (Race Equality And Cultural Harmony) Group	7	3 users 4 non-users
Asian and Chinese parents from Ormiston Children's Centre Highwoods	2	2 users

Groups	No. of parents participating	Registered childcare use
Teenage or young parents		
Chelmsford YMCA Children's Centre Young Parents Group	3	3 non-users
Basildon Catch 22 Young Parents Group	3	1 user 2 non-users
Tendring Children's Centres Teenage Parent Group	10	3 users 7 non-users

The consultation meetings which took place with the parents discussed the following discussion themes:

- Awareness of childcare – what different types of childcare were participants aware of? Did they understand what registered childcare was?
- Do participants know how to find out about local childcare? What ways do they suggest? Are they aware of the Family Information Service? Is lack of knowledge a barrier for them?
- What childcare had they used themselves, or were they using? This could include both registered and informal childcare.
- For those that had or were using registered care, why were they? What have been their experiences – both positive and negative? What have been the effects on them as parents and for their children?
- What would be their preferred childcare options and why?
- If not wanting to use any registered childcare, why not? (e.g. not in employment so not required, issues of trust, cultural issues, cost)
- What do they see as barriers to their taking up registered childcare? This could include local availability, affordability, flexibility of times, how they or their child is accepted by other children or parents.

All the parents who participated in the consultation meetings had the purpose of the discussions fully explained to them, and were given an information sheet if requested. Written notes were made of the comments made by the parents and these were then written up and aggregated in anonymous form.

5.2 Consultation findings: Rural parents

Awareness of registered childcare

All 41 of the parents who were consulted were aware that childminders, pre-schools and day nurseries were registered childcare and there was an understanding of the role of Ofsted. There was much less awareness of after school clubs or holiday club.

How they would find out / have found out about registered childcare?

The majority of the parents said that they would find out about childcare by 'word of mouth' and local recommendation. Children's centres were seen to be a source of information about local childcare that parents of pre-school children also often used. Schools were used by a small number of the parents, as were Health Visitors or the Health Centre. One parent said that they would use the internet. A number of parents from one of the Rural Parent groups requested more information on how to find childminders.

Awareness of the Essex Family Information Service (FIS)

Slightly less than half of the parents (17) had heard of the Essex FIS – these parents all had pre-school age children. Those who had used the FIS had positive comments to make, for example "very satisfied".

Experiences of using childcare and preferred childcare options

Parents were using a range of childcare: childminders, day nurseries and pre-schools in addition to informal childcare. They had a variety of reasons for their childcare choices, illustrating the importance of having a choice of childcare types available to parents:

Preference for childminders:

"It is more flexible around my working hours."

"I found it hard to get a local childminder or a nearby one with places. Luckily a new childminder has just registered..."

"A childminder provides more personal care for my child."

Preference for day nurseries:

"It enables my child to interact with a group of other children."

"It's great; they are so flexible and pick up from the local pre-schools as well."

"A day nursery and pre-school is more sociable for them."

Reasons for non-use / barriers to take-up

Trust

For a majority of the parents who were not currently using registered childcare, there was no need as they were not working at present. For a number of parents issues of trust in relation to full daycare nurseries emerged, in particular after cases of child abuse within day nurseries which had been reported in the media. As one parent commented, "It is scary choosing somewhere to leave their child all day long".

Affordability

The issue of affordability was brought up by parents in the rural groups within Epping Forest, Braintree, and Maldon.

“When childcare is £50 a day it is hard to justify going back to work.” – Parent from the Epping area.

“Full time formal childcare is not an option as too expensive”. (...so occasionally uses grandparents) – Parent from Epping area.

Transport

Transport was mentioned as a barrier to accessing childcare by a number of parents in the Bradwell and Southminster Rural parent groups. As one parent commented who was living in a fairly isolated rural area, having no car or even no second car can restrict access to services. Other parents brought up the problems with public transport (buses) when travelling between local villages and into Maldon; buses not turning up, buses being full up on the return journey and not being able to get home.

5.3 Consultation Findings: Black and Minority Ethnic Parents

Awareness of registered childcare

Of the 19 parents consulted in BME groups, 14 mentioned day nurseries, 8 pre-schools, and 8 childminders when asked if they understood what was meant by registered childcare. Only one of the parents also mentioned after school and holiday registered childcare.

How they would find out / have found out about registered childcare

A range of different methods were suggested by parents, with children’s centres and use of the internet (including the Essex County Council website, and District / Borough Council websites) being most frequently mentioned (by 6-7 of the 19 parents). Other ways included FIS (3 parents), health visitors, word of mouth or friends, school, and magazines found at nursery.

Awareness of the Essex Family Information Service (FIS)

Just four of the parents in the BME group consultations knew of the FIS. One parent commented that, “I have seen information at the children’s centre but not sure exactly what they do”.

Experiences of using childcare and preferred childcare options

Some of the parents used a childminder. One parent described this as a positive experience for her child but that sometimes she was required to work evening or weekend shifts and the *“childminder works Monday to Friday ‘til six”*. One Polish mother felt that the after school club her child attended had been very good for her as *“she speaks more English with confidence”*. Those who expressed a preference for childminders did so because it was felt they were *“affordable and flexible”*, they preferred care to be in a home environment, and they were unsure of standards in a nursery and felt that qualifications were low.

An Asian mother whose child attended a pre-school also described the benefits:

“My son goes to pre-school to give me some time for myself. He also enjoys it and it’s good for him to mix with other children.”

The mother from the Traveller community who used a pre-school commented that her child could *“experience new things, play, make friends, play with others and learn lots. She enjoys it loads!”*

Reasons for non-use / barriers to take-up

A number of barriers to the take-up of registered childcare were discussed by the parents within the BME parents groups.

Language

One Polish mother who spoke Polish to her child at home felt anxious about her child not being able to speak English if she used registered childcare. Although this was not a barrier mentioned by others from the Polish group it highlights the need for local childcare providers to be aware of any ethnic groups in their localities for whom English is not the language spoken at home.

Affordability

Cost was mentioned as a barrier by seven of the parents, therefore is a significant factor in their decision on whether to use registered childcare, or which type.

Information

In answer to the question of whether lack of knowledge could be a barrier to take-up, one parent commented that, *"I think it can be. There may be something more affordable out there if you 'shop around'"*.

"At first you don't know what is out there so this could be a barrier. Some of the information can be unclear such as that provided by health visitors, so it would help if information is explained clearly."

Availability

Two parents from Basildon had wanted to use daycare and out of school provision but had found that there was no local provision, or a lack of places available.

Flexibility

Flexibility was mentioned by seven of the parents across the different BME consultation groups as being a factor which could be a barrier to their taking up childcare. As one parent mentioned:

"The opening hours of some nurseries are not suitable for working parents e.g. 7.45 am to 5.45 pm which will not suit a commuter worker from London."

5.4 Consultation Findings: Teenage or Young Parents

2 childcare users 14 non users

Awareness of registered childcare

Sixteen young parents took part in childcare consultation discussions. 12 of these mentioned daycare nurseries as being registered childcare, 7 mentioned pre-schools and 9 childminders. Only one of these parents also included after school clubs as being a type of registered childcare.

How they would find out / have found out about registered childcare

Asking their children's centre or visiting or telephoning the childcare setting directly were the most common ways suggested by these young parents. Only one parent suggested using the internet, and three said *"word of mouth"* or *"friend's"*.

Awareness of the Essex Family Information Service (FIS)

Two of the group participants were aware of the FIS.

Experiences of using childcare and preferred childcare options

The parents who were using day nurseries both felt that the experience was a positive one for their children; it *“supported her development”* said one. The other parent also commented that it gave her *“time out and it was good that it was funded”*.

Some of the young parents expressed a preference for childminders if they needed to use any registered childcare, for the following reasons:

“Would prefer a childminder as less children to one person.”

“Like the idea of a childminder as it would be within a home environment.”

However day nurseries were preferred by other parents primarily for the social aspect:

“A nursery is bigger and there are more children for the child to socialise with.”

“...more children and lots of staff.”

“...for the social aspect and flexible times.”

Reasons for non-use / barriers to take-up

For the young parents there were a number of possible barriers to their taking-up registered childcare.

Trust and quality

Trust featured strongly among this group of young parents. Comments included concerns about leaving her child and not knowing the staff, and wanting to ensure that the childcare setting had a good Ofsted judgement.

Transport / distance to childcare

Several of the young people commented that they were reliant on public transport or walking so it was important that the childcare could be reached by these means. One parent commented that *“there isn’t any out of school care in the school and the only other one is a bus ride away”*.

