

Newcastle Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2008

**A report by Erskine Corporation LLP for Newcastle City Council
February 2008**

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1 How to use this report

Over 1400 parents, children and employers were consulted in order to write this report, along with 411641 childcare providers in the city. This means that a huge amount of information has been collected. This report is designed to be as easy to read as possible, and because we know that some people will want to know more detail than others, we have designed this report to be read at different levels.

The executive summary provides a short overview of the key findings, and is largely based on the statistical analysis used to identify the gap between supply and demand. This should be enough to provide an overview of the key findings of the assessment.

For a more in-depth review of the results, see the main body of the CSA report. This brings together the different elements of the research in three main chapters about supply, demand and the gap between the two.

If you want to read in more detail the findings from each separate element of the research, then the individual reports on each element (for example the parents survey or the

employers survey) can be found in the appendices to the main report.

Should you require any of the primary data (for example to contribute to another study); this is available on request from the Council.

1.1 Terminology

Wherever possible we have avoided the use of acronyms and used a plain English approach to our reporting, and we hope that you find it easy to read and understand.

The way that we have described types of childcare in the reporting links directly to the types of childcare that were specified in the initial research. Because the supply research was already underway when we started the project (as an independent audit undertaken by the Council), the categories in the supply report differ from the categories in the demand report, for example the supply report used the term 'day nursery' and the demand report used the terms 'council nursery classes' 'private day nursery' and 'pre-school/playgroups'.



2 Executive summary

The new duties in the 2006 Childcare Act (Section 11) require local authorities to shape and support the development of childcare provision in their local area in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community.

From April 2008, local authorities will have a legal duty to secure sufficient childcare (Section 6 of the 2006 Act) for the parents in their area to enable them to return to work or training.

In preparation for this duty, local authorities were required to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment from April 2007.

The aim of the assessment is to measure whether childcare provision in the city is sufficient (that the supply meets the demand), and to anticipate future demand so that the council can produce a plan for future provision.

A comprehensive research programme was carried out in Newcastle from December 2007 to February 2008. This included:

A full audit of childcare suppliers

A survey of 1167 parents

4 workshops with 39 'hard to reach' parents, including parents of children with disabilities, young parents, parents in community nurseries and substance misusing parents.

4 workshops with 46 children and young people

Interviews with 16 childcare professionals

Employers survey with 51 employers.

The results of the research were combined to produce an Index of Childcare Deprivation which gives indicators for each locality to show the profile of the gap between supply and demand in each locality, and to rank the localities and children's centre areas in terms of childcare deprivation.

The summary of the ICD can be found below.

2.1 Profile of localities

Below are the key characteristics of each locality as shown by the outstanding results of the ICD.



2.1.1 West Riverside (average score: 23.92, most deprived area)

Penetration rates (number of places for population of children) are relatively low

Unemployment rates in parents are the highest

The number of lone parents is the highest of all localities

Satisfaction with childcare is high

Proportion of household income spent on childcare is high and is the highest of all wards in Lemington

Current occupancy levels vary across the locality with Lemington having a low occupancy and therefore a high number of available places and Westgate having a high occupancy and therefore a very low number of available places.

2.1.2 North Central (average score: 21.52, 2nd most deprived area)

Penetration rates (number of places for population of children) are low

Unemployment rates in parents are high

The percentage of lone parents is relatively high

Satisfaction with childcare is high

The proportion of household income spent on childcare is quite average

Current occupancy levels are average.

2.1.3 East (average score: 17.32, 3rd most deprived area)

Satisfaction with current childcare provision is high

Occupancy rates are quite average, although they are particularly low in Ouseburn and South Jesmond, meaning that there is a high number of available places in these wards

The number of lone parents in this locality is relatively high

Unemployment rates in parents are high

Penetration rates (number of places for population of children) are very high

The proportion of household income spent on childcare is high, apart from in South Jesmond, North Jesmond, South Heaton and Walkergate



where proportion of household income spent on childcare was relatively low.

2.1.4 Outer West & North (average score: 13.11, least deprived area)

Penetration rates (number of places for population of children) are the highest of all wards

The number of parents who are unemployed is the lowest of all localities

Similarly, the number of lone parents is the lowest of all localities

Satisfaction levels with current provision are among the highest, with the exception of West Gosforth where satisfaction is the lowest out of all localities

Occupancy rates are quite average, with the exception of Woolsington where they are quite high, i.e. there are a low number of places available.

The ICD and other analysis highlights the following gaps in Newcastle's childcare provision:

Geographical gaps: Based on responses to the audit, it appears that North Central locality

has the lowest number of places in relation to the number of children; however the biggest gap between supply and demand of provision seems to be in the West Riverside locality.

The West Riverside locality has the lowest number of providers in Newcastle, with 89 providers (14 per cent of Newcastle's providers). This low number of providers gives rise to a low number of registered places, 858 places, which is the 2nd lowest number of registrations (North Central having the least with 734 places). A low number of places usually gives rise to a high occupancy rate, whilst the rate in this case is quite high (72 per cent) it is still not the highest, which is Outer West & North with 82 per cent.

From the parents survey we see that of the 55 per cent of all children surveyed in the West Riverside locality, are currently not using childcare but their parents would like them to. This proportion is the highest of all four localities. Whilst places in the West Riverside are not completely occupied, this 55 per cent represents 91 places, and the 28% of places that are currently vacant is equivalent to 241 places. So if these 91 places from the sample suddenly started using childcare there would be only 150 places left.



The East locality has the largest number of registrations, with 1,624 places, and also has the second highest amount of providers with 192 providers. Occupancy in this locality is among the highest of all localities, at 80 per cent, but this still leaves 331 places vacant, the highest of all localities. Due to the large take up of places in this locality the demand by those children who aren't using but would like to is significantly lower, only 40 per cent (opposed to 55 per cent above). This suggests that the demand for additional childcare places is not as significant as it is in the West Riverside locality.

Income gaps: West Riverside and parts of East localities are the areas where the average cost of childcare has the highest impact on average salary (and therefore is the least affordable).

Specific need gaps: Parents of disabled children reported a lack of capacity within mainstream childcare providers to meet the needs of disabled and special needs children.

Time gaps: The most significant gap in opening hours is for childcare after 6pm. 16.5 per cent of parents currently using childcare and 11.7 per cent of parents who are not using

childcare but would like to said that they want to use childcare after 6pm.

Age gaps: Parents of disabled children raised the issue of a lack of childcare with disabled and special needs provision for children aged 14 to 18.

Type gaps: After school clubs and council run nursery classes were types of provision that parents would most like to see open over the next 3 years.



3 Introducing the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Newcastle City Council with support from Erskine Corporation LLP through an in-depth research and consultation process has produced this Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for the City of Newcastle.

The aim of the assessment is to measure whether childcare provision in the city is sufficient (that the supply meets the demand), to enable parents to return to work or training and to anticipate future demand so that the Council can produce a plan for future provision, particularly with reference to three and four year old funded places.

