Securing Sufficient Childcare
Statutory guidance for local authorities in carrying out their childcare sufficiency duties

You can download this publication or order copies online at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Search using ref: DCSF-00274-2010

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DCSF Publications
PO Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham NG15 0DJ
Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Textphone: 0845 60 555 60

Please quote the ref: 00274-2010DOM-EN


D16/B699/03/10

© Crown copyright 2010

The text in this document (excluding the Royal Arms and other departmental or agency logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context.

The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

For any other use of this material please contact the Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or e-mail: licensing@opsi.gsi.gov.uk.
Childcare plays a crucial role in the lives of most families. It enables parents to go out to work to contribute to a decent family income when they have very young children. A growing body of evidence shows that good pre-school childcare gives children a flying start and leads to better outcomes as they move through school. It also allows older children to take part in a wide range of interesting activities that fosters their personal development in a safe environment.

Childcare plays an equally crucial role in supporting our national and local goals. Economic development and regeneration just cannot happen unless there is sufficient childcare to match. Parents cannot take up new job opportunities and progress in their careers unless they can secure suitable childcare. Parents who are out of the job market and bringing up their children on a low family income cannot escape from poverty by taking up a job without affordable, flexible local childcare to help them.

Childcare has been entirely transformed over the past decade. There are now over 3,500 Sure Start Children’s Centres, extended services in more than 20,000 schools, and free early years provision for all 3 and 4 year olds, and for 2 year olds in the most disadvantaged areas. The childcare workforce is more skilful and better trained than ever before. These advances would not have been possible without the hard work of many local authorities and childcare providers and I would like to put on record the Government’s thanks.

This guidance clarifies the statutory requirements relating to childcare sufficiency and offers guidance on how local authorities can carry out these responsibilities effectively, based on current best practice.

It is important that local authorities see their childcare responsibilities as part of the wider strategic agenda to improve outcomes for children and families in their communities. In particular, the childcare sufficiency assessment will be an important component of the Children and Young People’s Plan and the local authority’s role in managing the childcare market will need to be incorporated into the local commissioning framework.

The next round of childcare sufficiency assessments, to be carried out by April 2011, is an opportunity to take stock of how well families’ childcare needs are being met and will indicate where further action is needed. I wish you well in this important task.

Signed

Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP
Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families
Introduction

This document provides statutory guidance to local authorities in support of their duties under the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare. It updates the guidance included in two earlier documents: Childcare Sufficiency Assessments: Guidance for Local Authorities and Securing Sufficient Childcare, both published in 2007.

Much of this guidance is based on effective practice developed in local authorities or across regions since the first guidance was published. It is intended to be a framework to steer local authorities through their sufficiency responsibilities. We have avoided being too prescriptive so that local authorities have room to respond to local needs and circumstances.

It is important to note however that the guidance is a statutory document and local authorities must therefore have regard to it in carrying out their sufficiency responsibilities. This means that they should not adopt a different approach without good reason.

Throughout the text there are also references to local authority responsibilities that have legal significance:

- **Duties** are set out in legislation and are things the local authority **must** do
- **Powers** are also set out in legislation but are things the local authority **may** or **could choose** to do
- Some parts of the text refer to things the local authority **should** do. We have used these to indicate where we feel there is a compelling reason for a consistent approach across all local authorities.

This guidance is for local authorities in England only.
Local authorities must have regard to this guidance in carrying out their childcare sufficiency duties.

The Childcare Act 2006 requires 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 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 must 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

The guidance in this document, which updates the two previous sets of guidance in relation to the childcare sufficiency duties, is designed to clarify the legal requirements and help local authorities in carrying out their responsibilities.

Chapter 1 provides a definition of childcare, including some examples of the types of care or activity that are included in the definition, or are specifically excluded. The chapter also explains what ‘sufficiency’ means, including what it is ‘reasonably practicable’ for a local authority to do when meeting parents’ childcare needs.

Chapter 2 outlines the local authority’s role in securing sufficient childcare.

The local authority should ensure that its arrangements for securing childcare sufficiency are integrated with the wider consultation, planning and decision making arrangements for children’s services, including the Children’s Trusts and commissioning framework, and the Children and Young People’s Plan.

The key elements of the role are a childcare sufficiency assessment, action planning in response to the assessment, and facilitating (or managing) the childcare market to ensure that it is flexible, responsive and sustainable.

The next four chapters provide detailed guidance on each of these elements.

Chapter 3 sets out the local authority’s responsibilities in relation to the sufficiency assessment. These include:

- Assessing demand for different types of childcare across the authority and by sub-area. This will need to recognise the number of places, how those places will be funded, the times of the day and over the week (or even over the year) when they are required and where they are needed as well as any special requirements
- Assessing the supply of childcare within the area and sub-area available to meet this demand
- Identifying any gaps in provision, which could be based on location, affordability, specific needs, availability during a particular time or session, particular age groups, or types of setting
- Preparing an assessment document
- Publishing the assessment document
**Chapter 4** emphasises the importance of the action planning process. It is not a legal requirement for a local authority to produce a plan, or to publish it, although this is already best practice among many local authorities.

**Chapter 5** explains the local authority’s wider role in managing the childcare market. The aim should be to promote choice and access for parents and flexibility, sustainability and quality improvement for providers. The eight key steps of market management are:

- Having a good understanding of local demand and supply for childcare and the extent to which they match up
- Having a clear set of strategic and specific priorities and be working towards them
- Having a good understanding of how to manage the market and making effective use of the powers available to local authorities in doing so
- Taking action to stimulate parental demand through good information and outreach and stimulating take-up of free childcare and use of Government schemes to make childcare more affordable
- Developing the supply of childcare through promoting partnership, providing funding and growing and sustaining provision
- Monitoring both the quantity and quality of provision and using regulation and support to make improvements to the local childcare market across the board
- Consulting effectively and engaging local stakeholders
- Monitoring progress and outcomes

The presumption should be that the authority is a commissioner of childcare and should only become the provider as a last resort.

**Chapter 6** offers guidance and good practice on procuring new provision.

**Chapter 7** highlights the need for local authorities to pay particular attention to the childcare needs of families in challenging circumstances, especially including:

- Low-income families, or where parents are seeking work
- Families who include a child or parent with a disability
- Families in black and minority ethnic communities
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Families living in rural or inaccessible areas
- Armed Forces families
Chapter 8 summarises the latest economic and policy developments that are likely to influence a local authority’s childcare sufficiency responsibilities.

Childcare has the potential to play a very significant role in local economic regeneration. It will be important for local authorities not only to look at the current position, but also to anticipate local market and employment trends and their impact on demand for childcare in future.

Recent policy developments such as the extension of the free entitlement, changes to funding arrangements and quality improvement initiatives are likely to affect overall demand for childcare and will impact on individual childcare settings.

Chapter 9 lists additional resources to guide and support local authorities in carrying out their responsibilities. Links are provided to a range of resources, including a step by step guide to the assessment and action planning processes.
Chapter One
A Definition of Childcare
Sufficiency

This chapter gives a definition of childcare and explains how sufficiency is to be interpreted in practice.

What is childcare?

1.1 Childcare is defined in Section 18 of the Childcare Act 2006 as “any form of care for a child” including “education … and any other supervised activity”.

1.2 The following are specifically excluded from this definition:

- education or activities provided by a school for a pupil during school hours, unless that pupil has not yet started Key Stage 1 (thereby including nursery and reception classes);
- care provided for a child by a parent, step-parent or person with parental responsibility; or any relative; or foster parent (local authority or private); or
- care provided by a children’s home, a care home, a hospital or a residential family centre, a young offenders’ institution, a secure training centre, or a secure care home within any of those establishments.

1.3 In the Childcare Act 2006, ‘early years provision’ means childcare for a child aged from birth until the 31st August following the child’s 5th birthday and ‘later years provision’ means childcare for a child from the 1st September following the child’s 5th birthday until the child reaches 18. (see sections 20 and 96(6) of the Act).

1.4 Childcare includes some ‘supervised’ provision for under 18 year olds. This may overlap with local authorities’ duties under section 507B of the Education Act 1996, to secure sufficient leisure activities for 13-19 year olds.

1.5 Local authorities should regard childcare as any provision that is regular and reliable and provides children a safe place to be. It would not include, for example, before school or after-school activity that was unsupervised or that was provided as a one-off activity.

What is sufficient childcare?

1.6 Local authorities are under a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare provision in their areas for two main purposes:

- Under Section 6 (1) of the Childcare Act 2006, the provision must be “sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the local authority’s area who require childcare in order to enable them to:
a) take up, or remain in, work, or
b) undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

This requirement is applicable to all children up to 1st September after they reach the age of 14. For children with a disability (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995), the requirement applies to children or young people until they reach the age of 18.

Under Section 6(2) of the Childcare Act 2006, in determining whether childcare is sufficient, the local authority must have regard to the needs of parents in their area
a) for provision for which the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is payable; and
b) the provision of childcare that is suitable for children with a disability.

● Under Section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities must secure free early years provision for all eligible children in their area. Regulations made under section 7 set out the type and amount of free provision and the age of children to benefit. These Regulations have been amended, with effect from September 2010, to increase the amount of free provision from 12½ hours a week for 38 weeks of the year to 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks

1.7 In discharging both these duties, the local authority must have regard to relevant guidance that is issued by the Secretary of State. This document provides that guidance in relation to their overall sufficiency duties. The Code of Practice for Local Authorities on Delivery of Free Early Years Provision for 3 and 4 Year Olds1 sets out clear expectations in relation to the flexibility and quality of provision required to meet the free entitlement.

1.8 Section 6(1) of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure the provision of childcare “so far as is reasonably practicable”.

1.9 In assessing what is “reasonably practicable”, the local authority may take into account:
- The state of the local childcare market, including the level of demand in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
- The state of the labour market and the potential for increasing the number of people working in childcare;
- The resources available to, and capabilities of, childcare providers (resources means not just the available funding, but also staff and premises, and capabilities will include experience and expertise);
- The need to develop an effective, phased programme to meet the sufficiency duty; and
- The local authority’s resources, capabilities, and overall budget priorities.

1.10 If challenged, a local authority may be called upon to demonstrate how it has done all that it can to secure sufficiency, taking into account these constraints. Local authorities

---

1 http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00689/
should work, over time, to reduce particular constraints, for example by building their own capabilities and expertise, and those of local providers.