5.5 Consultation Findings: Parents of children with additional needs or disabilities

A consultation with parents of children with additional needs or disabilities was carried out in Essex in early 2010. The questionnaire was aimed at all families in Essex with disabled children aged 0 – 19 years. Approximately 3500 questionnaires were distributed. 712 responses were received.

Regarding childcare, the findings from the questionnaire showed that a significant proportion of families (41%) currently used childcare and the main reason for not using childcare was that it is not required. However, more than 20% of families gave their main reason for not using childcare as *“I can’t find childcare that can meet the additional needs of my child.”*

75% of families expressed an interest in using childcare in the future, with the majority of families preferring childcare to be located close to their home, rather than close to their child’s school. When asked what type of childcare they would like to use, parents’ most preferred choices were specialised holiday clubs, followed by weekend clubs and after school clubs.

How the findings from this consultation have been used during 2010-11:

Supporting the Childcare Sufficiency Duty

Information on parental demand and need is key to developing sufficient childcare. In addition to the county-wide report, a detailed district by district analysis was carried out, and reports from this were distributed to the Children’s Community Development Officers for each district, in order for findings to inform development of district level childcare sufficiency actions.

Supporting access to childcare for disabled children

Findings from the questionnaire have been used as a baseline for the development of the DCATCH (Disabled Children’s Access to Childcare) programme during 2010-2011. This resulted in:

- A county wide training programme for early years and childcare staff.
- A bespoke information booklet on finding childcare for families with children with additional needs or disabilities (available from the Family Information Service).
- A DVD to help parents find childcare (also available from the Family Information Service).
- As part of the evaluation of the DCATCH programme, a second consultation with this group of families is planned to take place during 2011-12.

Supporting the development of Aiming High short breaks

Consultation and participation is a core element of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme. Findings from the questionnaire have been used to inform the commissioning of Short Breaks through the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme during 2010-11, which has resulted in a number of new after-school and holiday clubs being set up across the county.

5.6 Overall themes emerging from parent consultation with users and non-users of childcare

Childcare for school age children

Approximately one third of the comments received were concerning breakfast and after school provision and the childcare needs of families who have school age children, from primary up to secondary school age. This is an issue of great importance to many working parents. Parents were appreciative of good breakfast and after school provision, but it is clear that in some parts of Essex parents are struggling to find the local and affordable childcare they require for their school-age children, both in term-time and in the school holidays. The survey results suggest that breakfast club, after school club and holiday club provision could increase by approximately 8-10% to meet unmet demand, but that location and affordability were also important factors to take into account as these comments highlight:

“The provision of affordable, high quality childcare for working parents is terrible- be it in term time or during the holidays. Schools are not appreciative of working parents needs and could provide more breakfast and homework clubs, or open during the holidays.”

“There is little or no childcare provision or government support for older primary age children, outside of private registered day care centres which are expensive.”

“I feel breakfast and after school clubs are very important to enable parents to work. These should be widely available and affordable. There is a problem for working parents when full day nursery ends and school begins if the school does not offer breakfast or after school care.”

Childcare costs

13% of the respondents who were not using registered childcare gave lack of affordability as a reason, and comments from parents living in different districts of Essex supported this. Feedback from parents suggested that it was the cost of full daycare, after school clubs and holiday clubs that was felt to be particularly difficult to afford.

“The cost of childcare is extremely high, and unaffordable for most people. I have twins and even though I earn a reasonable salary it only just covers the cost of both.”

“The Free Early Education Entitlement is an assistance but as a single mother working full time, full time childcare is extremely expensive.”

“I find it very hard to find the money for my child to go to nursery. She is not quite two, so is not eligible for free care yet. The government encourages parents to go back to work, but they don't help.”

The needs of commuters

There are certain parts of Essex where a significant proportion of the workforce commute into London or to other large urban areas. Comments received from the survey indicate that London commuters have particular needs for flexible childcare in which it is possible for children to be cared for before 8am and after 6.30pm. In these areas it would seem particularly important to

have a good supply of flexible childminders, in addition to full daycare which offers an early drop-off and later pick-up times. These are a number of comments which were received:

“Childminders are becoming more expensive, working in London hence need for longer hours.”

“My children are aged 8 and 5. I use after school clubs, but because it only covers until 5.15pm, I have to leave work at 4pm to ensure I catch a train to get me there on time. I arrive at the school at 4.45pm and have to pay until 5.15pm.”

“Generally, and I am sure this is not an Essex thing, but to get childcare through the official channels you need to be in a town, as most villages do not have facilities locally, and also the start and end times just don’t work when you have to commute to work.”

“I work in London and have been struggling to find a childminder or nursery that opens long enough to accommodate my commuter hours.”

“Not enough childcare facilities finishing at 7pm as I work in the City and therefore forced to use the only one that does finish at 7pm.”

The use of informal childcare

Informal childcare is being used to a great extent, both in addition to paid and registered childcare, and on its own to enable parents to work or study. However, this is not necessarily always out of choice, as feedback suggests that informal childcare is also used because of a lack of suitable, local and affordable registered childcare. If more registered childcare is made available that is acceptable to these parents, the use of informal childcare may decrease.

Information about childcare and the Free Early Education Entitlement

The survey findings suggest that there is more that can be done to provide clear and timely information to parents about the Free Early Education Entitlement, and to make it easier for parents looking for childcare to find the information they need – through the Family Information Service, children’s centres, community professionals and other appropriate media.

The needs of parents in rural localities

The findings from the parent survey and the face-to-face consultation were that there were particular challenges in accessing childcare for families living in the many rural areas of Essex. For those parents who did not have access to a car, one of their priorities was that childcare should be local and easily accessible either on foot or by public transport. Some parents commented that the local buses were not always frequent or reliable, making it difficult for them to travel. In rural areas there are challenges in having sufficient local childcare to meet parental demand which is also sustainable, given that there may be few children in that locality who would use it.

6. Essex Employers Childcare Survey

This consultation with a sample of Essex organisations was part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment consultation with a range of childcare ‘stakeholders’. As part of the process of understanding the factors which affect childcare demand, it was important to hear from a sample of employers from across Essex.

Methodology

The consultation with Essex employers took place during December 2010. An online questionnaire was set up on the Essex County Council Engage Essex Consultation Portal, and paper copies were also available.

A mailing list of Essex employers and their contact details was obtained from the Business Information Service / Essex County Council Libraries. Where an email contact address was available, the organisations were emailed the survey with letter of explanation about the purpose of the survey. Paper copies of the survey were sent with return envelope to organisations to which it was not possible to send the questionnaire electronically. This mailing list was reduced using a number of criteria to a sample of approximately 500 organisations.

An explanatory letter about the survey and the weblink to the Engage Essex consultation portal was passed on to all Essex members of the Federation of Small Businesses, with the co-operation of the Essex Regional Organiser. In addition, the survey weblink was publicised by email to the five PCTs operating within Essex, and the District / Borough Councils.

Employer Survey sample

	Posted	Emailed
Basildon	59	24
Braintree	30	9
Brentwood	31	16
Castle Point	11	5
Chelmsford	56	20
Colchester	105	19
Epping Forest	35	9
Harlow	23	17
Maldon	17	4
Rochford	13	6
Tendring	21	6
Uttlesford	31	13
Total	432	148

A response rate of 11% was achieved. The majority of responses were received through postal return.

Profile of respondents

The range of employer types and the District / Borough Council areas in which they operated were as follows:

Employer Type	Number of employers	Percent
Charity.	1	1.4
Construction	7	10.1
Education	4	5.8
Financial	4	5.8
Health	6	8.7
Hospitality	1	1.4
Insurance.	1	1.4
Local government	6	8.7
Manufacturing	10	14.5
Media and entertainment	2	2.9
Other	11	15.9
Religious	1	1.4
Retail	7	10.1
Service Industry	3	4.3
Sport	2	2.9
Transport	1	1.4
Voluntary sector	1	1.4
Total	69	100.0

District Council in which organisation operates	Number of employers	Percent
Basildon	9	13
Braintree	11	16
Brentwood	13	19
Castle Point	8	12
Chelmsford	17	25
Colchester	16	23
Epping Forest	10	14
Harlow	9	13
Maldon	7	10
Rochford	7	10
Tendring	12	17
Uttlesford	9	13

6.1 Working times for female employees

If working mothers need to work outside of normal 'core' working hours then there should be registered childcare available, where practicable, to meet those childcare needs. Employers were asked whether any of their female employees worked before 8am, after 6pm, weekends or overnight, and it was found that women working 'non-core' hours occurred in nearly half of the sample.