The assessment report sets out the results of a research programme undertaken from December 2007 to February 2008. The development of this report means that for the first time the Council have undertaken a thorough review of all childcare provision (whether Local Authority, private or voluntary sector) with the view to planning provision that truly meets the needs of families within Newcastle.

3.1 National context

The new duties in the 2006 Childcare Act (Section 11) require local authorities to shape and support the development of childcare provision in their local area in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community.

From April 2008, local authorities will have a legal duty to secure sufficient childcare (Section 6 of the 2006 Act) for the parents in their area.

In preparation for this duty, local authorities were required to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment from April 2007.

3.2 What is childcare?

Childcare is when someone other than a parent / carer supervises and takes responsibility for a child over a period of time, including feeding, clothing, and other aspects of daily care.

For the purpose of the assessment the Council is primarily concerned with formal 'registered' childcare provision, though not exclusively. Registered childcare is that which is inspected by Ofsted. This includes all nurseries,



childminders, pre-school, afterschool and breakfast clubs, and holiday clubs.

However, from national research as well as our own research in Newcastle we know that most families rely on informal childcare through extended family (particularly grandparents) and friends for some or all of their childcare, and therefore this information was included in the assessment in order to give us a full picture of childcare needs.

Sufficient childcare is defined by the government as “sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the local authority area who require childcare, in order to enable them to:

- a) Take up, or remain in work, or
- b) Undertake training that could reasonably be expected to assist them in obtaining work”

Whilst the definition of sufficient childcare focuses on the role of childcare in enabling parents to take up work or training, it is important to recognise that childcare has a broader role in the support of families and the development of children.

It is widely recognised that childcare (and for under 5’s Early Years Education) has a positive impact on children’s development.

“Early years education benefits children’s learning, improves their confidence and peer relationships, and can help break cycles of poverty...There are positive behavioural outcomes of independence, sociability and concentration”¹

Childcare also fulfils a role of respite care for families within which a parent/carer or child is disabled or has special needs.

4 How did we do the assessment?

In order to find out what childcare is available, and what parents need, a comprehensive research programme was undertaken.

Information about what childcare is available (supply) was gathered through existing

¹ Childcare Nation? Progress on the childcare strategy and priorities for the future, Daycare Trust / National Centre for Social Research 2007



databases and the Newcastle City Council Childcare Audit.

Information about what childcare is needed (demand) was gathered through a series of research activities including:

Parents' survey: 1167 parents answered a questionnaire during a door-to-door survey.

Parents' workshops: 'hard to reach' families and those with particular childcare needs were targeted through 4 workshops and interview groups (39 parents took part).

Children's workshops: 46 children aged 2 to 14 years old took part in 4 workshops at a nursery, after school clubs and a youth club.

Stakeholder interviews: 16 stakeholders who work as childcare providers or have a strategic role in relation to childcare were interviewed about their professional experiences of childcare.

Employers' survey: 51 employers were interviewed about how they support working parents.

Because a whole range of people were involved in the research, including childcare providers, parents / carers, children and employers, the

assessment gives a rounded picture of the state of childcare and future requirements.

5 The local context

The unitary authority of Newcastle upon Tyne is located on the north bank of the River Tyne in the North East of England in Tyne and Wear.

A great part of the authority is the regional capital of Newcastle, but it also contains the following wards: Benwell and Scotswood, Blakelaw, Byker, Castle Dene, Denton, Elswick, Fawdon, Fenham, Gosforth, Heaton, Jesmond, Kenton, Lemington, Newburn, Ouseburn, Parklands, Walker, Walkergate, Westerhope, Westgate, Wingrove and Woolsington.

The estimated total population of the unitary authority area in June 2004 was approximately 267,100; of these 43,800 are aged 0 to 14 which equates to 16 per cent of the total population. The breakdown of ages are as follows: 2,900 under the age of 1, 11,000 aged 1 to 4, 14,300 aged 5 to 9 and 15,600 aged 10 to 14. It is estimated that the area will experience a decline in the overall number of children aged 14 and under.

Approximately 7 per cent of the total population are part of a minority ethnic group and the ratio of young people from this group



is even higher. There are a high number of children with disabilities; the figure for the northern region is 3.9 per cent in comparison to 3.1 per cent nationally. It is estimated that the number of children and young people of asylum seeking families in Newcastle is 1,120 with over 50 different languages being spoken and over 1200 children under the age of 16 who have parents with substance misuse problems.

5.1 The Indices of Multiple Deprivation

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation combine a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues into a single deprivation score for each area in England. The Indices are used widely to analyse patterns of deprivation. Newcastle does experience significant deprivation and in the IMD 2007 was ranked 37 out of 354 placing it in the top 15 per cent in England. It is ranked 26 out of 354 on the rank of income scale and 18 out of 354 on the rank of employment scale, outlining the deprivation existing in these important areas. There is a diverse mix of affluent areas to the north and west which present problems of their own with parent's income already stretched by large mortgages. There are areas of significant deprivation in the outer east including Byker,

South Heaton, Walker and Walkergate and the inner west including Benwell and Scotswood, Elswick and Westgate.

5.2 Economy and employment

Historically, Newcastle was at the forefront of industrial innovation with at one time a quarter of the world's shipbuilding centred here, a large coal mining industry and large manufacturing sector. These industries now make up less than 10 per cent of all economic activity in the city and with the decline in traditional industries, other industries have grown and the local economy has diversified.

There is now a focus on transport, commerce, services, knowledge and culture and Newcastle has been designated as a Science City. There has been large-scale regeneration with the Quayside providing a focus for a range of hotels, bars and restaurants. Gateshead Millennium Bridge links the City to Gateshead Quays and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

Unemployment is a concern with 7.6 per cent of the working-age population unemployed in 2004, which is higher than the average of 4.9 per cent in England and Wales.



5.3 Policy Context

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is in context with major national, regional and local policies and partnerships for children and young people within and across Newcastle.

The Children Act 2004 and Every Child Matters: Change for Children

The Five-Year Strategy for Children and Learners

The Education Act 2005

10-Year Child Care Strategy

Our Health, Our Care, Our Say

Choosing Health

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services

National Skills Strategy

Respect Action Plan

Youth Matters – The Next Steps (March 2006)

The Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People April 2006 – April 2009

A Play Strategy for Newcastle upon Tyne 2007 - 2012

UN Convention on the Rights of a Child

6 Supply of childcare

The data on the supply of childcare in Newcastle is from an audit that was undertaken in order to register childcare with the Children's Information Service at Newcastle City Council in January 2008, and questionnaires were followed up with several phone calls to ensure that all childcare providers took part. Providers who did not take part in this audit are taken as being un-registered at the time of the audit.