1.11 “Reasonably practicable” allows some flexibility. What is practicable or impracticable in one time and place may not be in another. Local authority decisions to address gaps in childcare through one method, rather than another, based on what they regard as reasonably practicable, should be documented and published to allow scrutiny and challenge.

1.12 The sufficiency duty is phrased in general terms, and it will be for the authority to decide what is sufficient given the needs of parents in its area. A local authority may not be failing to fulfil the duty simply because an individual parent’s particular need is not being met at a particular time, as it may be judged to be not reasonably practicable to do so. However, a local authority should not assume that it is not reasonably practicable to secure childcare that meets particular needs, such as childcare for a child with a disability or at atypical hours, just because it is difficult to do so.
Chapter Two
A Summary of the Local Authority’s Role in Securing Sufficient Childcare

2.1 Local authorities should have regard to opportunities for joint planning and service integration provided by Children’s Trusts partnerships, and should also ensure that their sufficiency responsibilities are integrated with their wider planning and assessment duties. For example:

- The Childcare Act 2006 also requires local authorities to work with parents and PVI providers in the planning and delivery of early childhood services and to take account of the ‘voice’ of the young child.\(^2\)

- Under the Child Poverty Act 2009, local authorities have a lead role in promoting cooperation with partners within their areas to tackle child poverty, and in producing local Child Poverty Needs Assessments (CPNAs) and local child poverty strategies.

- From 1st April 2010, under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, local authorities will be under a duty to prepare a Local Economic Assessment of the economic conditions of their area. This comprehensive analysis will inform local authorities’ economic policies and interventions, and should recognise the essential role that childcare can play in economic development and regeneration and inform local authority sufficiency assessment and action planning activity.

All the above should inform and as far as possible be integrated with the sufficiency and action planning process.

2.2 Local authorities should establish an outcomes based commissioning framework for childcare that includes the following features:

- It should show how childcare will contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people, with a clear link to objectives in the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP). Local authorities should also show how childcare will contribute to Local Area Agreement targets and the National Indicator Set.

- There should be clear accountability to the Children’s Trust Board for progress towards targets.

- Engagement with families should take place at all stages of the commissioning process, with opportunities for service users (including fathers, mothers, carers, children and young people) to express views on how and what childcare should be provided.\(^3\)

---

\(^2\) The statutory guidance ‘Raising Standards – Improving Outcomes’ outlines clearly the statutory duties of the local authority, and health and Jobcentre Plus partners to improve the wellbeing of young children.

\(^3\) Section 3(5) of the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to have regard to such information about the views of young children as is available to them and appears relevant to the discharge of early childhood duties. Advice and support is available through the Young Children’s Voices Network.
Mechanisms are required for regular consultation with existing providers. The local authority should also seek the views of potential providers to support market development. Provider forums, the Schools Forum, cluster groups and national organisations (such as 4Children, the National Childminding Association (NCMA), the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), and the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA)) all provide channels of two way communication.

Consultation should also provide a feedback loop to those who have contributed so they can see how their views have been reflected.

There should be clear partnership arrangements with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, and the Primary Care Trust and local employers.

The local authority should also ensure that there are good links with relevant departments within the authority, such as transport, housing, social care and leisure.

The local authority should secure commitment from all partners and providers involved in delivery and supporting improvements.

Decision making should be open and transparent. All decisions should be evidence-based, designed to promote outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The local authority should use opportunities for sharing resources, securing value for money and promoting quality improvement and sustainability.

2.3 The following table shows the broad steps that local authorities are expected to follow in commissioning childcare and securing sufficiency:

Figure 1: the role of market management in relation to other childcare sufficiency functions
The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

2.4 The assessment is a detailed investigation and measurement of the nature and extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare within each local area. It will enable local authorities to identify where there are gaps in the market.

2.5 The assessment should not only look at the current position, but also have regard to trends or developments that are likely to affect demand and supply in the foreseeable future. The assessment should be kept under regular review to ensure that assumptions remain valid. Many local authorities carry out more frequent assessments than the legislation requires.

Sufficiency Action Planning

2.6 Once the local authority has completed the sufficiency assessment, it should then develop an action plan, showing how and when it proposes to tackle any issues arising out of the assessment. As with any action plan, it will be important to be specific about the actions that are needed, the rationale for each action, how it will be delivered, who will be responsible, when it will be done by, and how it will be resourced.

2.7 Just as with the sufficiency assessment, it is important that the action plan is monitored and updated regularly to ensure that it takes account of the changing context.

Market Management

2.8 In carrying out their market management role, local authorities should have regard to the following benchmarks of sufficiency there should be:

- **Sufficient places overall** – enough places to meet the needs of working parents or those who are training to work and enough places to allow eligible children aged 2, 3 and 4 to take up their offer of free childcare, even where parents aren’t working or training.

- Childcare places should be of **high quality**, quality of places (reflecting judgements made by Ofsted, Early Years Quality Improvement Support Programme (EYQISP) and any local schemes that indicate a setting’s quality rating and improvement path).

- There should be sufficient **flexibility**, with places being available at the right times (for example, in the early morning, late evening, at the weekend, or during school holidays), to fit in with working patterns.

- Places should be sufficiently **accessible**, so that parents do not have to travel too far out of their way to access childcare.

- There should be a sufficient **range of provision**, with the balance between the various types of early years and childcare provision appropriate to meet the needs of parents identified through the sufficiency assessment.

- There should be sufficient **knowledge and information** about the supply and quality of places and how to access them.
Childcare places should be sufficiently **affordable**.

Childcare settings should be sufficiently **inclusive** and meet **particular needs**.

Childcare settings should be sufficiently **sustainable**.

2.9 Local authorities should take a proactive role in market management, stimulating the take-up of places, especially the early years free entitlement, and from under-represented groups, rather than just monitoring it. They should also stimulate the growth of places and new provision where they are needed.

2.10 A key part of the market management role is to ensure that parents receive good information about childcare in order to make informed decisions. Local authorities should ensure that parents are aware of their entitlement to free early years provision and the different tax allowances that may help to make additional childcare more affordable, as well as the range of childcare provision and related forms of support, for example through children’s centres and extended service provision available for older children.

2.11 Local authorities should bear in mind how different settings link together so that children have a positive and seamless experience in moving from one to another during the week, or between different age ranges. Particular attention should be paid to the transition between childcare setting and school, so as to minimise the inconvenience for families who use different settings, and/or when they have more than one child in childcare.

2.12 Local authorities should also have regard to opportunities for joint planning and service integration provided by Children’s Trusts partnerships, and how policies and planning for childcare can support – or are influenced by – policy and planning in other parts of the authority, such as transport, housing, social care and leisure.
Chapter Three
The Sufficiency Assessment

Local authorities **MUST**:
- prepare assessments of the sufficiency of childcare in their area at least every three years
- keep the current assessment under review in the meantime
- comply with the Childcare Assessments Regulations 2007 prescribing the criteria, form or publication of the assessment and people to be consulted

3.1 The following elements of the assessments process are prescribed in the Childcare Assessments Regulations. Local authorities **must** consult:
   a. the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board,
   b. Jobcentre Plus,
   c. partners of the local authority who are relevant partners as defined by section 10 of the Children Act 2004 (this will include, for example, Primary Care Trusts and schools on the Children’s Trust Board)

3.2 Local authorities **should** also consult:
   a. children,
   b. parents,
   c. childcare providers,
   d. employers,
   e. governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of schools other than maintained schools,
   f. governing bodies of institutions within the further education or higher education sectors within the meaning of section 91 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992,
   g. neighbouring authorities,
   h. organisations representing the interests of persons mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (d), or other organisations with an interest in the provision of childcare, and

---

See: www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/uksi_20070463_en_1
i. individuals and organisations not listed above, including those from faith, disability, and black and minority ethnic groups.

3.3 Childcare markets tend to be highly localised. The assessment must cover the whole local authority area, and must also take account of the pattern of demand and supply and any gaps in sub areas – for example, wards, super output areas or primary school catchment areas, or other areas as designated by local authorities to help with the delivery of local services.

The Sufficiency Assessment Process

3.4 Assessing the demand for childcare in each sub-local authority area must take account of at least the following, by age range and type as described below:

i) the number of childcare places required for children of working parents or those who are training for work, up to and including the age of 14 (or for children with a disability until they reach the age of 18);

ii) the number of registered childcare places required for children whose parents will claim the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit or support for their childcare through another Government scheme;

iii) the number of free early years places for 3 and 4 year olds required to enable them to meet their statutory duty under section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006. The Code of Practice gives detailed statutory guidance;

iv) the times of day at which childcare is required, including demand for flexible childcare that caters for irregular patterns of usage across the day, the week or the year; and

v) any specific requirements relating to the childcare of children with a disability or special educational need

3.5 Assessing the supply of childcare (including extended services provision) in each sub-local authority area, must take account of at least the following, by age range and type:

5 Code of Practice for Local Authorities on Delivery of Free Early Learning Provision for 3 and 4 Year Olds, published March 2010
i) the number of childcare places available for children up to and including the age of 14 (or for children with a disability until they reach the age of 18);

ii) the number of registered childcare places available for children whose parents will claim the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit or support for their childcare through another Government scheme;

iii) the number of free early years places available for 3 and 4 year olds which enables them to meet their statutory duty under section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006;

iv) the times of the day at which childcare is available, the maximum length of time that childcare providers will care for children in a day, and their flexibility in catering for irregular patterns of usage across the day, the week or the year;

v) the number and nature of places available for children who need special care due to a disability or special educational need;

vi) the range of session lengths offered by childcare providers;

vii) the number of vacant places – overall and for each type of provision identified under subparagraphs i-vi above;

viii) the range of charges for childcare and parents’ ability to pay the charges; and

Age ranges and types of childcare

Local authorities should have regard to the available data relating to the demand for, and supply of childcare in relation to specific age groups. In practice, local authorities are likely to want to pay particular attention to the needs of the following age ranges:

- Children under the age of 2 (so that the LA can assess the sufficiency of provision for this younger age group whose parents require childcare for work or training for work etc)

- Children aged 2 (so that the LA can assess sufficiency both in respect of children of that age who are eligible for free childcare, and for parents of all children of this age who require childcare for work or training for work etc)

- Children aged 3 and 4 (so that the LA can assess sufficiency both in respect of meeting the free entitlement for children of those ages, and whose parents require additional childcare for work or training for work etc)

- Children aged between 5 and 14 (whose parents require childcare for work and training for work etc. In assessing the match between demand and supply it may be appropriate for the LA to differentiate between numbers above and below the usual age of transfer to secondary school)

Where the relevant published data are not disaggregated in this way or are not readily available, the local authority should use other evidence to support its sufficiency assessment, so it can meet the childcare needs of all age groups.
3.6 **Analysing the gap between demand and supply in each sub-local authority area, must take** account of at least the following:

i) the types of care available;

ii) the age of children for whom care is available;

iii) the cost and affordability of childcare;

iv) the times at which childcare is available, including the need for flexible childcare that caters for irregular patterns of usage across the day, the week or the year;

v) the specific needs of children with a disability; and

vi) the location of childcare. The local authority *should* take into account current and planned walking and cycling infrastructure, and public transport routes, to ensure that childcare is accessible, particularly for families without cars.