	Percentage of sample
Early mornings (before 8am)	46%
Evenings (after 6pm)	45%
Weekends	45%
Overnight	22%

The organisations in the sample with a higher percentage of women working for them were more likely to have women working after 6pm. Women were less likely to be working before 8am than working evenings; it occurred most commonly in organisations where 40 – 60% of the workforce were women. Weekend working was most common among businesses where over 50% of the employees were women.

Overall as the size of the organisation increased the more likely it was that some of the female staff worked after 6pm or in the early mornings or weekends. Women worked overnight infrequently but it was most likely in large organisations of over 400 employees such as a health organisation – care workers or nurses for example.

6.2 Family-friendly practices

On-site childcare provision such as crèche or daycare nursery for employees

A small number of the largest organisations (4) provided on-site childcare provision.

Linked off-site childcare provision for employees

Linked off-site childcare provision was offered by a further three employers within the sample.

Provision of childcare voucher scheme

A childcare voucher scheme was offered by 41% of the respondents.

Provision of information to employees on finding and affording childcare

One fifth of the respondents were proactive in providing information to their employees on finding or affording childcare. This may be something which only a minority of employers feel is their responsibility to do; it may also be that the employers do not have access to this information. Only the largest employers – those with over 400 employees – were more likely to provide information relating to childcare to their employees, and even then this was only the case for one third

Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements of different types were offered by three quarters of the employers – details of the type of arrangements are presented overleaf. It was apparent that the majority of the respondents were trying to be as flexible as their business allowed to their employees' needs for work-life balance and childcare commitments. This was the case for all the larger

organisations but even those with smaller workforces (less than 20 employees, 20-60 employees) were trying to be flexible where possible.

Type of employer	% of female employees	Number of employees	Types of flexible working arrangements: comments given
Education	40.01 - 60.00% women	over 400 employees	We have an on-site nursery catering for children from 3 months to 5 years old on our Colchester site. No on-site provision on our Southend site.
Other	20.01 - 40.00% women	20 to 60 employees	start and finish times can be altered
Construction	<= 20% women	over 400 employees	Some flexibility in hours worked is available and part-time work available.
Other	<= 20% women	20 to 60 employees	Part-time working.
Manufacturing	20.01 - 40.00% women	20 to 60 employees	Part-time work arranged if required.
Local government	60.01 - 80.00% women	150 to 400 employees	Part-year working, term-time working, reduced hours, compressed hours, remote working, job-sharing.
Financial	40.01 - 60.00% women	20 to 60 employees	To try to fit and balance business needs with EE requirements.
Manufacturing	20.01 - 40.00% women	60 to 150 employees	Late start and part-time both reduced hours and reduced days.
Other	20.01 - 40.00% women	up to 20 employees	Employees can adjust hours to suit them i.e. finish early or start later.
Local government	60.01 - 80.00% women	150 to 400 employees	Dependent on job role.
Health	<= 20% women	over 400 employees	Where possible dependent on service needs.
Local government	40.01 - 60.00% women	over 400 employees	All sorts of shift patterns apply.
Education	60.01 - 80.00% women	up to 20 employees	Hours of work are reviewed on an individual basis within the constraints of school curriculum and nursery provision.
Other	.	.	By mutual agreement including part-time, static and mobile positions.
Health	40.01 - 60.00% women	up to 20 employees	Most of our female employees are mums and work shifts around school hours. If time off is needed for child's illness etc it is always agreed.
Retail	60.01 - 80.00% women	up to 20 employees	A p/t member of staff has returned on temporary hours after maternity leave.
Retail	40.01 - 60.00% women	60 to 150 employees	Part-time and flexible shift-patterns available.
Construction	<= 20% women	150 to 400 employees	Part-time or different working times.
Construction	<= 20% women	60 to 150 employees	Position for part-time and working from home where appropriate.
Education	60.01 - 80.00% women	150 to 400 employees	We have a variety of different working hours depending on the role. We will always consider flexible working requests.
Health	80.01+ % women	150 to 400 employees	We are as flexible as our business allows us to be.
Transport	40.01 - 60.00% women	over 400 employees	Some staff part-time or reduced week.
Manufacturing	.	.	For some positions.

Type of employer	% of female employees	Number of employees	Types of flexible working arrangements: comments given
Manufacturing	20.01 - 40.00% women	20 to 60 employees	Variable working hours if possible.
Construction	20.01 - 40.00% women	over 400 employees	Formal request is made if employee requires to amend their working hours.
Manufacturing	<= 20% women	150 to 400 employees	Depends on department.

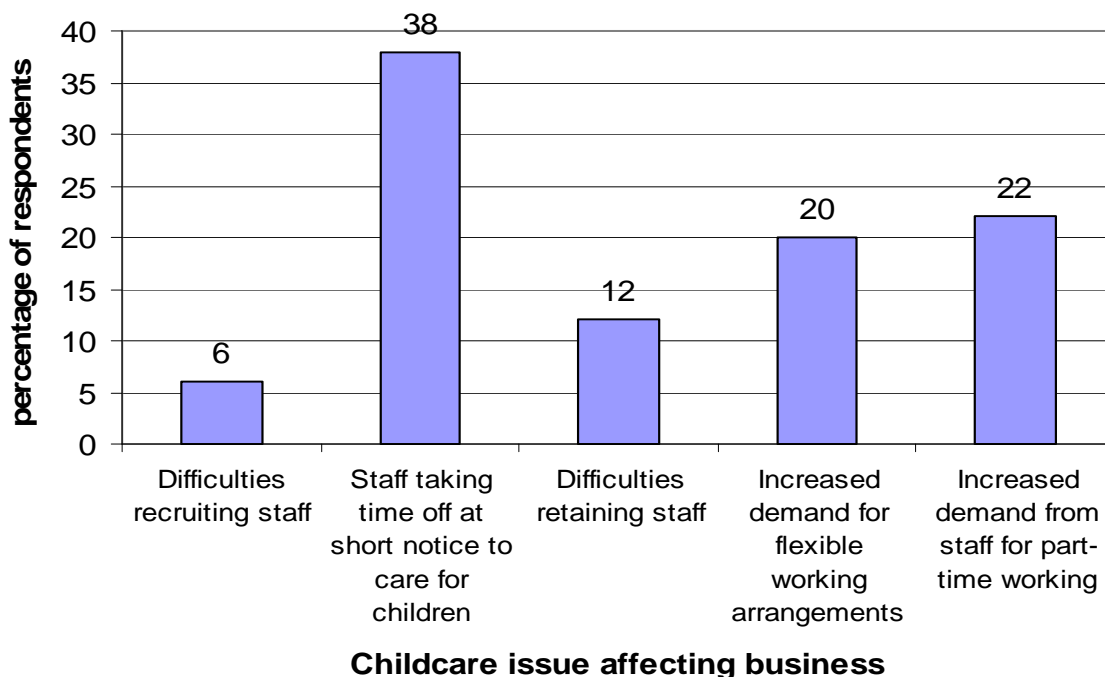
6.3 Signposting to Childcare Information

Awareness of the Family Information Service and dissemination of information about it

Of the sample of 69 employers, 13% of the respondents had heard of the Family Information Service and of these, only four employers reported that they had given employees information about the service. It was not necessarily the case that the larger organisations were more likely to have heard of the FIS (within the sample group of businesses employing 150 – 400 staff (11), none was aware of the FIS), however of the largest organisations which operated across a number of districts of Essex 36% were aware of the service.

6.4 Childcare issues and the effects on the business

Nearly half of the sample (45%) agreed that childcare issues did affect their business, as shown overleaf:



Childcare issues were found to affect businesses of all sizes, but it was found unsurprisingly that the higher the proportion of women working in the organisation, the more likely it was that childcare issues affected their business.

6.5 Conclusions

This survey, although only sampling a small percentage of the varying businesses operating across Essex, has highlighted a number of issues of pertinence to the childcare sufficiency assessment.

Women are working outside 'core' 9-5 hours, most commonly after 6pm. Even if this only applies to a minority of the working mothers, their childcare needs must be considered when looking at the operational times of childminders, day nurseries, breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday play-schemes.

Businesses are increasingly being asked for flexible working arrangements by their employees, in order for parents to manage their work and childcare commitments. Flexible working arrangements, in addition to informal childcare and reliable, local and affordable registered childcare are all important to enable parents (particularly mothers) to work.