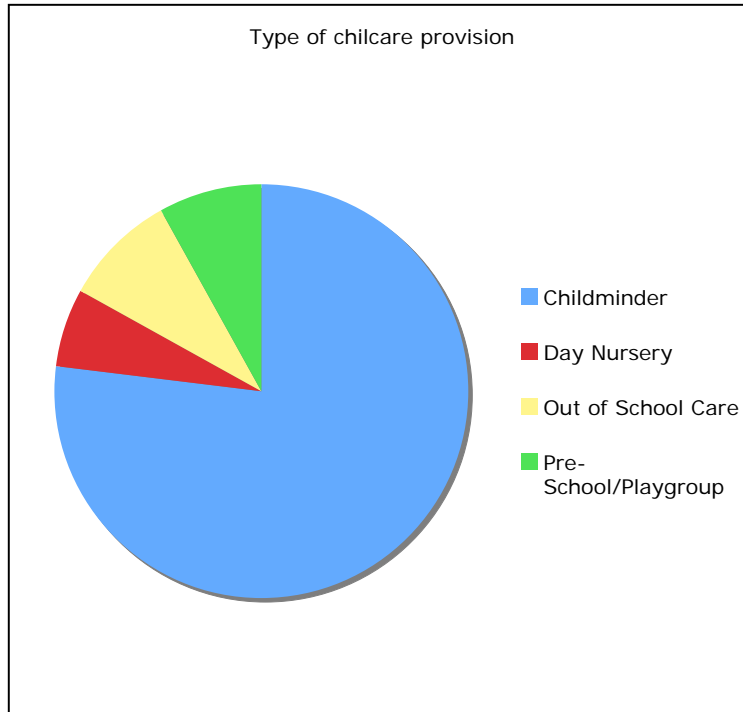
This chapter contains a summary of the key findings about supply of childcare across Newcastle. For full details of the analysis at Ward level please see the Report on the supply of childcare in Appendix x

6.1 Type of provision

Of the 641 Newcastle childcare providers included in the audit, the majority were childminders, making up 77 per cent of all provision. Out of School Clubs made up 9 per



cent of childcare provision. Pre-schools/playgroups accounted for 8 per cent of childcare provision each and Day Nurseries accounted for 6 per cent.



6.2 Number of places

It is important to note that 360 out of the 641 suppliers in the city responded to the audit and the findings, assumptions made, and conclusions of this report are based on the information returned by these providers

only. Only 360 suppliers out of the 641 suppliers gave details on how many places they had. These 360 providers had 4,904 registered childcare places in Newcastle. 60 per cent of the registered childcare places were for children aged between 1 and 4, 21 per cent were for children aged under 1 and 21 per cent were for children aged 5 and over.

The ward that had the most registered places was South Jesmond, with 327 places, the majority of which were for children aged 1 to 4.

North Jesmond had the least number of registered places, with 52 places, followed closely by Byker with 70 places. Again, the majority of these places were for children aged between 1 and 4 years old.

6.3 Provision by age of child

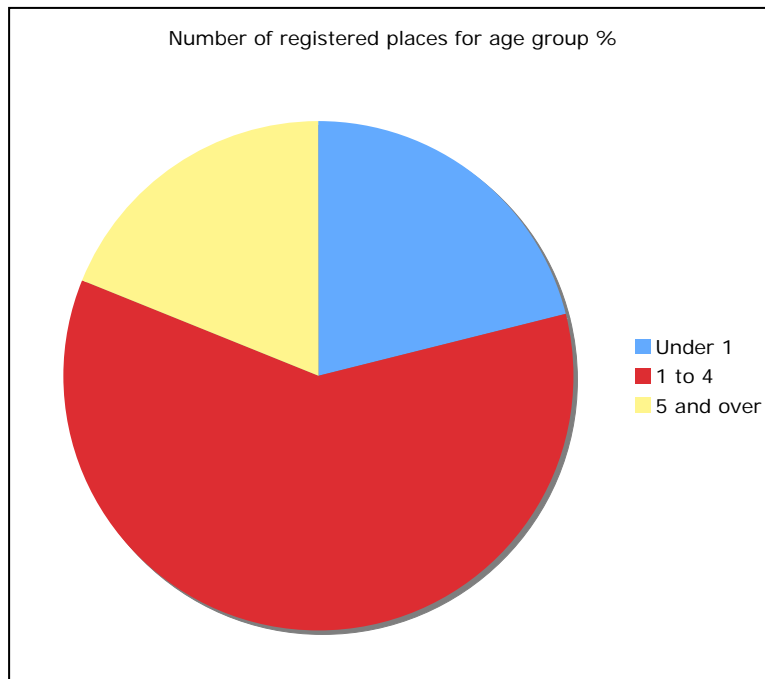
For children aged under 1, the ward with the most registered places was West Gosforth, with 157 registered places. North Jesmond had the least provision for children under 1, with just 2 registered places.

For children aged 1 to 4, the ward of Dene had the most registered places with 183 places. The ward with the least number of registered



places for this age range was North Jesmond with 45 places.

For children aged 5 and over, the wards with the most registered places were South Jesmond and Westgate with 145 and 111 places respectively. The wards of Elswick, North Jesmond and Walker each had 5 places or less for children aged 5 and over.



6.4 Vacant places

Of all the registered childcare places in Newcastle that were recorded by the audit of suppliers, 1,005 (20 per cent) were vacant, which means that the average occupancy rate was 80 per cent.

Whilst this average occupancy rate is high, it is important to understand the nature of the vacancies. The information collected in this respect was limited and whilst we know where the vacancies were and what aged children they were for, we do not know why these vacancies existed. It is our recommendation that in future audits more information is collected about the reasons for vacant places.

Of the 20 per cent vacant places across the city, 57 per cent were for children aged between 1 and 4, 33 per cent were for those under the age of 1, and the remaining 10 per cent were for children aged 5 or over.

The ward that had the highest percentage of vacant childcare places was Lemington, where 52 per cent of the registered places in the area were vacant. This was closely followed by Woolston where 42 per cent of places were vacant.



The ward with the lowest percentage of vacancies was Westgate (4 per cent) followed very closely by Newburn and South Jesmond (both 6 per cent).

Childminders are the type of childcare with the largest number of vacancies currently available, with 469 vacant places. The majority of these vacancies (42 per cent) are for those children under the age of 1, a substantial amount of these vacant places are for children aged between 1 and 4 (37 per cent).

Day Nurseries currently have the highest number of places available for 1 to 4 year olds, with 203 places.

Overall there are currently more vacant places in Newcastle for children aged between 1 and 4 (564 places) than for other age groups.

There are few vacancies available for those children who are aged 5 or over, and the majority of these vacancies are only available through childminders.