3.7 **Preparing an assessment document, must** include the information in (a), (b) and (c) above for the whole of the authority area. It *must* then be made available for comments.

3.8 **Publishing the assessment document**

i) An authority *must* publish the assessment on the local authority’s website; and

ii) *should* also make it available in hard copy in local public libraries, childcare settings, schools and other public places, as considered appropriate.

The following sections cover the different steps of an assessment in more detail

**Understanding the Area**

3.9 Local authorities need a clear understanding of the demographics of their local population, in particular factors that will drive demand for childcare such as:

- Trends in live births

- Population movements within and across the authority’s area

- Property development within the area which may affect population composition and density

- Employment patterns, including:
  - levels of employment and unemployment
  - plans to open, close, expand or contract businesses in the area
  - business plans which may impact on parental work patterns (e.g: shiftwork)
  - (re)location of workplaces – which may affect commuting times

- The number of lone parents and the age of their children
The composition of the children’s population by age range and, in each age range, the number of children who may have particular childcare needs (e.g. children with a disability, black and minority ethnic children and the children of Armed Forces families)

Assessing Parental Demand

3.10 Local authorities should gather the views of parents or other carers in assessing levels of demand and families’ needs and preferences for childcare. These should include those who are not currently in work, who are employed or self-employed, who are in training or who are engaged in voluntary work.

3.11 It will also be helpful to identify any particular needs of low income families and those whose families include a child with a disability. Local authorities will be able to use the analysis in their Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for their CPNA which will help them develop an understanding of the impact of childcare on particular vulnerable groups. Likewise the CPNA will help local authorities to identify priorities for the Sufficiency Action Plan.

3.12 Local authorities should take account of the range of factors influencing parents’ decisions about childcare – is it reliable (i.e. certain to be available every day, and for expected hours) and is it of suitable quality and affordability.

3.13 The Family Information Service (FIS) will be a good source of information about families’ preferences and demand for childcare. In addition, the local authority should also consider using structured sample surveys to find out parents’ views. These can be conducted by telephone, by self-completion questionnaire, or in person and supplemented by focus groups and/or face-to-face interviews. The latter methods are best for picking up the needs of particular groups, like parents of children with disabilities; parents not using childcare; and parents from minority ethnic groups. House to house work at sub-local authority area level can also be helpful in building up in depth profiles of particular areas.

3.14 To allow the results of these surveys and interviews to be matched to local demographics, local authorities should also collect basic data on the characteristics of respondents, including:

- the employment/training/educational status of parent(s), or other carer(s)
- household income levels
- whether they will be claiming the Child Tax Credit, or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit, or support for their childcare through another Government scheme
- the ethnic background of families
- the age and number of children
- whether they, or their children, have a disability
3.15 Parents’ choice of convenient childcare will sometimes mean that they take up places in a different local authority from their own. Accordingly, local authorities should, when conducting their assessment, take account of the needs of those who use childcare outside their area, as well as those who travel to their area to use childcare. It will usually be helpful to consult local providers, employers and neighbouring local authorities to try to assess the numbers involved.

3.16 Examples of good practice in this area are available on the Every Child Matters website: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/earlyyears/localauthorities/lappractice/markets/sufficiency/sufficiency

The Government Office for London’s Toolkit for Conducting a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (http://www.younglondonmatters.org/resourcecentre/19/childcaresufficiencyresourcesandtoolkits/) includes information on data collection methodology.

3.17 A grid to help local authorities who wish to survey parents in their area and calculate sample sizes is available at: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00195/

The grid provides information on how many interviews a local authority would need to complete for certain population sizes, to generate estimates with relative degrees of accuracy.

Consulting with Children and Young People

3.18 It is important that local children and young people have an opportunity to express their views on what they see as strengths, weaknesses and gaps in childcare. They are the main users and beneficiaries of childcare services, so it is vital that their needs and concerns are understood. It will be important to obtain the views of both users and non-users as they will be able to offer views from different perspectives.

3.19 Some approaches to gathering views from children may be more appropriate than others, depending on the focus of the survey and their age, gender, interests, ethnicity and disability status.

3.20 The 2003 DfES research report, Exploring the Field of Listening to and Consulting with Young Children and the Coram Family Listening to Young Children resources are a useful source of information to help local authorities carry out the consultation. See the DCSF brief: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=RB445&

Working with Employers

3.21 Local authorities should take account of the views of employers, through surveys or group discussions, to obtain a better understanding of employment patterns which will affect demand for childcare. In addition, local authorities might find it helpful to engage in a dialogue with employers about how employer-provided childcare, encouragement of the take-up of tax credits, more flexible working patterns, and assistance for employees
with the costs of childcare through allowances or vouchers could help with recruitment, retention and motivation.

3.22 To complement their work with employers, local authorities **must** engage with Jobcentre Plus locally about the childcare needs of people for whom they are seeking a place in the job market, and the extent to which access to appropriate childcare is a barrier to entering training and work.

**Case Study 1: Childcare Needs Assessment in Rochdale – Engaging employers to assess the childcare needs of working parents**

Rochdale Local Authority use their links with employers to support their planning of provision. The authority establishes links with employers through outreach and mail shots – their best advertisement is employers who are already benefiting from local schemes and pilots established by the LA. Staff then assess employee demand for provision through questionnaires.

**Price and Demand**

3.23 The assessment **should** seek to establish demand for childcare at the current market price. But local authorities **should** also try to gain an understanding of how parents would be likely to react to changing prices, both increases and the availability of less costly provision, along with any impact on quality that this might have. Local authorities **should** ask their private and voluntary sector partners how they expect prices to change in the coming year, and why.

3.24 Affordability is likely to have a bigger influence on parents’ childcare decisions than price and this needs to be taken into account in the assessment. Local authorities have an important role in publicising the financial support available through the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. They may also wish to consider what additional assistance to give to parents who are finding it difficult to access appropriate childcare at the current market price.

**Mapping Supply**

3.25 The second step in preparing an assessment will be for local authorities to map the supply of childcare, so that they can identify any gaps.

3.26 The local authority **should** use various sources to generate a complete picture of childcare providers in the area, registered and non-registered. Family Information Service data will be important, as will data from the Early Years Census, from Ofsted registrations and the extended services databases, supplemented by other local knowledge.

3.27 The local authority should assess the current level of provision of each type of care, in terms of hours of opening, the number of places offered by each provider, the age group it caters for, and the cost per hour, day and week for all types of provision.

3.28 In addition to the quantifiable information listed above, local authorities **should** also take into account other factors which are relevant to deciding whether childcare is suitable
Securing Sufficient Childcare

and sustainable. Ofsted inspection reports and other quality assessments, evidence of comprehensive business plans, and membership of a childminders’ network are examples of likely suitability.

3.29 Local authorities should also consider how easy it is for parents to combine use of different providers to meet their needs.

3.30 The mapping of supply should include consultation with providers on their capacity and plans, which will help the local authority with future planning.

Gaps Analysis

3.31 A range of software is available to support the gaps analysis. In addition, examples of good practice in a number of leading local authorities can be found on the Every Child Matters website.

3.32 To assess where gaps exist, the local authority should compare two sets of data. The first set is data on how much, of what types, at what times, and in which localities, parents demand childcare, and whether there are any specific requirements these parents or children have. The second is how much childcare is available, at what price, in each locality, at each time, and whether that provision is able to meet any specific needs the parents or children may have.

3.33 Gaps in the market can be considered as falling into the following categories:

- **Geographical Gaps**: where a geographical area has a general shortage of supply
- **Income Gaps**: where there is a shortage of affordable childcare for the income groups populating an area
- **Specific Need Gaps**: where there is a shortage of suitable places for children with a disability, or children with other specific needs or requirements, including those from particular faiths or community groups
- **Time Gaps**: where there is a shortage of childcare at a time that parents would wish to use childcare. These could be at certain times of the day or days of the week, or might be seasonal, for example during school holidays or as a result of changes in seasonal employment
- **Age Gaps**: where there is a shortage of childcare suitable to the needs and requirements of a certain age group. This may be difficult to detect if it is masked by overprovision of childcare suitable for other age groups
- **Type Gaps**: where there is a shortage in the type of childcare for which parents may be expressing a preference

3.34 Every gap will have a geographical element, which will need to be considered as part of the analysis. A local childcare market is generally considered to be a small area, which for very young children could be described as ‘pram-pushing distance’; but it may also be subject to limitation by physical constraints such as motorways and railway lines; and
there can also be non-physical barriers, such as a reticence to use provision in a different community, village or estate.

3.35 The local authority **should** have an understanding of how local provision effectively overlaps at community boundaries. Although it would be undesirable to encourage excess supply, some flexibility in capacity in such areas may be helpful.

3.36 Several tools have been developed to help local authorities compare demand and supply data. They can also be used in conjunction with the Index of Multiple Deprivation at super output area level to map childcare sufficiency in the most disadvantaged areas. Examples can be found at:

http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/earlyyears/localauthorities/lapractice/markets/sufficiency/sufficiency

The Government Office for London’s *Toolkit for Conducting a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment* March 2009:

http://www.younglondonmatters.org/resourcecentre/19/childcaresufficiencyresourcesandtoolkits/

uses a data matrix which will help local authorities compare both quantitative and qualitative results.

**Geographical Information Systems**

Gloucestershire County Council uses Geographical Information Systems to extract different sets of information and visually display them on a digitised map. This provides great flexibility, allowing map prints which exactly meet the needs of users to be produced very quickly. Gloucestershire Early Years and Childcare Service requires the mapping of all early years and childcare provision and other relevant services, including schools, boundaries (super output areas, wards and districts), population figures of children, health provision, Jobcentre Plus sites and libraries, and many other forms of provision. This will show existing (and possibly proposed) provision when planning for children’s centres, extended services and granting funding to new early years provision. Gloucestershire use this tool to avoid duplication of services and to identify gaps.