For a significant minority of employers (12% of the sample) the lack of suitable childcare was resulting in difficulties recruiting staff. This indicates that there are childcare sufficiency gaps in some parts of Essex which are having an impact on businesses.

Businesses are, to a large extent, unaware of how to find out about childcare provision and help with childcare costs, and do not provide information on this issue to employees. There is an opportunity here to engage with Essex employers to a greater extent and to improve the methods by which childcare information can be accessed by them when they need it.

7. District Childcare Sufficiency overviews

This section of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provides a summary of the current childcare sufficiency situation within each of the twelve District Councils or Boroughs of Essex, and some contextual narrative. The more detailed District Childcare Sufficiency Action Plans with a ward level analysis are available on the Essex County Council website [Early Years and Childcare pages](#).

7.1 Basildon

Fryerns Ward and Billericay East and West Wards have a lack of out of school places. Lee Chapel North and Laindon park Wards - due to expansion in housing developments there may be a need for additional childcare places.

Pitsea North West and South East Wards need to increase childminder places.

The main barriers for accessing provision for the Basildon borough are a lack of knowledge amongst some parents of quality in childcare, a lack of Level 3 workers to work in out of school clubs and childminding, and increased levels of grandparents as carers and the support available for them.

7.2 Braintree

Cost and flexibility as barriers to childcare have been identified as overarching issues from the parental survey. The Braintree Childcare Sufficiency Group continues to promote the various types of help that are available towards the cost of childcare, and works with local childcare settings to ensure that they are meeting the parental need for the area.

Families in Braintree who responded to the childcare survey based their decisions on what childcare to use predominately on their local knowledge and word of mouth, with a smaller minority using the Family Information Service and the internet. Factors that influenced families' choices around childcare were predominantly based on recommendation and convenience of the childcare setting. Almost an equal amount of the respondents to the parental questionnaire use informal childcare as those that use formal childcare.

One of the challenges for Braintree as a rural district is the balance needed between setting up sustainable provision and ensuring that there is adequate childcare to meet parental need. The Braintree Childcare Sufficiency Group will continue to look at the need in these areas and give potential new providers informed support when looking to set up a new provision.

7.3 Brentwood

There is a need for After School Club places in Brentwood South Ward, Ingatestone Ward and Fryerning and Mountnessing Ward and there is a need for additional childminder places in Pilgrims Hatch Ward.

The main barriers for accessing provision for the Brentwood area are access to affordable childcare and lack of knowledge and awareness of quality provision.

7.4 Castle Point

Canvey Island has a low number of childminders who are currently active. This is highlighted during school holidays and for out of school places during term time. There is a need for more holiday play-schemes for children with disabilities which has been an ongoing concern. This has been highlighted more recently via the Family Information Service. Proposed housing developments are also going through the planning process which could impact on the current childcare provision in Benfleet.

7.5 Chelmsford

A significant amount of future housing and community development is anticipated in the future within the North Chelmsford area.

A lack of holiday provision has been identified in parts of the district but sustainability remains a concern within the rural communities.

In addition there is a need for out of school provision in both rural wards and some of the more densely populated areas. Chelmer Village remains a focus for new daycare provision but new development is currently supporting this. New expansion and development in the district is currently supporting current and anticipated parental demand.

Family consultation shows what is important to families when choosing childcare provision; convenience of location, quality of provision, flexibility and affordability are the key issues identified. Barriers to accessing registered childcare for families are around affordability and choice available; some parents are not aware of how to find out about what choices are available to them.

The use of informal childcare in the district supports the childcare market with the majority of carers, being grandparents. Parents support the childcare services available for school age children which supports a smooth transition when children start school.

7.6 Colchester

There is currently a surplus of full daycare places across Colchester. This has remained unchanged for several years now, however many new housing developments are under way across the Borough so this will be closely monitored to ensure sufficient spaces are available.

Local pre-schools and childminders across the Borough also have spare capacity, although in some areas there are issues around premises which are being addressed.

The main gaps are around out of school provision. There is also a lack of awareness among some parents about how to get help with the cost of childcare, e.g. childcare vouchers, and the Colchester Childcare Sufficiency Group have an action in place to provide information to parents regarding benefits available.

7.7 Epping Forest

Consultation confirmed that parents and carers continue to be concerned with the cost of childcare highlighting the need for more promotion work around childcare tax credits, choosing quality childcare etc.

Childcare for older children

In particular a number of parents/carers were asking for more holiday provision and more provision for older children (aged 11yrs upwards). This identified a need to ensure good publicity of existing activities and groups that are available throughout the district for older children as well as promotion of those childcare providers who cater for older children.

Cross boundary working

There is a need to establish working relationships with our neighbouring London Borough colleagues to look and monitor the take up of childcare places on the Essex/Redbridge and Essex/Havering borders. This will help to inform need for any future provisions.

Lack of early years provision

Loughton continues to have a number of settings at full capacity and demand for either full daycare or pre-school places continues to grow.

Lack of out of school provision

A number of parents have asked for breakfast and after school provision within Waltham Abbey, Buckhurst Hill, Theydon Bois and Loughton areas with many commenting that they would prefer the provision to be on site of their child's school.

Sustainability of childcare provision

Waltham Abbey continues to have a surplus of childcare places creating a role for Development Officers and Early Years and Childcare Service to provide business support ensuring long term sustainability.

Nanny provision

Some parts of Epping Forest are served by nannies some of whom (30 at present) choose to be registered and others who are not registered and therefore difficult to include within sufficiency planning however should be acknowledged within the local childcare sufficiency agenda.

7.8 Harlow

Harlow has a good choice of full daycare, pre-schools, childminders and out of school clubs. They are spread across the town fairly evenly and even for those wards where the choice seems limited these are next door to wards with a full choice and vacancies. As Harlow is built around distinct community hubs so the childcare is often situated within the hatches or small shopping centres. These also contain children centres that are able to support parents to access childcare.

Parent consultations in the past have shown that often parents prefer to use informal childcare such as family members and a large number of parents use pre-schools to help educate and socialise their children rather than because they want to return to work or study.

There are numerous new housing developments across the town with others planned for the future. The Harlow Childcare sufficiency group will be mindful of parents need for childcare to

be close to where they live and will continue to support the continued delivery of childcare across the town.

7.9 Maldon

The Maldon district is well served through current provision and recent expansions and developments has supported families with local access to early years and childcare provision in the area. Out of School provision across the Maldon district is limited although consultation has shown limited demand. Holiday provision has been identified as a gap in some areas but some wards raise concerns for long term sustainability.

Purleigh and Tillingham continue to be in need of support to sustain the breakfast and after school clubs for families. The rural villages within the district, and some areas in the Maldon town experience sustainability issues due to the rurality issues within the communities they serve.

Family consultation shows what is important to families when choosing childcare provision; convenience of location, quality of provision, flexibility and affordability are the key issues identified. The Maldon community expressed the importance of recommendation from others when choosing childcare. Barriers to accessing registered childcare for families are around affordability and choice available; some parents are not aware of how to find out about what choices are available to them. The use of informal childcare in the district supports the childcare market with the majority of carers, being grandparents. Parents support the childcare services available for school age children which supports a smooth transition when children start school.

7.10 Rochford

Out of school provision and holiday club places need to be developed. The rurality of some of the villages in Rochford district creates barriers because of lack of transport. Canewdon and Great Wakering are two areas currently being targeted to improve the number of places available.

7.11 Tendring

An overview of the current childcare sufficiency in the Tendring district shows that all types of childcare are being provided and reflects the distribution of childcare at ward level across the Tendring District. There are larger areas across a number of neighbouring wards which show there may be a need through potential gaps in some types of childcare; this has been identified and shown within actions and timescales below, also shown are actions that relate to particular wards.

Consultation on childcare has been carried out with a sample of families across Tendring in 2010. This highlighted that transport could be a barrier for parents in choice of and access to childcare, due to the demographic nature of the Tendring district with large areas of outlying rurality. This is an important factor in the monitoring and meeting of childcare need and demand, and management of the childcare market, as is working with parents of children with special or additional needs to gain a greater understanding of their childcare needs and working with existing providers to ensure they all provide a fully inclusive and accessible service of high quality.

Gaps in provision may also be created by new housing developments. New housing developments and any resulting increase in childcare need and demand will be monitored to ensure that local childcare continues to meet the needs of the local community.