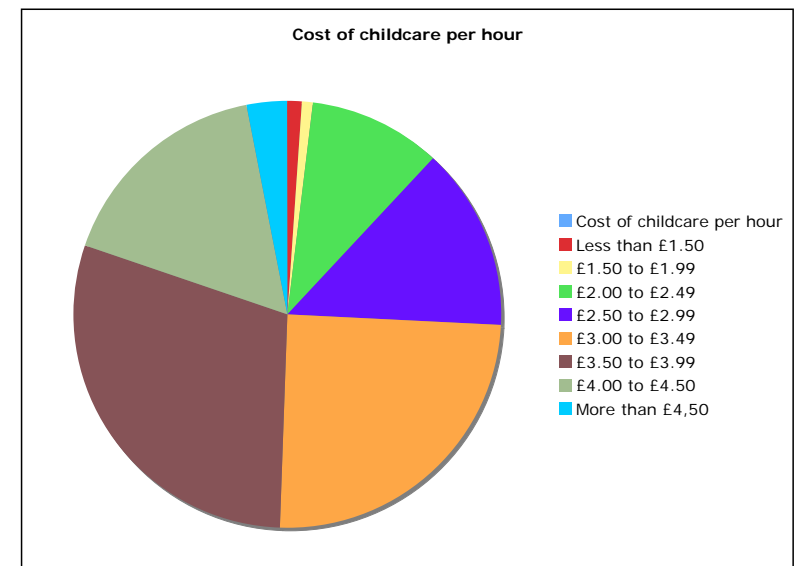
6.5 Times available

Most of the provision was available between 8am and 6pm; very few providers were open before 7am (1 per cent) or after 6pm (9 per cent).

Only 21 places were available in Newcastle before 7am, and there were 191 places offering provision after 6pm.

6.6 Cost of childcare

The hourly cost of childcare was mostly spread between £3.00 and £4.50 per hour. Very few providers charged more than £4.50 per hour (3 per cent).



Childminders were the type of childcare with the highest hourly rate, with almost 60 per cent costing more than £4 per hour. However,



we know that in practice childminders may be the most cost effective childcare in some cases as sessional childcare often requires parents to pay for a full morning or afternoon session. When childcare is required for short periods of time, or across morning and afternoon sessions (for example at lunch time), it can be cheaper to pay a higher hourly rate for fewer hours than to pay for a full day of sessional care.

Pre-school/playgroups had the lowest hourly rate, with the majority costing £2.50 or less per hour.

Just under half of out of school clubs (46 per cent) charged between £3.00 and £3.49 per hour.

Having looked at the statistics about the supply of childcare in Newcastle, we can now go on to look at the demand for childcare.

7 Demand for childcare

This chapter draws together the findings of the parents survey, the parents and children's workshops, the stakeholder interviews, and the employers survey to create a profile of the demand for childcare across the city. We start by looking at the general facts and figures concerning all parents, and go on to look at

issues raised around specific elements of the research.

7.1 Parents who use childcare

In total 1167 parents took part in the parents' survey, 60 per cent of whom used childcare and 40 per cent that did not.

Of the parents that did not use childcare (including expectant parents), 86 per cent wanted to use childcare, while 14 per cent did not want to.

The parents that were the most likely to have all or some of their children in childcare were aged between 41 and 45, in employment over 16 hours per week and earning over £50,000 per year and those living in Fenham.

Those who identified themselves as being from a white or mixed race ethnic origin were more likely to use childcare.

There was an even spread between marital status and disability and the use of childcare.

The most commonly reported reason for the parents using childcare was because they were in full-time or part time employment (44 per cent).



The most reported reasons for choosing their particular type of childcare were quality of staff, cost and the type of childcare.

Parents who took part in focus groups said that the reasons why families need to use childcare vary enormously and are not simply limited to enabling parents to work or access training. Childcare plays an important role in supporting children's development, particularly for children with special needs. Childcare also provides support for parents and important time to themselves or to spend with other children.

In the parents survey we asked parents to rate how satisfied they are with the childcare provision that they currently use. Overall, most parents that took part in the survey said that they were satisfied with their childcare. The parents were most likely to report they were very satisfied with informal childcare. We did ask parents who said that they were unsatisfied to state the reasons why, however the response rate to this question was so low that we are unable to draw any conclusions from the results. In future studies it may be worthwhile asking parents who are not satisfied with their childcare to take part in a focus group to discuss this further.

7.2 Parents that do not use childcare

Perhaps the most interesting group to look at in terms of demand for childcare are those who are not currently using childcare but do want to.

29 per cent of all parents surveyed said that they do not currently use childcare but they would like to.

The main reasons given for not currently using childcare were that the parents would rather rely on friends and family (37 per cent) and cost (35 per cent).

This group of parents reported that quality of childcare would be the most important factor in choosing childcare (85 per cent), however cost and type of childcare were also found to be influential factors.

The most common type of childcare required by these parents were after school clubs, followed by council nursery classes. After school clubs were most requested in Walkergate. Council nursery classes were most requested in Dene.

Over two-thirds of parents that did not use childcare said that they were unwilling to pay more than £3.00 per hour (69 per cent). The



average price that parents were willing to pay for childcare was £1.71 per hour.

We asked the parents who did not use childcare and did not want to the reasons for their decision. The main reasons given were:

Reason given	Percentage of sample (70 parents)
No need not working	31 per cent
Job is flexible enough	20 per cent
Don't like to leave them	13 per cent
Child is old enough to leave	11 per cent
I am a childminder	9 per cent
Children at school	7 per cent
Can't afford it	4 per cent
Can leave children with family	3 per cent
Child is disabled	1 per cent

7.3 Types of childcare used

For the parents in the parents survey who do currently use childcare, family and carers were reported to be the most popular source of childcare (41 per cent), followed by council nursery classes (16 per cent) and pre-schools/playgroups (13 per cent).

7.4 Affordability

The average cost per hour for childcare in Newcastle is £3.28 per hour, and from the parents survey we see that the average consumption is approximately 12 hours, which leads to an average cost per week per child of £40.60, which is equivalent to 12 per cent of the weekly household income for this area (£350/wk).

The average cost of childcare per hour was highest in West Riverside (£3.31/hr), and when combined with the average use in this area from the parents' survey of 13 hours, we find an average cost per week per child of £43.53. This is roughly 16 per cent of this locality's average weekly wage of £275, which is the highest rate of all four localities.

Whilst West Riverside spends the highest proportion of it's weekly income on childcare, it is the East locality that spends the most



overall. The average consumption in this area is 15 hours per week (the highest of all localities) and when this is combined with an average cost of £3.25 an hour, this gives an average cost per week per child of £49.15, which is 13 per cent of the weekly household income for this area (£388/wk).

The Outer West & North and North Central localities both spend roughly 10 per cent of their weekly household income on childcare for each child, although North Central spends the least in actual monetary terms, £32.31 per week per child, as opposed to £37.37 in Outer West & North localities.

The children's centre area that the parents spent the most per hour for childcare was North Jesmond (average of £4.75 per hour).

The majority of parents who used childcare reported that they found it very easy to pay for their childcare (58.8 per cent), although this may be affected by a high rate of people who use free childcare through free education places for 3 and 4 year olds, and those that use family and friends for childcare. Only 6.7 per cent found it difficult or very difficult. Higher earners were the most likely to find it easy to pay for their childcare, although there

was little difference in ability to pay between the different income brackets.