**Drafting and Consulting on the Assessment**

3.37 When the local authority has completed the three stages of assessing demand, mapping supply, and mapping supply to demand, and has completed its assessment in respect of each sub-local authority area level, it **must** prepare an assessment document for later publication in accordance with Childcare Assessments Regulations.

**Format of the Assessment Document**

3.38 The assessment document **must** set out a picture of childcare sufficiency for the local authority area. It must describe sufficiency in terms of types of childcare:
- age ranges;
- costs of childcare and affordability;
- specialist care; and
- location of childcare.

The underlying sub-local authority area level analysis should be available on request for anyone who wishes to see it.

3.39 The assessment document *should* focus on identifying the largest and most serious gaps, the scale of which should generally be measured in terms of the number of families affected. It *should* also identify gaps affecting particular families, for example, those which include a child with a disability and black and minority ethnic families, and others listed in chapter 7. The assessment document *should* be presented in an accessible and user friendly way that enables readers (including providers and parents) to understand where there are sufficiency issues that need to be addressed.

**Seeking Comments on the Assessment Document**

3.40 The local authority will have involved a range of interested groups and organisations in making the assessment in respect of each sub local authority area; in particular, during the stages of assessing demand, mapping supply and mapping supply to demand. Having prepared the assessment document, the local authority *should* now publish it in draft, so that parents, providers, employers and the wider community have an opportunity to comment on the assessment and highlight relevant issues or concerns.

3.41 Local authorities *should* be proactive in ensuring that people have an opportunity to comment, including providers and those who live in disadvantaged areas, families which include a child with a disability, minority ethnic groups, and others listed in chapter 7, all of whom may face particular issues in accessing childcare. The assessment document *should* be made available in local community languages where appropriate.

**Publication**

3.42 The assessment document *must* be placed on the local authority’s website. The local authority *should* also consider making it available through early years and childcare settings, schools, Family Information Services, public libraries, GP surgeries, and Jobcentre Plus offices, as well as local authorities’ usual information channels. The assessment does not need to be a standalone document, but *could* form a section or annex of the authority’s Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP), or the local authority’s Child Poverty Needs Assessment (CPNA).

**Reviewing and Updating the Assessment**

3.43 The local authority *should* amend the assessment as it considers appropriate in light of comments received.
3.44 The local authority *should* review the assessment when new data become available and – as a minimum – at least every year. The full assessment process *must* be repeated at least every three years.
Chapter Four
Effective Action Planning

Introduction
4.1 A good childcare sufficiency assessment gives a local authority a clear picture of their task in filling the gaps between supply and demand in their area. But they also need a strong and coherent strategy in place to fill these gaps effectively, in order to meet their statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare.

What is Sufficiency Action Planning?
4.2 An action plan should detail what the local authority – and its partners – plan to do to fill the gaps between supply and demand in their area identified in their sufficiency assessment, to address any barriers that prevent specific groups from accessing childcare, to encourage take-up of childcare and to support quality improvements, sustainability and (where appropriate) growth in the childcare market across the local authority’s area.

4.3 The action plan should contain the following elements:

- an introductory vision statement;
- a schedule of specific actions designed to bring about necessary changes in the childcare market, with priority actions and timelines clearly identified;
- clear lines of accountability, showing who is responsible for implementation;
- details of any major involvement by partners (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, regeneration or child poverty agencies, employers) in completing each part;
- an indication of how the plan will improve outcomes for children and families;
- details of how the childcare needs of families in challenging circumstances are to be met with a particular focus on the following (as far as they are relevant to the local authority area):
  - unemployed parents and low-income families;
  - black and minority ethnic families;
  - families from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities;
  - children with a disability;
  - families living in rural areas;
  - Armed Forces families;
- a clear indication of how and when the plan will be reviewed and updated; and
● the local authority should also show the outcome of exercises that decide the allocation of resources (such as childcare sufficiency capital and revenue funding); and

● before considering the use of dedicated sufficiency funding, the local authority should first ensure that it is gaining maximum leverage from other financial allocations.

4.4 Plans should not just be about service provision. They should also cover:

● the workforce – including levels of qualification and training as well as financial support and grants

● quality improvement – including levels of support and challenge from local authority quality teams and financial incentives

● facilities – including co-location of early years and childcare services, as well as business support such as capital funding

4.5 It is recommended that the action plan should cover a three year period, with a particular focus on the action to be taken in the first year (or sooner) to address pressing issues and priorities, with timescales for reviews and updates.

4.6 Where appropriate, the above should be clearly differentiated according to the needs of children of different age ranges. As highlighted in the Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare strategy document, action plans should include a particular focus on provision for children over the age of 5.

4.7 In deciding on priorities and actions, local authorities should consider some additional elements:

● To have maximum impact, action plans should make clear and explicit the links to other strategic priorities within the authority and amongst its partners. This will help ensure that the plan informs and reinforces other actions and activities taking place within the authority.

● Developing a childminder quality improvement network where none currently exists.

● The local authority should also consider the environmental impact and sustainability of any proposals.
4.8 Specific action points should be SMART:
  Specific – clear and concise, including as to who is responsible for implementation
  Measurable – quantifiable changes and improvements and specific targets
  Achievable – plans that are realistic
  Relevant – action that helps bring about the required changes
  Timebound – explicit about when actions or objectives will be achieved

4.9 The flowchart below shows a number of questions local authorities should consider in developing an action plan. This will help local authorities make sure they are clear about their priorities and the changes they want to make in the market, how they will know these changes have taken place, and how they will ensure the plan is robust and resourced.

Figure 2: Flowchart – questions to consider in developing your Action Plan:

1. Where are you now?
   What are the gaps highlighted in the sufficiency assessment?

2. Where do you want to be?
   In the short term and in three years time?
   Are changes needed for specific groups?
   What outcomes need to be improved?

3a. How will you measure success?
   How will you know if change has occurred?
   What indicators can you use to measure impact? Ensure these are SMART.

3b. What is the direction of travel?
   What gaps will the market naturally address? What gaps are a result of market failure?

DCSF market levers:
   Regulation, Support, Information, Commissioning, Procurement, Providing

4. Focus on market failures
   What levers can the local authority deploy to tackle the market failures?

5. Prioritise
   Concentrate on those actions that:
   (a) the authority has greatest control over
   (b) are cost efficient
   (c) have greatest impact

6. Agree action plan and implement
   Ensure action plan is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed and that officers know which actions they are responsible for.

Consider links with CYPP, Community Strategy, LAA, Play Strategy, Youth Strategy

For a suggested action planning template which includes the flowchart highlighted above at figure 2 see the Government Office for London’s Toolkit for Conducting a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment March 2009 (page 99)
http://www.younglondonmatters.org/resourcecentre/19/childcaresufficiencyresourcesandtoolkits/
Examples of local authority action plans are available at:
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/earlyyears/localauthorities/lappractice/markets/sufficiency/sufficiency

Publishing, Reviewing and Maintaining the Sufficiency Action Plan

Publication

4.10 Local authorities should publish their Sufficiency Action Plan (updated versions), alongside their assessment and link it to other appropriate planning documents. It could, for example, form an annex to the Children and Young People’s Plan, or the local authority’s Child Poverty Strategy. In addition, where access to childcare is identified as a high priority in terms of employment, and action to address child poverty, links could be made with the local authority’s Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) and wider performance frameworks.

Review

4.11 Local authorities should monitor and review progress on delivering the various commitments in the action plan on a regular basis, to ensure that delivery remains on track and any obstacles are addressed at an early opportunity.
Chapter Five
Effective Market Management

Introduction

5.1 This chapter explains how local authorities should approach their role in leading and facilitating the childcare market. It is broken down into eight key elements:

- Understanding the local childcare market
- Identifying and working to clear priorities
- Making use of local authority powers to manage the market
- Supporting parental demand
- Developing the supply of childcare
- Using proportionate regulation and quality improvement powers
- Engaging stakeholders
- Monitoring progress and outcomes

All of the above need to be seen as contributing to an integrated and combined approach rather than as a series of separate exercises. Some of them encompass responsibilities described earlier in the guidance, but we have summarised them here for completeness.

Step 1 of effective market management: understanding the local childcare market

5.2 The first stage in effective market management is to have a comprehensive understanding of how the local childcare market is operating. This will be informed by the childcare sufficiency assessment but it also needs to reflect the following characteristics that are distinctive to the childcare market:

Not all childcare that is provided is paid for. Grandparents and friends, for example, are a significant source of informal childcare. In this instance ‘goodwill’ rather than money is the main currency.
The childcare market is a complex and diverse mixture of provision on domestic and non domestic premises. It includes a mixture of: maintained provision in schools, registered early years providers in non-domestic settings, run mostly by private, independent or voluntary sectors (PVI) childcare providers (the great majority being small businesses); registered childminders, childcare providers and home childcarers on the voluntary registers – many of the former run after school clubs and activities.

The childcare market is funded from different sources – some is publicly funded (the free entitlement), part subsidised (through tax credits) and part privately funded (through fees).

The childcare market operates differently in different sectors – for example, regulatory, inspection and funding arrangements and staffing ratios for schools are different from those for the PVI sectors.

There is considerable turnover of providers in the childcare market, particularly in the PVI sectors which reflects both the competitive business environment and the continuing ease of entry for newly established provision. At the end of March 2008, Ofsted found that around a third of all providers (including childminders) had registered for the first time during the previous three years (Ofsted 2008).

The balance between PVI and maintained provision varies from place to place.

The childcare market cuts across local authority boundaries. In many places, parents will live in one area and work in another meaning that there is a considerable cross-border flow in the operation of the childcare market.

The childcare market is very dynamic. Fluctuations in birth rates and changes in the local economy and labour market, and changes in the entitlement to free childcare and in rights to parental leave all affect parents’ demand for childcare.