7.12 Uttlesford

Families living in the Uttlesford area will have different experiences of being able to access childcare within the district. For those within the towns of Saffron Walden and Dunmow there is sufficient childcare to enable parents to either study or work. However, for those families living in the rural villages there is limited childcare choices and parents need to be able to travel to adjoining wards and villages to access a choice. For those reliant on public transport this limits their ability to access a choice of childcare.

In the outlying villages there are pre-schools and childminders in most wards. There are also several full daycare providers across the Uttlesford area although not always one per ward. There is insufficient demand for full daycare in each ward however this means that parents often have to travel to full daycare to neighbouring wards and even across the border to Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. In some cases this may be convenient for families who are working in these areas.

For out of school provision there are several providers across the area that will collect children from several schools by mini bus. There is not sufficient demand for an out of school provision in each village or ward but it does mean that children have to travel further distances than those living in the towns.

8. County Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan

The following section highlights the main county action points arising from an analysis of the data gathered during the childcare sufficiency assessment consultations and the ongoing data collection.

Gaps in out of school provision

Actions:

- Local Childcare Sufficiency Groups to identify areas within each district where there is parental demand for breakfast, after school or holiday clubs, and to formulate local action plans to meet these needs. County childcare sufficiency group to oversee and review on a termly basis.
- To improve the availability of high quality accurate data, held by the Family Information Service, about both registered and non-registered out of school provision.
- To promote the Family Information Service more effectively through schools enabling them to signpost parents to childcare provision.

Knowledge and awareness of local childcare options amongst parents and employers

Actions:

The provision of a Family Information Service is a statutory requirement and represents an important gateway for the delivery of information about childcare and related services. In response to reductions in funding it has been necessary to look at more creative and shared ways in which a high quality and far reaching service can be delivered. Some actions have already been taken to consolidate the service. In October 2010, the telephone and email enquiry aspect of the service in Essex was transferred to the local authority call centre. Delivery is monitored through customer feedback and at present is reflecting a high level of satisfaction.

Further actions will include:

- Ongoing training for the FIS specialist call centre staff to expand their knowledge of areas such as the provision of information for families with children with disabilities, the Free Early Education Entitlement and out of school provision.
- Increasing the visibility of childcare choices and the Family Information Service through web based media including exploring the opportunities which social media presents in reaching parents.
- Formally confirming and expanding the role which children's centres have in delivering information about childcare.
- Continuing to encourage strong working relationships between local childcare providers and children's centres.
- Publication of new hard copy and web based guides to support parent in choosing high quality childcare, including a new '*Birth Guide*' to be given to parents as they register their baby's birth.

- Work with schools and childcare providers to ensure, as far as possible that parents are clear about their options with regard to the Single Point of Entry to school which will be fully implemented in Essex from September 2011.
- The introduction of a more robust brokerage service for parents finding it difficult to access childcare.
- Closer working with Health colleagues.

Affordability of childcare

Actions:

- Increase the web based information about financial support available to help with the costs of childcare.
- Develop new materials and web based information to promote the Free Early Education Entitlement.
- Continue to monitor take up and act to address any fall in take up of the Free Early Education Entitlement.
- Ensure that the Free Early Education Entitlement for two year olds reaches those children at most potential disadvantage.
- Enable parents to better access information by the increased profiling of the Family Information Service.
- Comprehensive distribution of the new publication for families with children with disabilities which includes information on financial support.
- Children's centres to signpost and support parents to relevant information on childcare affordability.
- Development staff to keep early years and childcare settings up to date on benefits available and to share good practice ideas as appropriate.
- Publicise case studies from each childcare sector which show ways in which childcare costs can be made more affordable, including publicising through the termly Early Years newsletter.
- Publicise to children's centres and out of school clubs information on the '*Every Child an Opportunity*' fund which is available for individual children where a school feels that they would benefit from childcare or enrichment activities.

Access to childcare for disabled children and those with additional needs

Actions:

- To continue to strengthen the childcare brokerage service for parents of children with disabilities or additional needs, and who are searching for childcare which meets their needs.
- To undertake further consultation with parents of children with disabilities or additional needs.

Access to childcare by families living in rural areas

Actions:

- Local childcare sufficiency groups to continue to work with local childcare providers and schools in rural areas to balance the sustainability of childcare settings with parental demand for local childcare.
- County childcare sufficiency group to liaise with the ECC school transport team regarding the possibilities of using minibuses to transport children from rural schools to an after school club.
- County childcare sufficiency group to investigate the possibility of community transport initiatives to see if this service could be made available to transport children in rural areas to childcare establishments. If successful this could be advertised through village and parish information outlets.

Provision of sufficiency high quality childcare across Essex

Actions:

- From April 2011 Essex County Council to have a Service Level Agreement with Pre-school Learning Alliance to provide development staff across Essex to promote childcare quality and childcare sufficiency.
- Essex County Council Early Years and Childcare Service to monitor the quality of all childcare provision through regular regional Quality Monitoring Meetings (QMMs), Ofsted gradings and the internal RAG process.
- Promote local out of school network meetings and Early Years Learning Communities.
- Increase the number of 'Good' and 'Outstanding' Ofsted rated childcare settings in Essex.
- Increase visibility of the Family Information Service to ensure effective signposting to childcare, increasing sustainability.

Impact of the Single Funded Formula (introduced April 2011) on school nursery classes / nursery schools and the PVI sector

Actions:

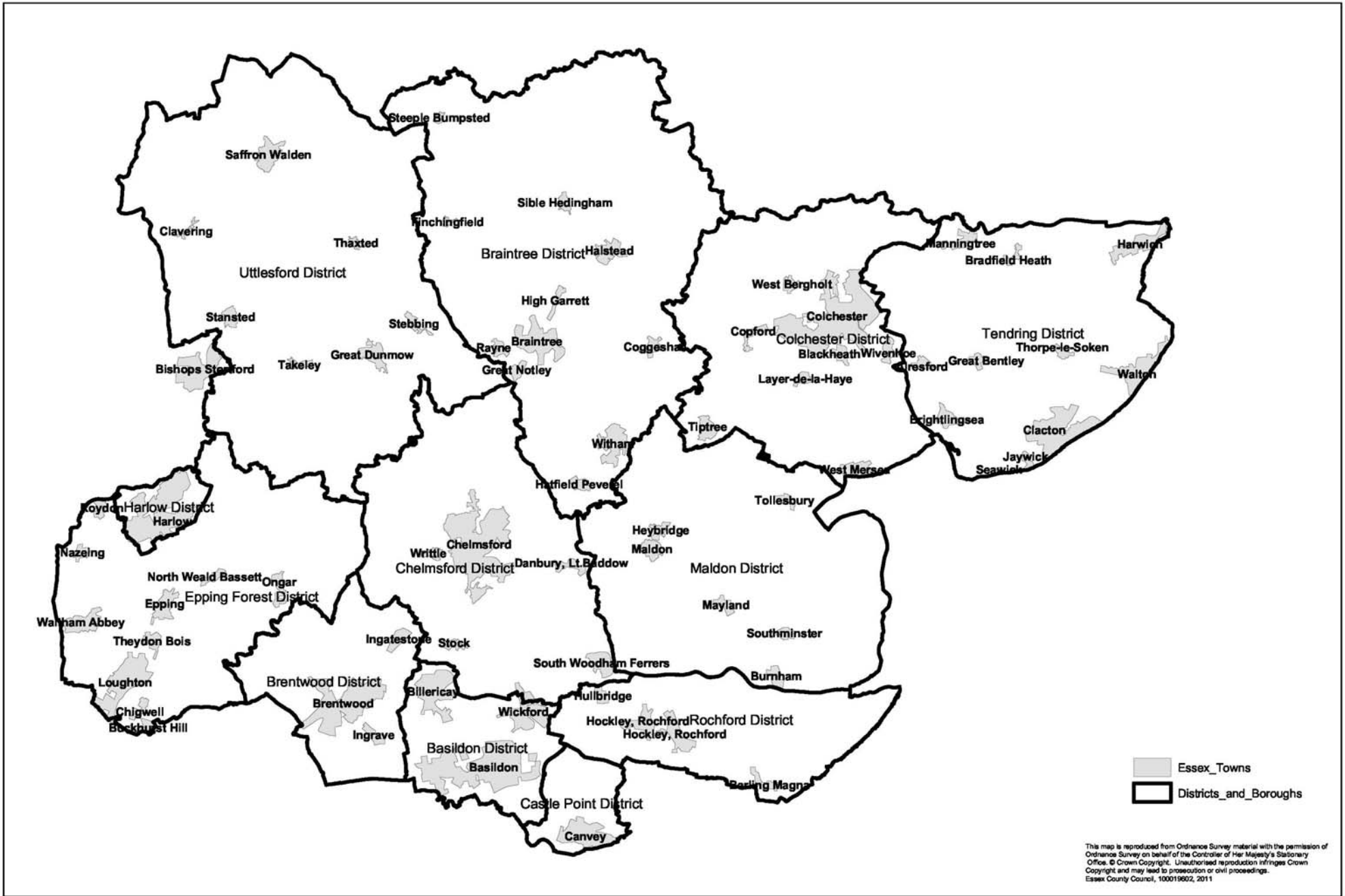
- To monitor the impact through termly collection of data on childcare places available and places taken up.
- To provide business support and advice to school nurseries that are experiencing sustainability concerns.