The stakeholders views on affordability indicated that whilst professionals thought that the perception in Newcastle is that there is a high level of free childcare compared to other areas of the country, the recent reduction of free childcare places is causing problems. There were also issues raised about parents accessing information on funding for childcare.

7.5 Tax credits and financial support for childcare

The parent's survey showed that 65 per cent of parents currently using childcare do use tax credits.

The locality with the highest take up of tax credits was West Riverside, with 81 per cent of parents using tax credits. The locality with the lowest take up on tax credits was East locality at 59 per cent.

57 per cent of parents who don't use tax credits said that it was because their earnings were too high. 8 per cent said that they were unaware of tax credits and 2 per cent said that tax credits are too complex. A significant proportion of parents said that there were other reasons why they don't use tax credits,



and these reasons should be investigated further in future studies.

32 per cent of parents who do not use tax credits earn under £20,000 per annum and therefore should be using tax credits for childcare. This percentage is highest in West Riverside. Again, further investigation is required to understand why more families who are eligible for tax credits aren't using them.

7.6 The extended offer for 3 and 4 year olds

According to government legislation all children aged 3 and 4 years old are entitled to a free early education place for 12.5 hours per week, for 38 weeks of the year. The government is proposing that this entitlement is increased to 15 hours per week and part of the parents' survey asked parents how they would like to see this extended offer of free early education places implemented.

Currently 67 per cent of parents with children of an eligible age use their free early education place. The current offer in Newcastle is for 5 mornings or 5 afternoons per week.

We asked parents how useful the current offer is. Only 6 per cent of parents said that it was not useful, and 72 per cent said that it was useful or very useful.

When asked about the extended offer and whether a different offer might be more useful, 68 per cent of parents said that they would prefer to keep the offer as it is.

8 per cent of parents said that slightly longer sessions over 4 days per week would be preferable, and 5 per cent said that they would prefer full days for half of the week.

These results show that most parents are happy with the current offer of 5 mornings or 5 afternoons a week.

7.7 Opening hours

Just over a third of parents used childcare for 5 hours or less per week.

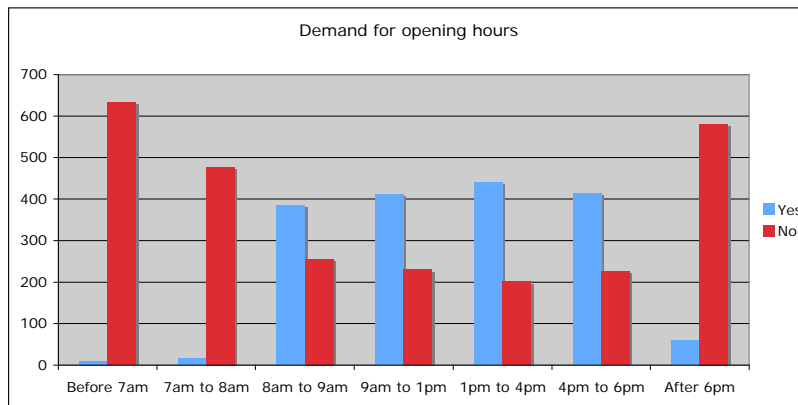
Between 1pm and 4pm (49 per cent of parents) was the most popular time to use childcare, closely followed by the hours of 9am to 1pm (48 per cent).

Only 1 per cent of parents used childcare before 7am, with 16 per cent using childcare after 6pm.

Almost all parents expressed an interest in using childcare during different periods of the day, although these closely mirrored the core hours being used, and once again the most



popular hours were between 1pm and 4pm. The number of parents who reported a requirement for childcare before 7am was again 1 per cent, although 17 per cent would like to use childcare after 6pm.



Of the parents who do not use childcare but do want to, fewer wanted to use childcare outside the hours of 7am to 6pm than those with children currently in childcare. 1 per cent would like to use childcare before 7am, and 12 per cent would like to use childcare after 6pm.

This is a surprising contrast with the information given by employers that the majority of the employers (73 per cent) reported that their employees worked unsocial hours with weekends being the most popular time.

7.8 Travelling to childcare

There was a strong tendency for parents to use childcare providers in their local area. The majority of parents (67 per cent) travelled less than a mile for childcare and in the majority of the wards the maximum distance travelled was less than 2 miles. Only 1 per cent of parents travelled over 5 miles to find childcare.

The average distance that parents travel to childcare was reported as 1.9 miles. This is very close to the average desired distance that parents would like to travel which was on average 1.8 miles.

For the parents that do not use childcare but want to, the average distance the parents were prepared to travel for childcare was slightly less, at 1.4 miles.

7.9 Information

The majority of the parents in the survey reported that they found it easy to access information about their type of childcare (77 per cent). Family and friends were the most common sources used to receive childcare information.

However, in the workshops with young parents, parents involved in substance misuse and parents of disabled children, a lack of



available information was raised. In some cases parents did not have an understanding about different types of childcare, whereas in others people knew what should be available but didn't know how to find it or where to go for help. Parents suggested that childcare information should be included in the statutory information that parents are given about schools etc. Education of parents is needed so that they understand what different types of childcare can do for them and their children.

Positive comments were made by parents that had had good experiences of using the Children's Information Service (CIS). However some groups said that they would like to be visited by the CIS to explain more about childcare.

7.10 Financial support

Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of the parents received at least one type of financial support for their childcare. The most common types of support received for childcare were Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit. The parents that were the most likely to receive at least one type of financial support were those living in Dene or Elswick and earning between £10,000 and £20,000. There was an even spread across ethnic groups.

The parents that we spoke to in the workshops talked about how complicated it is to access financial support for childcare. There was some confusion about what parents were entitled to, and some parents thought that they were paying for things that they shouldn't be paying for. Information and advice about childcare should include advice about benefit support and help to fill forms in.

7.11 Demand for new childcare

Only 18 per cent of the parents that used childcare reported that they wanted some new childcare in their local area in the next 3 years. Of the parents who did want new local childcare provision, after-school clubs and council nursery classes were the most commonly requested.

Of the parents that did not use childcare but wanted to 49 per cent reported that they wanted new childcare in their local area in the next 3 years.

As with parents who do use childcare, the type of provision most requested by these parents was council nursery classes (46 per cent), followed by after-school clubs (42 per cent).

The professional perspective on the demand for new childcare (from the stakeholder



interviews) was that currently childcare is fragmented across the region; the more affluent areas have a better choice. Parents need more provision for shift-work, weekends and holidays and more places are required for children from ethnic communities and those with disabilities.

7.12 Childcare provision infrastructure

The professionals that we interviewed as part of the research highlighted issues around the provision of childcare that impact on the ability of the city to meet the demand for childcare, and some of these issues were also raised by parents involved in the parents workshops. It is important to note that both of these sections of the research involved a small (but carefully selected) sample of relevant participants, and therefore the views expressed may not reflect the majority view. However, these comments raise issues that require further investigation in future work.