5.3

Figure 3 summarises the factors that should inform a market management strategy.
## Figure 3: Factors necessary to inform a market management strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand side</th>
<th>Supply side</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Number of places gaps</td>
<td>● Provider capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Age group</td>
<td>– Number of places by age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Locality</td>
<td>– Vacancies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Gaps in range of provision – sessional or full day care</td>
<td>– Ratios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Inclusion gaps</td>
<td>● Provider charges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– BME</td>
<td>● Provider capability – ability to increase places and/or adjust supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Disability</td>
<td>● Provider competence – level of business planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– SEN</td>
<td>● Provider quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up gaps</td>
<td>● Skills profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Waiting lists</td>
<td>● Asset profile – quality of estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Flexibility gaps</td>
<td>● Provider economics – sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Accessibility gaps</td>
<td>● Potential to provide for gaps in provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Occupancy gaps</td>
<td>● Provider marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Quality gaps</td>
<td>● Degree of competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Choice and satisfaction gaps</td>
<td>– Balance of provision between sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Affordability gaps</td>
<td>– Ability of parents to choose and level of switching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Knowledge and information gaps</td>
<td>– Turnover – market entry/exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Marketing gaps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.4

Good market management will integrate information on different aspects of childcare providers to provide an overall picture of the state of childcare supply. The Case Study from Leicestershire (Case Study 2 below) provides one example of how data integration can be achieved.
Case Study 2: Leicestershire County Council Supply Side

Leicestershire County Council collects and collates on a monthly basis the number of places filled and the level of vacancies for each district council area in the county. This is broken down by type of childcare provider (Childminder, Home Childcarer, Creche, Nursery, Pre-School Playgroup, Holiday Scheme, Childcare on Domestic Premises). The number of closures and new entrants is also tracked. This data is matched against the number of children for each year group up to the age of 19 living in each area.

A single spreadsheet captures this information and also includes:

- Data on the proportion of 3 and 4 year olds taking up the free entitlement
- Number of settings open 8am to 6pm all year
- Average weekly costs by type of provider
- Ofsted inspection ratings
- Local authority assessment ratings
- Business health check assessment rating
- Number of staff with NVQ Level 3 or better
- Number of settings with a Graduate Leader
- Number of setting with an Early Years Professional
- Parental satisfaction
- Tax Credit take-up
Local authorities will be able to build up a picture of the sustainability of the childcare supply in a number of ways. For example, staff providing business support for childcare settings should have a wealth of information and intelligence. The Business Health Check used by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (see Case Study 3 below) provides one example of how to both support settings and collect data. Where authorities are lacking an understanding of the business viability of parts of the childcare sector (for example, after school or holiday play schemes) they may wish to consider adapting the typical cost survey methodology (DCSF, 2009) and applying it to other parts of the sector.

### Case Study 3: Stockton-on-Tees Council’s Business Health Check

The Business Health Check takes the form of a suggested checklist that is designed to support childcare providers in analysing the business health of their settings. It covers:

- Opening hours
- Fees
- Management analysis (asking about such issues as whether providers know their revenue and occupancy even levels, have business and cash-flow plans and use software packages to help them manage their business)
- Income analysis
- Employee analysis (covering staff retention and human resources issues)
- Customer analysis
- Premises analysis
- Service analysis (covering marketing arrangements)

In terms of understanding the level of competition in the market, local authorities will have data either from their own records, or from Ofsted, on market turnover – i.e: the rate at which PVI providers are entering and leaving the market. They will also be able to map on a sub-authority basis, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or spreadsheet tools, the location of providers, by type and the age of children for whom care is provided. By cross-matching these data with the profile of children in the area, they will be able to analyse the extent to which parents have a degree of choice about childcare provision.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment should show the level of parental satisfaction with the range and choice of existing providers. Parental surveys may also indicate the extent to which parents are switching between providers.
Step 2 of effective market management: working to clear priorities

5.8 Market management requires local authorities to balance a range of competing interests and considerations. For example:

- ensuring childcare is affordable, accessible and flexible has to be balanced with providers needing to make a return in order that childcare is sustainable;
- incentivising high quality sometimes has to be balanced with ensuring there are sufficient childcare places overall;
- making improvements in how the market is operating may have to be balanced with avoiding destabilising the local market in general or providers in particular locations;
- tackling poorer performing providers may involve varying approaches depending on the sufficiency of provision locally;
- promoting competition has to be balanced with encouraging providers to collaborate and work in partnership; and
- making available financial support for providers has to be balanced with ensuring that local authorities discharge their best value duty by using budgetary resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

5.9 The right balance between these competing interests is more likely to be achieved if a local authority’s Sufficiency Action Plan has clearly identified the gaps in provision and prioritised the improvements that need to be made to secure sufficiency.

Step 3 of effective market management: being aware of local authority powers to manage the market

5.10 It is important that local authorities are clear about the legal framework for intervening and shaping the market. Figure 4 below summarises the main powers available to them.
### Figure 4: Powers available to local authorities to assist with managing markets to secure sufficient childcare

Sections 8, 9 and 10 of the Childcare Act 2006 give local authorities the powers they need to fulfil their duties under sections 6 and 7 to secure, respectively, sufficient childcare for working parents, and prescribed early years provision for eligible 3 and 4 year olds free of charge.

Section 8(1) gives local authorities the power to assist any person providing, or proposing to provide, childcare and to make arrangements for the provision of childcare. It also gives them a power to provide childcare, subject to the limitations in the Act.

Section 8(2) specifies that the assistance local authorities may give includes financial assistance.

Section 8(3) specifies that a local authority may not provide childcare unless it is satisfied that no other person is willing to provide it or, if another person is willing to do so, that in the circumstances it is appropriate for the local authority to provide the childcare – see Step 7 and Figure 5 below for further details.

Section 9 provides that where local authorities make arrangements with a provider for childcare in return for financial assistance given by the authority, they may impose requirements on any provider receiving financial assistance, and have the power to require the repayment of the whole, or any part of, any financial assistance given where these requirements have not been satisfied. (The section does not, however, apply to the governing body of a maintained school)

Section 10 gives local authorities a power to charge for any childcare they provide, except when that provision is made under section 7, or where the childcare is daycare for children in need, provided under section 18(1) and (5) of the Children Act 1989 (provision as to charges for such care being made by section 29 of that Act).

Section 4 of the Act places Primary Care Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities and Jobcentre Plus, as well as local authorities, under reciprocal duties to work together in delivering integrated early childhood services to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.

5.11 There are no limitations in the Childcare Act 2006 on the types of assistance that local authorities can give providers. They should, however, establish mechanisms for consulting on their approach to market management, particularly if they intend to commission additional goods and services.
Step 4 of effective market management: supporting parental demand for childcare

5.12 The more informed and empowered parents are the better the childcare market will operate. Local authorities have a vital role to play in empowering parents both through information and enabling more parents to access childcare.

Providing information and knowledge

5.13 Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006, along with the accompanying regulations, place a duty on local authorities to ensure that parents have sufficient information, advice and assistance about childcare places in their area. The government issued statutory guidance about what this means in terms of the sorts of information and brokerage services local authorities should provide and the role of Family Information Services (FIS) in delivering them http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PpageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00943-2007.

5.14 Local authorities should aim to ensure that all agencies providing information, advice and assistance on childcare are working together to ensure that it is consistent, co-ordinated and disseminated effectively. This involves developing strong relationships and links with Jobcentre Plus, the local Primary Care Trust (PCT), housing associations as well as Sure Start Children’s Centres, extended schools, parents, community and faith groups and childcare providers. Chapter 8 includes more detail on information for parents and families.

Promoting take-up

5.15 Local authorities should encourage take-up of the free entitlement to early years provision for 3 and 4 year olds, both from families who are not using their entitlement or not using their full entitlement of hours. In promoting take-up local authorities should also ensure they are making maximum use of related programmes and guidance sponsored or issued by the Government. Chapter 7 provides details on the Affordable Childcare Communications Toolkit, Parent Champions project and a Black and Minority Ethnic toolkit.

5.16 The cost of childcare for many parents can be an issue. However, help is available for working parents through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (WTC) and there are other Government schemes that enable unemployed parents to access childcare so they can train to work. Local authorities should encourage parents to make use of schemes for which they are eligible. Chapter 9 provides sources for HMRC data on take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and a Daycare Trust ready reckoner which helps parents and officers to assess eligibility.
5.17 Local authorities should provide training and support so that all childcare staff working in FISs, children’s centres or in childcare settings have a good basic understanding of how WTC and other schemes work. It will be important for them to integrate advice on the childcare element of WTC with potential entitlements to other benefits (such as housing and council tax benefit) so that an all around assessment of a family’s financial position can be made.

5.18 Local authorities should also encourage out of school providers to go onto the Ofsted voluntary register so that parents can claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

Step 5 of effective market management: developing the supply of childcare

5.19 Developing the supply of childcare requires a graduated range of interventions so that the market evolves to better meet the needs of parents and families.

Influencing and stimulating

5.20 Local authorities should share the detailed work underpinning their Childcare Sufficiency Assessments and their Sufficiency Action Plans (see Chapters 3 and 4) with childcare providers and other relevant agencies supporting services for children, to help them plan their own provision.

5.21 Local authorities may also wish to work with childcare providers by encouraging and guiding them on conducting their own market assessments and parent satisfaction surveys where providers do not already undertake these activities.

Promoting partnerships

5.22 Many parents will use more than one form of childcare for one or more of their children. For example, to accommodate their pattern of working hours a parent might use a childminder to take their children to school, or pick them up from their free entitlement setting. Or a child might go to an after school club separate from the school that they attend. It is important therefore that although providers may at times be in competition they are also encouraged to work together to promote the welfare of children.

5.23 Local authorities can enable the market to work more smoothly by linking providers and ensuring they understand each other’s cultures and operating procedures. Some local authorities convene cluster meetings that bring together all the providers in a children’s centre area to discuss developments in the area, share practice and undertake joint training. Some deploy graduate teacher support across settings and sectors. Other authorities have helped providers to work more closely together by facilitating links between childminding networks and a particular school or PVI setting. Authorities can also help to broker continuity of handover from one setting to another and the standardisation of record keeping arrangements across settings.

5.24 Local authorities may also wish to bring providers together, or encourage them to meet, to discuss the support that they might be able to offer each other at times of emergency such as floods and flu pandemics.
Providing financial support

5.25 Market managers should liaise closely with the local authority’s finance department to ensure they are aware and have access to all the potential funding streams that can potentially be used to support different aspects of early years and childcare provision, including those for sustaining and growing provision and for quality improvements. Market managers should also be fully aware of other, non LA, sources of financial support, such as Business Link, which it can talk through, and suggest to, providers.

5.26 Local authorities should ensure that appropriate criteria are in place for deciding which providers should receive their financial support and when, and that funding systems treat providers in all sectors of the market equitably. Decisions to refuse or cease support should be based on a clear and publicised rationale, and informed by evidence and a full assessment of different options available.