Consultation with parents

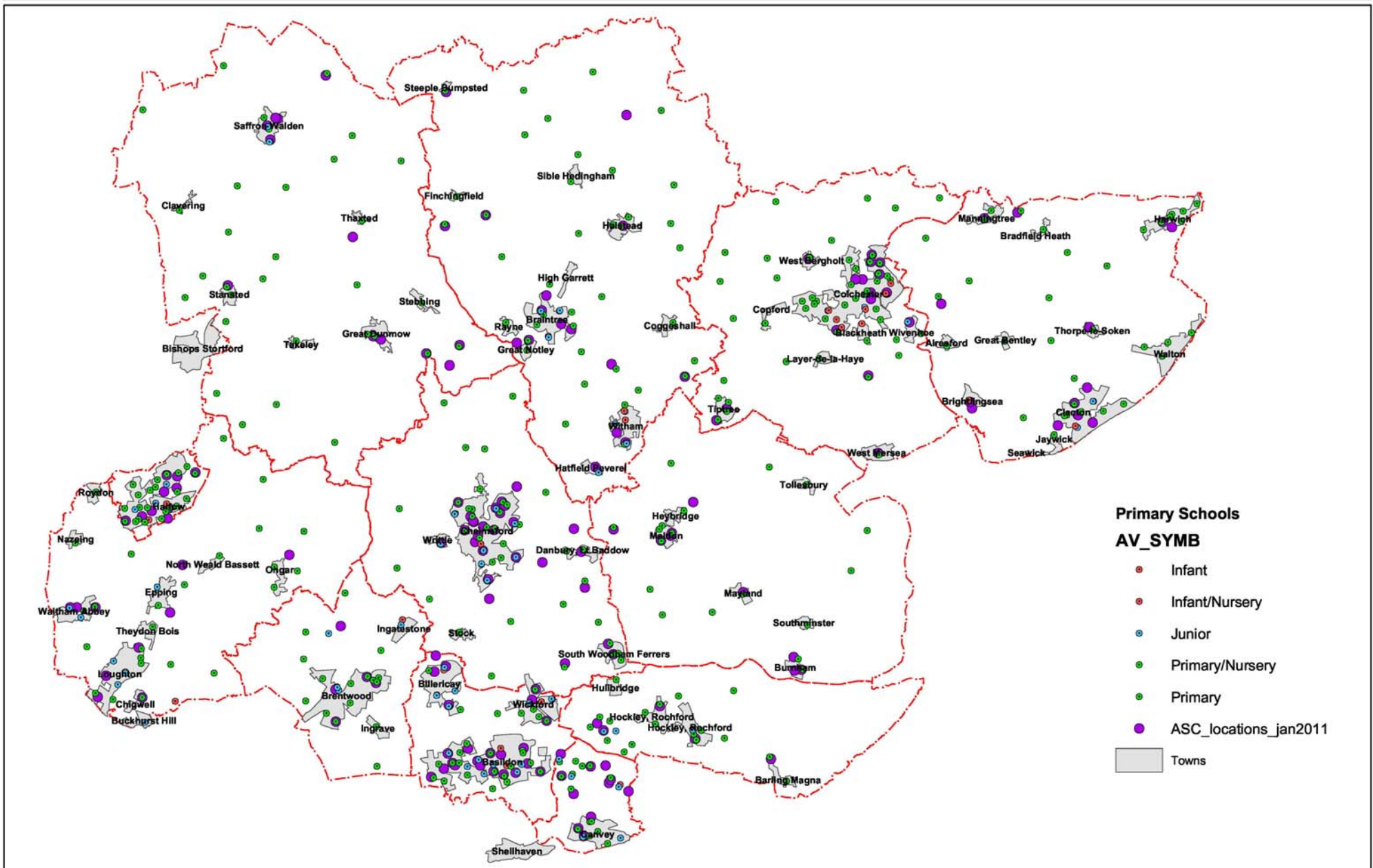
Actions:

- To develop a consultation strategy for early years and childcare provision, which enables parental demand data to be collected on a regular basis across Essex, building on the consultation work already undertaken. Family Information Service customer feedback already collects feedback from parents about their childcare needs and an electronic feedback survey is being introduced into email enquiries.

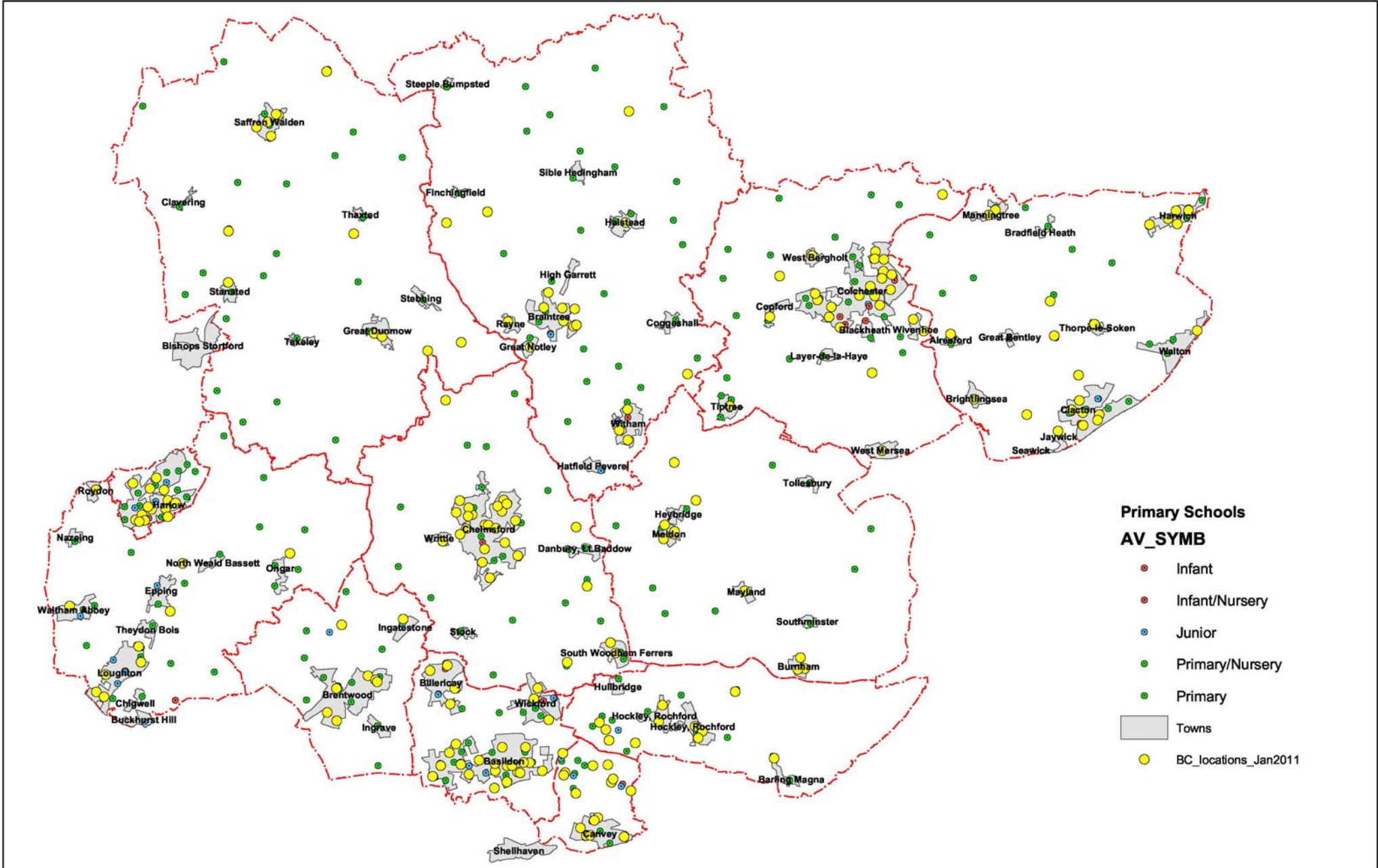
District / Borough Boundaries and main towns of Essex