There is a history within Newcastle of family looking after children while parents are at work, and for some families there is a suspicion of childcare due to its historic association with Social Services and enforced care. Despite formal links between childcare and Social Services ending several years ago,

this link was a recurrent theme amongst our research with parents and with professionals in the sector.

Some private childcare providers said that because they are not publicly funded there are issues around sustainability and it can be difficult for childcare professionals in this sector to access local authority support. Business support is required to help private providers to make the most of marketing, sustainability and expansion possibilities. Where this support exists, better marketing of the support is needed to make sure that providers know how to access it.

Several stakeholders said that childcare is not valued as a career, and the poor levels of pay and training have led to a shortage of well trained, experienced staff.

More communication is required between childcare providers and others who work with children. Schools need to work more closely with private childcare providers to ensure that their services are complementary rather than competitive.

Better co-ordination of services was also raised by the parents, who took part in the parents' workshops, particularly by parents of disabled



children. One point was about the sharing of information between providers, and the need for providers to work together to help parents find the best solution for them, rather than being in competition with each other.

Also, wraparound care was said to need improvement; co-ordination between childcare providers and schools, and the transport in between needs to work effectively to enable parents to use after-school care.

Young parents and those who had been involved in substance misuse said that where families are involved with other services (such as social services), it would be better if families could have one person to deal with that they could build up a relationship with, and who could help them to access childcare.

7.13 What children want from childcare

Being able to choose how they spend their time at childcare is a priority for children of all ages. Having a range of activities available and enabling children to take part in their favourite activity is important, particularly in settings where children do not necessarily choose to be there.

Being able to play with friends but not being too crowded or bullied was highlighted by

many of the children that we spoke to. The social element of childcare is important to children; they like being able to play with friends and siblings at childcare, but this has to be in balance with the capacity of the setting so that children don't feel they are too crowded.

The children that we spoke to liked to play outside and saw it as something that benefits their health as well. A few children said that they don't like playing outside, and don't like being made to go outside, so again choice is important.

Children said that they like to be active at childcare; they like to have plenty of activities to do. Popular activities include arts and crafts, computer games, games and playing outside. The older children that we spoke to particularly like to have activities available to them; they like to go to clubs because being at home is boring, and the thing that makes clubs attractive is the opportunity to do lots of activities.

Food and snack time were popular. Many children said that snack time was one of their favourite things about going to childcare.



7.14 Older children and childcare

We spoke to 20 children aged 9 to 13 about their own experiences of childcare and about the issues around growing older and not needing childcare any more.

Some of the young people had attended childcare in the past, but had stopped either because they were allowed to be at home on their own as they got older, or because they had to leave childcare because of age restrictions.

Whilst nearly all of the young people thought they were too old to be at childcare, many still went to family and friends for care (particularly grandparents), and those that were at home or out independently had safety mechanisms that meant that they could be supervised to some extent (for example they used neighbours as a contact if anything went wrong, or they had mobile phones so that they could call their parents in an emergency).

The young people thought that they should be able to stay on their own after school around the ages of 9 to 11 years old but that they like having somewhere to go where they can meet people, take part in activities and have fun.

7.15 Parents with particular needs

We know that some parents face particular challenges in accessing childcare and this reflects the demographics of the area which show, for example, a higher than average number of disabled children and a high number of children whose parents are or have been involved in substance misuse.

We undertook four focus groups with parents of disabled children (8 families), parents involved in substance misuse (7 parents and 5 workers), young parents (4 parents) and parents who use the community nurseries (20 parents). They were all asked about their experiences of using childcare, the barriers that prevent them from using the childcare that they want to use, and what improvements are needed in Newcastle.

Again, it is important to note that both of this section of the research involved a small (but carefully selected) sample of relevant participants, and therefore the views expressed may not reflect the majority view. However, these comments raise issues that require further investigation in future work. It is also important to note that due to the scope of this study the list of groups that we were able to speak to was not exhaustive, and that future



work is needed to include other groups in childcare research, for example some of the migrant communities in Newcastle, and traveller families.

Because of the history of the community nurseries in Newcastle, and the high instance of use of community nurseries amongst the parents that we spoke to in these focus groups, there appeared to be a strong association between childcare and social services. For many of the parents that we spoke to this connection made it difficult for them to trust childcare providers, and some of the more vulnerable parents said that they were intimidated by or afraid of childcare because of its historic link to social services.

The positive aspect of this association is that it does make parents more aware of the social benefits of childcare, however parents lack of trust and confidence can stop them from accessing childcare when they need it. For families who have for generations only had experience of childcare through community nurseries, this association of childcare with social services extends beyond the nurseries themselves to a lack of trust in most professionals that work with their children.

A theme that occurred across most of the groups (apart from the interviews with parents of disabled children) was the reference of parents to their own experiences as children, or for older parents to their experiences of childcare a number of years ago. This has a strong influence on their expectations or fears for their own children now. Whilst some parents say that they know that things have changed, there was a significant amount of discussion about expectations of childcare that looked back to 10, 20 or 30 years ago. This is an indication of the time needed to make significant cultural changes in childcare, and the legacy of parents own experiences that get repeated through generations.

7.16 Young parents

Several of the issues already covered were raised by young parents, for example access to information about childcare, financial support for childcare and the association of childcare with social services.

The key finding from the young parents group was that young parents do not feel empowered to choose or access childcare. Lack of knowledge about childcare means that they do not know what is available or how to choose good quality, appropriate childcare. A



complicated benefit system means that they find it difficult to pay for and access childcare. Feeling intimidated by childcare professionals means that they are unlikely to approach new childcare settings. These are all barriers that prevent these parents from using childcare.

7.17 Parents of disabled children

It is very difficult for parents of disabled and special needs children to access childcare unless they are lucky enough to be able to access one of the few specialist places currently available. More capacity to deal with disabilities and special needs has to be developed within mainstream childcare provision. Better co-ordination of services is needed between different providers, particularly in relation to providing wraparound care, and providing comprehensive childcare information.

A major issue is that disabled and special needs children need childcare at an older age than other children would. Parents with teenage children were having problems finding appropriate care for their children, especially when the child's peers were independent and no longer needing care.

Whilst most parents were accessing some form of financial support for childcare, such as direct

payments, there were mixed experiences of how easy this was to use. The benefits system is very complicated, and direct payments can be difficult to administer, as parents have to become employers of their carers and deal with PAYE, pay slips and tax calculations.

Where parents were using direct payments to employ carers, it was common for them to employ friends or family. This was partly because familiarity and trust are very important to them and they need to feel confident that the carer can appropriately meet their child's needs. It is also because it can be very difficult to find an appropriate carer. Parents had used various means to find carers for their children, but said that there is no central register for potential carers and that would be helpful.