5.27 There may be circumstances when it is right for local authorities to consider ‘one-off’ subsidies to providers. These might include:

- offering start-up grants to key provider groups which are necessary to secure sufficiency;
- providing support to a setting where an unexpected event or change of circumstances has heavily impeded their capacity to deliver;
- supporting providers who are needed to secure sufficiency but are facing the threat of closure. Local authorities should consider carefully what has caused this sustainability issue before providing support. It may be preferable to support such a provider through business development support/training – ensuring, for example, that they have a comprehensive and realistic business plan – rather than financial payments. A short term injection of cash will not usually make an unsustainable provider sustainable and often a change in business model is required. It may also be better, as described above, to support the creation of new provision under a different business model rather than making grants or loans to a provider that is unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term;
- encouraging the involvement of new providers to encourage diversity and inclusion, and ensure choice for parents; and
- providing short term support to assist providers to establish services or develop existing ones in circumstances where this would otherwise be difficult. For example, developing services that reach out to, and meet the needs of, disadvantaged groups, or that are suitable for children with a disability who would otherwise be unable to access sufficient childcare.

5.28 Although it is most efficient only to support provision which is capable of becoming sustainable, long term financial support by local authorities may be justified in exceptional cases:
where provision is unlikely ever to be self sustaining but there is a need for childcare and no more cost-efficient form of provision is available. In such cases, local authorities will have to consider whether it is reasonably practicable for them to commit to long-term ongoing support and what form this should take; and

where provision is sustainable, but only when charging fees which exclude a group of parents for whom the local authority is attempting to secure childcare. If the local authority believes it is reasonably practicable to do so, it can enter into a long term arrangement with the provider or parents to subsidise places.

5.29 All financial support should be based on a well researched and evidenced business case which outlines the type and nature of support required. They should also consider whether commercial or bank loans would be available to any providers who make an application for funding.

5.30 Local authorities should also ensure that they have acted fairly and transparently and have adhered to all appropriate rules and guidance relating to the role of market testing and competitive tendering between providers.

5.31 Robust contracts should be agreed with any provider being supported that include:

- measurement of performance against direct outcomes which are clearly aligned to key strategic objectives;
- clear development and financial support mechanisms for providers, with defined end dates. Childcare providers should be encouraged to reach a sustainable position rapidly and support should be focused accordingly. In general, therefore, open-ended, repeated subsidies to providers will not be appropriate.
- agreements should contain the facility for local authorities to require the repayment of funding if agreed outcomes are not achieved or specified conditions not met; and
- local authorities should ensure, so far as possible, that arrangements they set up with partners are future proofed to comply with agreed or likely changes to policy, delivery approaches or structures and that such arrangements fall within, and comply with, the local authority’s wider commissioning strategy and agreements.

Providing business, training and other support

5.32 Section 13 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure the provision of information, advice and training to:

- providers registered on either the Early Years Register, or the Ofsted Childcare Register;
- people who intend to provide childcare which will need to be registered;
- people in schools providing childcare;
- people intending to provide childcare in a school; and
- people employed by, or who intend to be employed at or by, any of the above.

5.33 Local authorities may also provide information, advice and training to other childcare providers, prospective providers and childcare workers and prospective childcare
workers. This duty is in addition to the requirement on local authorities to establish a clear and well signposted mechanism for routine consultation between themselves and local providers.

5.34 The section 13 duty is intended to ensure that providers have a range of information, advice and training available to them to help develop their staff and business and meet their regulatory requirements. It is also intended to support those in – or looking to move into jobs within the sector.

5.35 Local authorities should secure information, advice and training, whether delivered by themselves or others, that:

- is tailored to meet local needs and to support childcare sufficiency;
- is provided at accessible times for all providers, including the home-based childcare workforce;
- helps them meet their registration and regulatory requirements;
- supports the economic sustainability of providers;
- supports the obtaining of appropriate qualifications;
- ensures that childcare meets the needs of children with a disability and their families, and children at risk of exclusion;
- supports providers in complying with statutory requirements and national guidance on child protection; and
- secures the provision of information, advice and training on first aid and health and safety.

**Step 6 of effective market management: using proportionate regulation and quality improvement powers**

5.36 For childcare to be ‘sufficient’ it needs to be of high quality. Ofsted is the main regulator of both the PVI and maintained sectors of the childcare market, but local authorities also have a significant role to play in securing improvements in the quality of provision.

5.37 Local authorities should keep the principle of proportionality in mind as they apply their powers in relation to seeking improvements in the quality of childcare provision, including:

- using the conditions attached to the funding for delivering the free entitlement set out in the Code of Practice;
- monitoring the outcomes of settings receiving graduate leadership or other training funding;
- following up the results of Ofsted inspections and working with providers across all sectors to secure improvements, particularly where performance is inadequate or satisfactory. This will include agreeing and monitoring action plans for improving the quality of childcare offered by settings;
matching Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results to other child-level data to inform progress against overall achievement and gap-narrowing targets. The data can also be used to benchmark and track the performance of providers. For example, Bradford City Council has developed a data set that takes children’s outcomes as assessed in the Foundation Stage Profile and links this to where early education was accessed; and

decommissioning consistently poor provision by withdrawing free entitlement funding from providers who have not demonstrated the agreed commitment towards quality improvement, subject to due process as outlined in the Code of Practice for Local Authorities on Delivery of Free Early Years Provision for 3 and 4 Year Olds.

Even though the regulatory systems for the PVI and maintained sectors are different local authorities should be consistent and apply the same standards on quality across all providers.

**Step 7 of effective market management: engaging stakeholders**

There should be regular and transparent dialogue and consultation with all interested parties to ensure there is good understanding and consensus between them. Consultation on the draft Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan will be key steps in this process but it is important that authorities see this as a continuing process rather than a one-off exercise and should continue to listen and act on any concerns that are being raised.
Figure 5: Duties in sections 3 and 4 of the Childcare Act 2006 on local authorities to engage with others on delivering early childhood services

Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to take all reasonable steps to discharge their duties to deliver integrated early childhood services to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities by:

- encouraging and facilitating the active involvement of parents;
- having regard to such information about the views of young children as is available to them and appears relevant to the discharge of those duties; and
- encouraging and facilitating the involvement of early years providers in their areas, including those in the private, independent and voluntary sectors and other persons engaged in activities which may improve the well-being of young children in their area.

5.40 Interested parties include:

- users of childcare;
- providers of childcare;
- other parts of the authority – including quality and curriculum support teams, central commissioning and information management teams, and those responsible for assessing and planning other local authority services that may impact on childcare;
- the Local Strategic Partnership so that childcare is linked into the local economic and skills strategy;
- other agencies including the Children’s Trust Board, Jobcentre Plus colleagues and PCTs. The latter can be particularly useful in providing live birth data and liaison with health visitors;
- employers; and
- other local authorities – to assess the impact of cross-border flows. Local authorities may even decide to jointly commission some childcare provision.

Step 8 of effective market management: monitoring progress and outcomes

5.41 Local authorities should monitor the impact of their market making activity. In particular they should assess the extent to which their market making activity is helping to close the gaps and address the priorities and outcomes identified in the Sufficiency Action Plan.
One outcome of the Sufficiency Assessment may well be that in a particular locality a local authority identifies that there is insufficient childcare – there may be a lack of places, insufficient provision of the type that parents want or the quality of the provision currently available may be inadequate.

It may well make sense to work in certain circumstances with the existing provider(s) to remedy the situation. However, commissioning and procuring new provision can be powerful ways of developing the market and creating greater diversity and choice for parents.

Figure 6: Restrictions on local authorities directly providing new childcare supply

Section 8 (3) of the Childcare Act 2006 places a restriction on local authorities providing new childcare themselves where there are alternative and appropriate means of delivery available in the market. A local authority must determine, before providing childcare itself, whether another provider is willing to provide it and whether, in all the circumstances it is appropriate for the authority to provide the childcare itself (this restriction does not affect the provision of childcare by the governing body of maintained schools or under section 18 (1) or (5) of the Children Act 1989).

It is a condition of Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant funding that local authorities must consult, and consider using, private, independent and voluntary sector (including community) providers in their area when planning the development of new children’s centres. Similarly, schools are strongly encouraged to make use of the private and voluntary sector as providers of the 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. childcare which is a key part of the extended schools ‘core offer’.

The restriction in section 8 of the Childcare Act 2006 relates only to new or expanding local authority childcare. In cases where local authorities already offer their own provision, section 8 does not apply unless that setting expands. If a local authority wishes to expand existing childcare in terms of the number of places or the hours offered, or it wishes to open new provision, the requirements of section 8 (3) will need to be met.
If no alternative providers are available or if, after carrying out an appropriate tendering process, it is considered appropriate, the local authority may decide to provide childcare directly. Section 10 of the Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities the power to charge for childcare which they provide, except where it forms part of the free offer, or where it is delivered to children in need under section 18 of the Children Act 1989, and is accordingly covered by the charging restrictions in Section 29 of that Act.

6.3 In practice Section 8 (3) of the Childcare Act 2006 means that local authorities have to test the market before considering whether they should step in and address a sufficiency gap by providing the childcare needed themselves. The starting assumption should be that the local authority will be a commissioner, but not a provider of new provision.

6.4 Commissioning new provision may take one of a number of forms:

- it may be possible to stimulate new provision by holding a provider ‘fair’ of all childcare providers operating locally and regionally and, reflecting the guidance above, share with them the commercial opportunities for opening new provision;
- inviting new providers to be accredited on to its Directory of Providers for delivering the free entitlements for three and four year-olds;
- inviting providers to bid for extra places in their current settings in order to deliver specific programmes;
- undertaking a procurement exercise by tendering for provision in a specific locality, or to fill gaps in childcare provision across a wider area – such as for mobile provision for rural areas or isolated estates, holiday cover, atypical hours childcare, provision for older children or for children with a disability. For this to be effective, it may well be that the local authority has to provide guarantees, either for a limited period or for the duration of the contract, of a minimum level of income or usage in order to make it commercially attractive for new providers to submit a tender and enter the market in the locality. Where they do this local authorities should satisfy themselves that the funding required to underwrite such guarantees is affordable and in line with the criteria for providing either one-off or long-term financial support.

6.5 Enabling the market to develop may also mean that local authorities do not seek to intervene when a new provider wishes to establish a setting in an area where there is sufficient supply of childcare. The Code of Practice for Local Authorities on Delivery of Free Early Years Provision for 3 & 4 Years Olds makes it clear that local authorities should not refuse new providers the opportunity to request entry to the LA Directory of Providers delivering the free entitlement solely on the grounds that there are already sufficient providers delivering the entitlement.