After School Clubs and Primary School locations within Essex January 2011



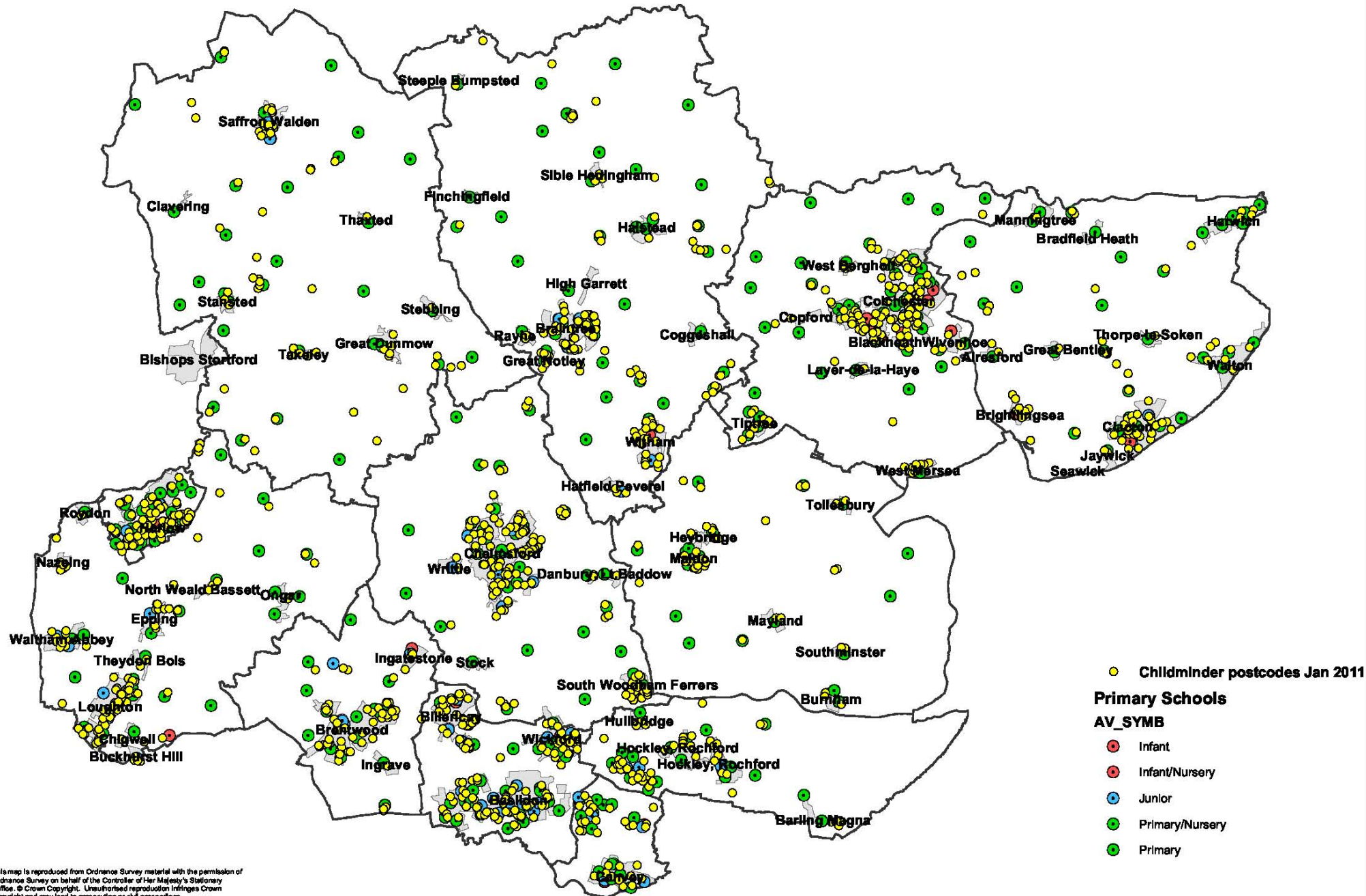
Breakfast Clubs and Primary School locations within Essex January 2011



Primary Schools
AV_SYMB

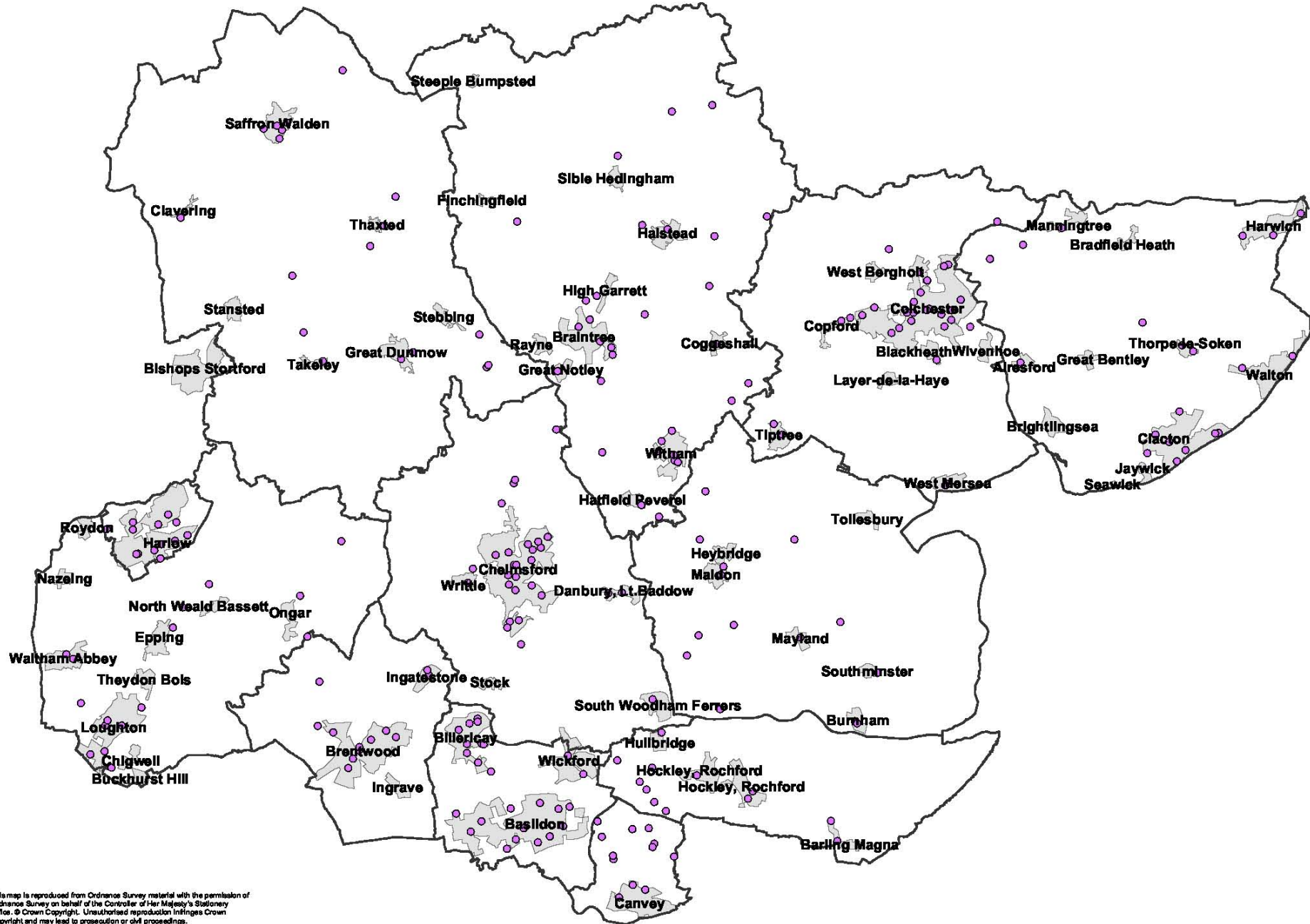
- Infant
- Infant/Nursery
- Junior
- Primary/Nursery
- Primary
- Towns
- BC_locations_Jan2011