7.18 Parents affected by substance misuse

This summary of the findings from our research with parents who have, or have had, problems with drugs or alcohol combines the results of our own workshop with 7 parents and 5 workers held at the 'What Women Want' group, as well as the Parenting Support Consultation produced by the Safe Newcastle Drug Support Unit, September 2007.



Families who are having or have had problems with drug or alcohol misuse need the support and respite that childcare can offer. However, they are likely to find it difficult to approach childcare providers because of the perception that childcare is linked to social services and because they find it difficult to trust professionals in relation to their children.

The main recurring theme was the strong association of childcare with social services, and the fear of professionals that might take their children away from them. These parents find it very difficult to trust professionals when it comes to dealing with their children.

Another issue that affected the parents' ability to trust professionals with their children was their own experiences as children. There seemed to be a strong link between substance misuse and domestic violence, and with experiences of child abuse.

Despite being very wary of professionals and links between childcare and social services, the parents did say that things are changing, and that some of them have had positive experiences of social services.

Parents need co-ordinated services (ideally just one person to deal with), so that they can build

up a relationship and trust with the people that are helping them.

A major need for help with childcare was said to be during school holidays.

Childcare can provide support for children, and the consultation showed that parents feel that their children need the opportunity to talk about their parents' drug and alcohol problems and its impact on them. Life can be very chaotic for these families, with things like the threat of eviction, power cuts due to non-payment of bills and visits from bailiffs disrupting life at home. Childcare can provide respite for the children from this chaotic environment and can provide an opportunity for the children to access support.

7.19 Families who use community nurseries

Community nurseries are valued highly by the parents that use them. More than in any other area of research, parents spoke of the high quality of care that their children receive and the relationships that the nurseries have with the whole family, offering family support when needed and regular updates on children's progress. They are also one of the most affordable childcare options available to parents.



There is clearly a high level of concern amongst parents about the future of the community nurseries, as recently they have been threatened with closure and the timing of this assessment means that many parents thought that this exercise (the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) was a means to justify closing down the nurseries.

This issue also raised concern about payment for the nursery and the number of days being paid for. Parents felt that they were paying for childcare on training days and in the holidays when childcare was not being provided. The tension between providing free and fee paying places were also discussed. While parents who receive free places recognised that it is necessary to have fee paying parents use the nurseries to support the nurseries financially, there is a fear that free places are being gradually reduced and that families that really need the support that the community nurseries give them will not be able to access them.

7.20 Employers support for childcare

Childcare support for employees was recognised by the majority of employers, with 82 per cent reporting they offered at least one type of childcare support. Flexible working policies were the most common type of

childcare support followed by leave for parents. Just over a third of the employers reported they offered childcare vouchers. These were mostly large and medium sized companies, very few small companies offered childcare vouchers. "Public Sector, Education and Health" employers were the most likely to offer childcare vouchers.

88 per cent of employers reported that they offered at least one flexible working policy, with part-time working being the most popular. Flexible working policies were most common in large companies (those with 101-1000+ employees) whereas smaller companies tended to have more rigid working hours.

Very few of the employers reported they felt the availability of childcare had impacted on attendance or working patterns (14 per cent). These employers reported that flexible working policies have increased attendance and unreliable childcare leading to parent's absence from work.

Even fewer employers felt that childcare had impacted on recruitment and retention of employees (8 per cent). Reasons for the employers thinking that the availability of childcare had impacted in recruitment or retention included employers who used their



childcare support as a benefit for potential employers. More affordable childcare was also seen to have increased recruitment and retention of employees.

The majority of employers interviewed (82 per cent) reported that they were aware of how to access childcare information with 21 per cent having a member of staff who dealt with childcare information. The internet and Newcastle Council were reported as the most popular sources of childcare information. "Public Sector, Education and Health" employers were the most likely to know how to access childcare information (92 per cent reported this). This was closely followed by "Distribution, Restaurants and Hotels" companies (83 per cent).

Other issues raised about childcare included the expense of childcare on young mothers, whether childcare vouchers were cost effective and the trend to use informal childcare by low-income parents.

The following chapter brings together statistics about the supply and demand for childcare to give a profile of each locality in terms of its childcare needs.



8 Finding the gap: the Index of Childcare Deprivation

In order to establish the gaps between supply of childcare and demand from parents, we have created the The Index of Childcare Deprivation (ICD). This combines the data from the parents survey and the supply database.

The ICD is a tool used to establish the deprivation in each Newcastle ward and is determined by scoring a number of individual components. These scores are used to determine how “deprived” each different component is, 4 being the worst and 1 being the best, and they are then combined to give an overall score for each ward.

This overall score is the ICD and is used to determine the childcare deprivation in each area; this also means that each ward can be ranked in order of most deprived to least deprived.

This can be used to help plan childcare provision because it clearly prioritises areas in order of need, with the most deprived areas being the most likely to need childcare development in the future. It also gives a profile of the particular issues in the locality

and the significant factors which influence childcare sufficiency.

The individual components used in the creation of the index were:

Accessibility

For this component, the results from the parents survey pertaining to distances travelled for childcare were analysed. Parents were asked what distance they currently travel to receive childcare and what their ideal distance of travel would be. The difference between parents current distance and ideal distance were analysed for each ward and then scored on a sliding scale of 1 to 4 (4 being the largest positive difference between current and ideal distance of travel).

Satisfaction

Parents were also asked how satisfied they were with their current childcare providers, these results were analysed and the percentage of people who were “very satisfied” were scored on a sliding scale of 1 to 4 for each ward, where 4 is the area who had the



least percentage of “very satisfied” people and 1 is the area with the highest percentage.

Affordability

The average annual salary per household is calculated using information from the parents’ survey. Using costs from supply data along with average hours of consumption from the parents’ survey, the average cost per child per year is determined. The percentage of the annual salary that this average cost takes up is then scored from 1 to 4 (with 4 being where the average cost of childcare makes the largest impact on salary).

Occupancy Rates

The current levels of occupancy in childcare providers across the Newcastle region are calculated as a percentage and then scored from 1 to 4 (4 being the lowest occupancy rate and 1 being the highest).

Deprivation

Using data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) led to the each of the 26 wards being scored on a sliding scale of 1 to 4 (1 being the least deprived and 4 being the most deprived).

Some components could not be calculated at ward level due to limitations in data. However, they could be calculated at locality level, so the scores for each locality are applied to the ward that they belong to. These components were:

Penetration Rates

Using information from the suppliers survey on the number of registrations available and looking at this as a percentage of the population of children in each locality, gives us the penetration rate of places in to the general child population. These penetration rates are then scored on a sliding scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is the highest penetration rate and 4 the lowest.

Lone Parents

The percentage of total parents who were either single or living alone were calculated using data from the 2001 census, these percentages were then scored on a sliding scale of 1 to 4 where the highest percentage of Lone Parents was given a 4 and the lowest a 1.

Working Parents

The percentage of parents who are currently in work was calculated, again using data from the



2001 census, and then scored on a sliding scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest percentage of parents in work and 4 being the worst percentage.