6.6 Local authorities may wish to share their market analysis on demand and supply with potential new providers so that, as described above, providers know the risk they are taking. But if a new provider still wishes to establish new provision where there is already sufficient childcare it should in general be for parents rather than local authorities to decide the shape of the market.
6.7 Local authorities may wish to establish a pre-qualification list of approved childcare providers for different types of childcare. This may provide an opportunity for smaller providers such as private, voluntary and social enterprise providers to pre-qualify either on their own or as part of a local consortium approach.

6.8 Local authorities should always – and particularly when working with small providers, or the voluntary and community sectors – work to measure and reduce the administrative burdens arising from contracts, and the existing administrative burden measurement process.

6.9 Local authorities should ensure that all the criteria, processes and decisions involved in commissioning, procurement and tendering – along with any associated decision on whether to provide childcare themselves – are fair and transparent and in accordance with UK and EU law, regulations and guidance. The EU Public Services Procurement Directive emphasises the importance of transparency and consistency in contracts, tender weightings, processes and awards.

6.10 Local authorities should also ensure that there is a process in place to re-consider decisions that are challenged by parents, providers or other members of the public.

6.11 A commissioning approach can also be used to support the informal childcare market. For example, local authorities can, through providing and broadening access to toy libraries, drop-in and stay and play sessions, reading and rhyme times in local libraries, one-off workshops and play clubs, support the caring role of grandparents, other family members and friends who undertake childcare.
Chapter Seven
Families in Challenging Circumstances

7.1 It is vital that local authorities engage with, and support, providers in ensuring that childcare is inclusive and accessible to all. They should have particular regard to the childcare needs of families in challenging circumstances, including:

- low income families (including lone parents) and where parents are seeking work
- families who include children or parents with a disability
- families in Black and Minority Ethnic communities
- families in Gypsy, Roma and traveller communities
- families living in remote or rural areas
- Armed Forces families

7.2 Local authorities need to be proactive in supporting these families and use outreach, both to bring families into existing locally provided services and to deliver services directly to families who are “reluctant” to access these services. Effective outreach can only be developed through partnership working and by tackling negative or prejudicial attitudes where they persist.
Securing Sufficient Childcare

Legal requirements

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to ensure that appropriate services are provided to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need.

Section 18 of the same Act makes provision for local authorities to provide, as is appropriate, day care for children in need within their area who are aged five or under and not yet attending school; and to provide such care or supervised activities as is appropriate for children in need within their area who are attending school outside school hours or during school holidays. Local authorities should ensure that their actions to secure sufficient childcare for working parents complement and reinforce these related duties under the 1989 Act.

Sections 1-4 of the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities and their partners to reduce inequalities in outcomes for young children aged 0-5; and this is supported by statutory early years targets on local authorities, which focuses on those at risk of falling into the lowest 20 per cent of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results.

Local authorities are also under the duties placed on them through the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000; Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001; Special Educational Needs Code of Practice to reduce inequalities and promote diversity.

Local authorities must also secure information, advice and training to assist providers in meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995; Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Race Relations Act 1976; the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003; the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003; Part 2 of the Equality Act 2006; and Regulations under Part 3 of the Equality Act 2006 to ensure that services promote equality of opportunity for all children.

Access to childcare for low-income families and parents seeking work

7.3 The Government pledged to give every child the best start in life and to halve child poverty by 2010, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020. The availability of accessible, flexible and affordable childcare can often make the difference between out of work parents (including potential second earners) finding a job or employed parents in low income families finding better paid jobs.

7.4 The Government aims to maximise the take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and other schemes that support training into work. Families Information Services (FISs) should ensure they are familiar with all the different forms of financial support for childcare and can advise families on appropriate options to suit their circumstances.

7.5 Local authorities also need to have regard to local patterns of employment, including shift work and atypical hours and consider how the childcare needs of these families can best be met. They should also have strong, well established links with Jobcentre Plus to ensure they are aware of the needs of those looking for work in their area.
7.6 They should further ensure that childcare is accessible, in terms of its geographical location, by walking, cycling or public transport. This is particularly important in communities with low levels of car ownership.

Lone parents

7.7 Changes to income support legislation are expected to have an impact on the number of parents seeking childcare for school-aged children. Since October 2009, lone parents whose youngest child is aged 10 or over can no longer claim Income Support, but must move onto Jobseeker’s Allowance if they are able to work. From October 2010, this will apply to lone parents whose youngest child is aged 7 or older.

Access to Childcare for Children with a Disability and their Families

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) definition, which is used in the Childcare Act 2006, a child has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Section 6 of Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to secure childcare provision for children with a disability until they reach the age of 18.

Under the DDA, childcare providers must make reasonable adjustments for children with a disability and they are not allowed to discriminate against them. The DDA also protects the rights of parents with a disability, requiring that providers make reasonable adjustments to procedures and policies, or provide aids to increase the accessibility of their services. Public authorities are also required by the Disability Equality Duty proactively to eliminate discriminatory practices, policies and procedures.

7.8 Families which include children with a disability can be among the poorest families in the country, at risk of being excluded from mainstream society. Problems many families may face identified in *Aiming High for Disabled Children* (2007) in securing suitable childcare include:

- a lack of appropriate childcare provision in their area
- difficulty finding out about suitable and affordable childcare
- above average childcare costs
- attitudinal barriers on the part of some providers
- a lack of training to enable providers to care appropriately for children and young people with significant communication difficulties, medical problems or behavioural difficulties
- the cost of transport, particularly for out-of-school and holiday activities

---

All of these barriers make it more difficult for children with a disability to participate in the same kinds of childcare as their peers and may reduce the opportunity for their parents to participate in work or training.

7.9 It is important that children with a disability are able (as far as possible) to participate in the same kinds of childcare as their peers. Local authorities’ disability equality schemes should specifically refer to early years and childcare settings, explaining their role in improving children’s outcomes and narrowing the gap between those children at risk of the poorest outcomes and the rest.

7.10 Local authorities should also actively consider ways in which childcare services and service delivery can be personalised for children with a disability and their families, using the Early Support approach and materials, including the Family File, to agree the nature of a child’s additional support needs and to share relevant information with other practitioners.

7.11 Local authorities need to secure childcare, including out-of-school and holiday care for older children, that is inclusive and should pay particular regard to the needs of children at risk of exclusion. They may place conditions on providers they support to promote childcare that is appropriate and inclusive, and should consider providing relevant training in equality and diversity issues. They should work closely with parents, practitioners and the voluntary sector when deciding on, and undertaking, such activities.

7.12 Local authorities should ensure that advice and support are co-ordinated effectively to reduce the risk of information not being shared, of children and parents being passed between agencies or falling through gaps, or of delays in the provision of services.

7.13 Local authorities will need to work with a range of partners to co-ordinate services including: childcare providers, extended services provision, children’s centres, Family Information Services and Parent Partnership schemes, Aiming High for Disabled Children project teams – particularly those working on Short Breaks, Parent Participation and Equipment, and local social care and health services.

Aiming High

7.14 The Aiming High for Disabled Children core offer sets national expectations for how services should be delivered. The standards cover information, transparency, assessment, participation and feedback. Service development affecting children with a disability and their families should take these standards into account.

7.15 The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme has introduced a package of policies to support children with a disability and their families. This includes investment in specific, priority services such as short breaks for children and families, and a grants programme to support the participation of parents in local service development. It is important that childcare and other provision for children with a disability, such as short breaks, should be offered in a seamless way that considers the child, siblings and the wider family needs.
7.16 One of the main growth areas for short breaks has been through non-specialist groups, often using universal youth and leisure services. Making adequate provision for children with a disability through childcare settings is essential to ensure mainstream services are used effectively. Local authorities should note that we plan to introduce a duty to provide a short breaks service in April 2011, under Section 25 of the Children and Young People Act 2008. Local authorities will be expected to provide a range of short breaks for disabled children, and their parents and carers, and to plan the service as part of the Children and Young People’s Plan.

7.17 Local health services have an important role to play in the joint commissioning of services and in making referrals to settings. Through the Child Health Promotion Programme, delivered by health visitors, midwives, GPs, family support workers and other practitioners, families are able to access a comprehensive package of care that includes signposting to childcare provision and support. This role is likely to increase in relation to providing childcare for children with a disability and/or with specific health needs.

**Disabled Children’s Access To Childcare (DCATCH)**

7.18 The Aiming High programme includes a £35m programme – Disabled Children’s Access to Childcare (DCATCH) – to test a range of practical ways to help children with a disability to access childcare. All local authorities will receive additional funding in 2010-11 to support implementation of the new working practices developed by the ten DCATCH pilots including:

- Better data: estimating demand and monitoring take-up
- Participation and feedback: consulting with families
- Improving information for families
- Supporting families to make choices
- Workforce development
- Increasing capacity, inclusion and improving quality
- Meeting particular childcare needs
- Affordability and cost

7.19 The DCATCH initiative has produced a number of resources to assist local authorities in carrying out their duty to secure sufficient childcare for children with disabilities:


A *Benchmarking and Planning Tool* to help local authorities establish baselines and plan improvements in access to childcare for children with disabilities can be found at: [www.togetherfdc.org](http://www.togetherfdc.org)
Access to Childcare for Parents who have a Disability

7.20 Nearly 70 per cent of households where neither parent is working include at least one parent who has a disability. People with a disability in work are disproportionately in low paid jobs, making the cost of childcare an increasingly important factor in decisions to take up, or remain in, work. In addition to promoting take up of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, the free offer for 2 year olds and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, local authorities may also wish to offer their own targeted support.

7.21 Parents with disabilities may also have particular issues relating to the coordination of children’s and adults’ services and access to childcare facilities, which local authorities should take into account in their planning.

Access to Childcare for Black and Minority Ethnic Families

7.22 Local authorities should pay particular regard to ensuring that information, advice and assistance meets the needs of families from black and minority ethnic groups (including Central and Eastern European) in the area.

7.23 Figure 7 below is taken from a toolkit on promoting take-up of childcare among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. It charts the stages in promoting take-up starting with identifying areas and families to target. It then moves through raising awareness via parents’ and community groups, personal and direct contact, outreach workers based in children’s centres and referrals from other agencies; providing one-off ‘taster’ and other introductory sessions; supporting parents to take up free entitlement places and paid-for childcare; and tracking progress and outcomes.