Primary school and childminder distribution across Essex January 2011



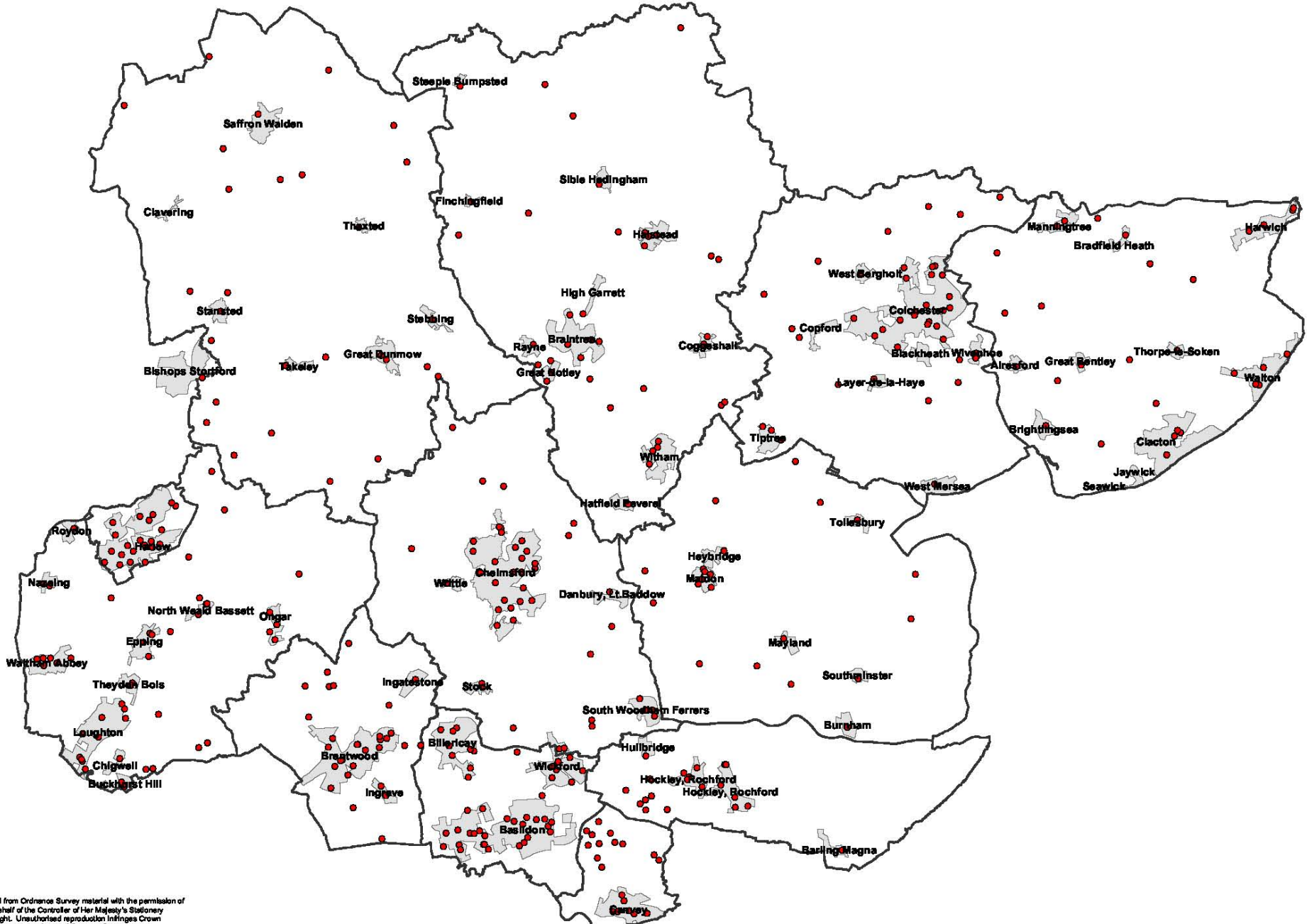
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Essex County Council, 100019602, 2011

Distribution of full day care providers for under 5s across Essex March 2011



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Essex County Council, 100019602, 2011

Distribution of sessional day care for under 5s across Essex March 2011



Childcare and Early Learning Opportunities in Essex Parent Survey 2010

Essex County Council has a responsibility to make sure that there is enough high quality Ofsted registered early learning and childcare provision for children up to 14yrs (and to 17yrs for children with special needs). As a parent, we would like to know what childcare or early education you use, whether it suits what you require and what you might need in the future. By answering the questions below you will help us and others to plan future childcare provision across Essex.

1. Do you **currently use** any of the following for your child / children?

Pre-School / Playgroup Childminder **Yes** **No**

Full day care Nursery Breakfast club **If Yes, please tick *all* that apply.**

Holiday playschemes After school club

School Nursery class (not Reception) Nanny

If No go to question 5

2. If yes, why do you use it? *Please tick **all** that apply.*

- So I or my partner can go to work So I or my partner can study or train for work
 To give my child an opportunity to socialise and take part in fun activities To provide early learning opportunities for my child (for children under 5 yrs)
 To give me / my partner some "me time" Other:

3. If you currently use any of the above, **how did you find out about it?** *Please tick **all** that apply.*

- Local knowledge School Children's Centre Jobcentre Plus Family Information Service
 Internet search **If yes, which websites did you visit?**
 Other:

4. What helped you make your choice? *Please tick **all** that apply*

- Recommendation from others Convenience of location The childcare was flexible My child knew other children there
 Affordability The quality of care provided Other reason:

5. Do you use any 'informal childcare' to enable you or your partner to work, train or study?

- Yes** **No** **If yes, please tick *all* that apply.**
 Partner Grandparent Other close family member After school activities run by

Essex Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2010 - 2011

Employer Survey 2010

Essex County Council is required by the Childcare Act (2006) to ensure, as far as practicably possible, that there is sufficient childcare available to meet parental need and to carry out a county assessment of all childcare at least every three years. The next Essex Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report will be published by April 2011.

We need your help as an employer in Essex to obtain a better understanding of:

- employment patterns which will affect demand for childcare, including more flexible working patterns
- levels of employer-provided childcare, and the use of voucher schemes
- any information you give to employees about how to get help with finding and affording childcare.

Name of business/organisation:

Please tick the type of business/organisation:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retail | <input type="checkbox"/> Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial | <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please state: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local government | |

In which District Council is your business/organisation based? (Please tick all that apply.)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basildon | <input type="checkbox"/> Chelmsford | <input type="checkbox"/> Maldon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Braintree | <input type="checkbox"/> Colchester | <input type="checkbox"/> Rochford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brentwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Epping Forest | <input type="checkbox"/> Tendring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Castle Point | <input type="checkbox"/> Harlow | <input type="checkbox"/> Uttlesford |

What is the approximate number of employees in your business/organisation?

Of these how many are women?

Do any of your female employees work the following times:

(Please tick if yes)

- Evening hours (after 6.00pm) Overnight
 Early mornings (before 8.00am) Weekends

Does your business/organisation provide on-site childcare provision (such as a crèche or daycare nursery)?

- Yes No Unknown

If yes please describe:

Does your business/organisation provide linked off-site childcare provision for your employees? (*This refers to a formal agreement between an employer and a childcare provider for childcare places to be designated for employee use/purchase.*)

- Yes No Unknown

If yes please describe:

Does your business/organisation provide a childcare voucher scheme?

- Yes No Unknown

If yes please describe:

Does your business/organisation offer your employees flexible working arrangements?

- Yes No Unknown

If yes please describe:

Does your business/organisation provide any information to employees on finding and affording childcare?

- Yes No Unknown

If yes please describe:

Do you think that issues around childcare have affected your business / organisation in any way?

- Yes No

If yes, in what ways? Tick all that apply

- Difficulties recruiting staff**
- Difficulties retaining staff**
- Staff taking time off at short notice to care for children**
- Increased demand from staff for flexible working arrangements**
- Increased demand from staff for part-time working**
- Other** Please explain:

The Essex Family Information Service is a free, impartial, county wide service providing parents and carers with details of local childcare and other related services. Have you heard of the Essex Family Information Service (FIS)?

- Yes No

Does your business/organisation ever give out information about the Essex Family Information Service (FIS)?

- Yes No

Please use this section to add any further comments you wish in relation to childcare issues which affect your business/organisation and your employees:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you wish to receive further information about ways to help your employees with childcare needs and to find out more about the outcomes of this survey please email us at eycomms@essex.gov.uk