The scores from these individual components were then combined to give an overall score, or the ICD, and can be seen over the page in Table 1.



Table 1: ICD Results

Locality	Ward	Deprivation	Penetration Rates	Affordability	Satisfaction	Lone Parents	Accessibility	Occupancy	Working Parents	ICD Score	Rank
Outer West & North	Castle	1.51	1.00	2.61	1.17	1.00	2.31	2.90	1.00	13.49	23
	Denton	2.39	1.00	2.68	1.19	1.00	3.73	2.35	1.00	15.33	18
	East Gosforth	1.10	1.00	1.16	1.00	1.00	2.28	1.57	1.00	10.10	26
	Newburn	2.15	1.00	3.13	1.00	1.00	3.20	1.16	1.00	13.65	22
	Parklands	1.07	1.00	1.00	1.20	1.00	3.18	1.88	1.00	11.33	25
	West Gosforth	1.14	1.00	1.31	4.00	1.00	3.08	1.41	1.00	13.95	20
	Westerhope	1.37	1.00	2.91	1.44	1.00	3.07	1.48	1.00	13.27	24
	Woolsington	2.70	1.00	1.35	1.10	1.00	2.22	3.40	1.00	13.77	21
OUTER WEST & NORTH AVERAGE SCORE²										13.11	
West Riverside	Benwell & Scotswood	3.15	2.89	2.75	1.50	4.00	1.00	2.76	4.00	22.05	4
	Elswick	3.83	2.89	3.65	1.91	4.00	3.00	3.16	4.00	26.44	1
	Lemington	2.29	2.89	3.95	1.78	4.00	3.37	4.00	4.00	26.27	2
	Westgate	2.15	2.89	3.14	1.00	4.00	2.72	1.00	4.00	20.90	8
WEST RIVERSIDE AVERAGE SCORE										23.92	
North Central	Blakelaw	2.67	4.00	2.12	1.57	2.82	2.54	2.12	3.50	21.34	7
	Fawdon	2.61	4.00	1.83	1.00	2.82	4.00	1.82	3.50	21.58	6
	Fenham	2.25	4.00	2.05	1.40	2.82	2.49	2.22	3.50	20.74	9
	Kenton	2.67	4.00	2.04	1.35	2.82	3.56	1.74	3.50	21.69	5
	Wingrove	2.54	4.00	2.98	1.61	2.82	2.95	1.83	3.50	22.24	3

² An average for each locality has been calculated because a sum would be misrepresentative of the deprivation in each locality. A total of the individual scores would automatically mean that the locality with the most wards would be the most deprived, i.e. either Outer West & North or East, when in actual fact West Riverside is the most deprived because its individual wards are some of the most deprived areas.



		NORTH CENTRAL AVERAGE SCORE								21.52	
East	Byker	3.66	1.10	3.94	1.00	2.90	2.21	2.72	2.83	20.35	10
	Dene	1.07	1.10	3.36	1.10	2.90	2.12	2.05	2.83	16.52	16
	North Heaton	1.39	1.10	2.33	1.75	2.90	2.89	2.07	2.83	17.26	13
	North Jesmond	1.00	1.10	1.74	1.49	2.90	2.12	2.80	2.83	15.98	17
	Ouseburn	2.07	1.10	4.00	1.12	2.90	2.12	1.36	2.83	17.49	12
	South Heaton	1.86	1.10	1.65	1.43	2.90	2.12	3.17	2.83	17.06	14
	South Jesmond	1.47	1.10	1.35	1.18	2.90	2.77	1.17	2.83	14.76	19
	Walker	4.00	1.10	3.38	1.56	2.90	2.18	1.53	2.83	19.48	11
	Walkergate	2.24	1.10	1.84	1.39	2.90	2.48	2.20	2.83	16.99	15
		EAST AVERAGE SCORE								17.32	



If we take an average of the scores in each ward for each locality, we see that the West Riverside locality is the most deprived in terms of childcare, followed by the North Central, the East; and the Outer West & North is the least deprived locality.

Another interesting observation is that whilst the West Riverside is the most deprived area, parents in this area have quite high levels of satisfaction with their current choice in childcare provision.

The Outer West & North locality is the least deprived in childcare terms, all Wards in this locality have the lowest ICD scores, this is determined by a combination of having the highest penetration rates, relatively high satisfaction levels, the lowest number of lone parents and the highest percentage of working parents. Wards vary in terms of occupancy rates with Woolsington having a high number of places occupied and Newburn having more available places. In terms of accessibility, many people are travelling further than they would like to in this area for childcare.

Elswick (in the West Riverside locality) is the ward showing the highest level of deprivation on the ICD. Even though people are generally quite satisfied with their childcare, other factors such as low penetration rates and a high percentage of lone parents and parents not working are pushing the score up. The proportion of household salary spent on childcare costs is also high in this area, in fact it is the second highest of all the Wards, Lemington being the highest.

Some other interesting results are Newburn has the highest level of people satisfied with their childcare choice, but they also feel childcare is not very accessible in this area. Satisfaction is lowest of all wards in all localities in West Gosforth, where parents also feel that childcare is not very accessible.

8.1 Profile of Localities

Below are the key characteristics of each locality as shown by the outstanding results of the ICD.

West Riverside (average score: 23.92, most deprived area)



Penetration rates (number of places for population of children) are relatively low

Unemployment rates in parents are the highest

The number of lone parents is the highest of all localities

Satisfaction with childcare is high

Proportion of household income spent on childcare is high and is the highest of all Wards in Lemington

Current occupancy levels vary across the locality with Lemington having a low occupancy and therefore a high number of available places and Westgate having a high occupancy and therefore a very low number of available places.

North Central (average score: 21.52, 2nd most deprived area)

Penetration rates are low

Unemployment rates in parents are high

The percentage of lone Parents is relatively high

Satisfaction with childcare is high

The proportion of household income spent on childcare is quite average

Current occupancy levels are quite average

East (average score: 17.32, 3rd most deprived area)

Satisfaction with current childcare provision is high

Occupancy rates are quite average, although they are particularly low in Ouseburn and South Jesmond, meaning that there is a high number of available places in these Wards

The number of lone parents in this locality is relatively high

Unemployment rates in parents are high

Penetration rates are very high

The proportion of household income spent on childcare is high, apart from in South Jesmond, North Jesmond, South Heaton and Walkergate where proportion of household income spent on childcare was relatively low



Outer West & North (average score: 13.11, least deprived area)

Penetration Rates are the highest of all Wards

The number of Parents who are unemployed is the lowest of all localities

Similarly, the number of lone parents is the lowest of all localities

Satisfaction levels with current provision are among the highest, with the exception of West Gosforth where satisfaction is the lowest out of all localities

Occupancy rates are quite average, with the exception of Woolsington where they are quite high, i.e. there are a low number of places available.



9 Appendices

The appendices contain the individual reports for each part of the research and can be used to find more detailed analysis of any of the point summarised in this main report.