7.24 At each stage, different kinds of data and action are required. It is vital that there are good links between services to ensure that initial contacts are followed through and that families don’t fall through gaps between services.
More information on the BME pilots, including the above toolkit, is available on the Every Child Matters website at:
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/earlyyears/localauthorities/lappractice/bmechildcare/bmechildcare/

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
7.25 Children from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities have the lowest achievement levels of any ethnic minority group and are at risk of not getting the appropriate targeted support.

7.26 The development of trusting relationships is a pre-requisite to the engagement of families from the GRT communities. The Traveller Education and Achievement services have specialist knowledge and valuable experience which should be shared with other local authority teams.

Access to Childcare for Families Living in Rural Areas
7.27 In rural areas, the increased distances between communities may make access to childcare particularly challenging. Physical barriers, such as a motorway or railway lines, may prevent access to provision which is physically close to parents’ homes or workplaces. Although the duty to secure sufficient childcare does not entail a duty to provide transport to childcare, local authorities should ensure that childcare is accessible for parents in the local community. When doing this, they should take into account access
to private or public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, general safety requirements, and specific barriers to access encountered by children and parents with a disability. This will include ensuring that families with young children living in rural areas or remote places have access to services in central locations.

Access to Childcare and Early Years Support for Armed Forces Families

7.28 Accessing good quality childcare and early years support can be difficult for armed forces families, with their unique circumstances, atypical working hours and often remote locations.

7.29 Local authorities should ensure that the needs of service families, and all service communities, (whether located in bases or living in the wider community) in their area are identified and met within their sufficiency assessment and action planning. Local authorities should liaise with the heads of armed forces bases both to ensure they can access the views of families living there, and so that plans for securing sufficient childcare are consistent with any restrictions governing access to the base.

7.30 Local authorities should also consider how best to maximise Sure Start Children’s Centres’ potential in helping service partners with young children to gain employment. Support would include promoting to them the range of services offered at local centres, e.g: helping with CV writing, interview preparation and confidence building.

7.31 Outreach work is already undertaken by centres with vulnerable groups, but local liaison between forces, local authorities and children’s centres should take place to raise awareness of the needs of service families located in bases and those living in the wider community. Together for Children will share emerging promising practice from the more mature centres with the newly developing ones to help encourage stronger partnership working with military communities. Local authorities should also ensure that extended services are reaching and benefiting armed forces families.
The Service Families Employment & Skills Taskforce Report, published March 2010, outlines the steps the Government is taking to address the barriers that make it harder for Service families to access opportunities to improve their employment, training and career prospects.

Chapter Eight
The Wider Context

8.1 This chapter provides an overview of the economic and policy context that is likely to have an impact on childcare sufficiency.

The changing economic environment

8.2 Improvements in the national and local economy will result in new jobs and increased demand for accessible childcare. As part of their childcare sufficiency responsibilities, local authorities should therefore:

- work closely with their Government Office, its Childcare Regional Network (CRN), provider organisations and neighbouring local authorities
- be aware of the changing economic position through updates from Regional Development Agencies and local business development officers
- maintain links with Jobcentre Plus to ensure they are aware of employment trends locally
- monitor the strength and sustainability of the local childcare sector
- consult regularly with childcare providers in the private, voluntary and independent sector to find out what issues they face and how the authority can best help
- review the support available to local childcare business. Is sufficiency and access funding (both revenue and capital) reaching the right places?
- review their own local arrangements for managing the childcare market. Are any processes causing practical difficulties?
- consider how easy it is for families to plan their childcare across the working day or across the days of the week, especially when they have children of different ages with some at school and others in childcare settings. What can the local authority do to make the childcare offer as seamless and convenient as possible?
The National Policy Context

8.3 The Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare: Building on the 10-Year Strategy document, published in January 2009 announced a number of new initiatives such as the introduction of a single funding formula for early years, a new focus on childcare provision for children aged 5-14 and Childcare Affordability Pilots to test out raising of the tax credit limit for families in pilot areas and those with children with a disability.

8.4 Key dates for local authorities to factor into their assessments are:

- Between April 2010 – April 2011, the introduction of the Early Years Single Funding Formula, for funding the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds
- Throughout 2010, further filling of free part-time places for disadvantaged 2 year olds
- From September 2010, the universal rollout of the extension to the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, from 12.5 to 15 hours per week, delivered more flexibly
- From September 2011, free full-time provision in reception from the September after a child’s fourth birthday, for those parents that want it.
- From September 2012, the availability of a “stretched” free entitlement of fewer hours per week over more than 38 weeks for 3 and 4 year olds, for any parent who wants it, in all local authorities
- From 2011, further rollout of free part-time places for 2 year olds.

8.5 The Government’s Families and Relationships Green Paper, Support for All, published in January 2010, included the following childcare proposals:

- launching an online eligibility checker to give parents a clearer picture of the financial assistance with childcare;
securing sufficient childcare

- simplifying the funding schemes for parents who need help with their childcare costs while learning or re-skilling for employment;
- encouraging all Sure Start Children’s Centres to offer a ‘walking bus service’ where their locations make this feasible;
- encouraging children’s centres co-located with schools to be more proactive in helping schools manage before and after school clubs;
- encouraging over 8s out-of-school and holiday childcare providers to register on a voluntary basis with Ofsted; and
- making more information available to parents about local out of school and holiday provision for older children.

Entitlement to Free Early Years Provision for 3 and 4 Year Olds

8.6 The free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds should be a cornerstone of provision in every local authority. Ninety-five per cent of 3 and 4 year olds take up at least some of their free entitlement to 12.5 hours free early years provision a week. From September 2010, the free entitlement will be increased to 570 hours a year, over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year and delivered more flexibly.

8.7 Further information on the extension of free early years provision for 3 and 4 year olds can be found in the Code of Practice at: [http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00689/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00689/)

The Early Years Single Funding Formula

8.8 In 2007 the Government announced plans to introduce a single local Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF), with the aim of providing greater consistency and transparency in local decision-making concerning the funding of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds. The legislation to put this into effect has now been passed by Parliament.7

8.9 The Single Funding Formula will be an important tool for the local authority to use in managing the childcare market, with the aim of ensuring that all childcare settings are sustainable and achieving or working towards high quality provision, and giving all settings the confidence that they are being funded fairly for providing free entitlement places. Further details are available in DCSF Guidance “Implementing the Early Years Single Funding Formula” (2009)8

8.10 Nine pathfinder local authorities have been operating the Single Funding Formula since 2009. More than 60 local authorities will be joining the pathfinder programme from April 2010. The Government expects all local authorities to have their single funding formulas in place by April 2011.

---

7 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
8 ISBN: 978-1-84775-473-8
Extending the free entitlement to 2 year olds

8.11 The Government has set out a long term ambition to extend the free entitlement to all 2 Year olds whose parents want it. This is being introduced in stages, beginning with the most disadvantaged. The commitment to offer 10 free hours a week of early years provision – to 15 per cent of the most disadvantaged 2 year olds – has been met with some 20,000 places currently available across all local authorities. The Government is committed to extending the free childcare to even more 2 year olds in the period until 2013-14, and local authorities will be expected to reflect this commitment in their planning.

Employer supported childcare (Childcare Vouchers)

8.12 Childcare vouchers provide significant benefits for employers and staff, both in terms of the savings they make on National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and in terms of retention and recruitment.

8.13 The Government plans to change the tax relief available for Childcare Vouchers from 6 April 2011. Basic rate taxpayers will keep the full amount of tax and NICs relief on employer supported childcare. However, higher rate taxpayers joining a scheme on or after this date will only be entitled to income tax relief worth exactly the same as basic rate taxpayers.

Full time learning for 4 year olds

8.14 In his Primary Curriculum Review of April 2009, Sir Jim Rose found evidence on the benefits to summer born children from starting school at the same time as their peers and therefore recommended that children should ideally start school in the September immediately after their fourth birthday, possibly on a part-time basis for some children, but with parents having freedom to choose. The Government also concluded that children should be able to continue to receive provision in other early years settings from the September after their 4th birthday, if their parents felt they were not ready for school.

8.15 In carrying out their sufficiency assessments, local authorities will need to confirm how many parents wish to take up the offer of full-time place in reception and availability of provision to meet this commitment. They will also need to assess how many parents wish to defer their child’s start in reception and continue to take advantage of their 15 hour free entitlement place instead, to ensure there is sufficient provision available and that children are supported in making the transition from nursery to full-time school.

Sure Start Children’s Centres

8.16 Sure Start Children’s Centres are a universal service for young children and their families. There are now over 3,500 children’s centres open – providing access to integrated early learning and care for children aged 0-5; a range of family support and health services including antenatal and post-natal advice; employment and training advice for parents; and support for families with special needs.
8.17 New provisions in the Childcare Act 2006 (which were inserted by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009), aim to secure the future of centres as an established part of universal services for young people and their families, by creating a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure there are sufficient children’s centres in their area.

8.18 Children’s centres are an increasingly important part of a local authority’s suite of children’s services and in areas of disadvantage may be a significant provider of childcare. Children’s centres operating in more disadvantaged areas offer full day care, between 8am and 6pm, five days a week. Local authorities should ensure that existing centres and plans for the development of new ones are considered when assessing the supply of childcare.

8.19 It is a condition of Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant funding that local authorities must consult, and consider using, private, voluntary and community sector providers in their area when planning the development of new children’s centres.


5-14 Childcare

8.20 The Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare strategy document emphasises that local authorities should ensure a rich menu of options for school-aged children and young people. These may be provided both inside and outside school premises throughout the year, and may be run and managed by a range of providers.

8.21 The factors that need to be taken into account for this age group will be different to those for children under 5. For example, where children and young people spend a whole day at school, the activities they take part in on either side of the school day will need to take greater account of their personal preferences or wider needs.

8.22 Local authorities should take steps to:

- ensure they have sufficient information about demand for childcare and activities for the 5-14 age group to plan effectively;
- ensure they are aware of children’s and young people’s preferences for particular types of childcare setting and activities – this will be particularly important for the 11-14 age group;
- help develop existing provision for 5-14s into regular and reliable childcare and activities by working closely with schools to ensure that they meet local demand and by securing provision elsewhere in the community;
- help schools to offer access to out of school childcare and activities by advising on sustainable charging regimes;
take a strategic approach, developing close links with different parts of the local authority involved in securing 5-14 provision – DCSF is currently working with 4Children and a small number of local authorities to identify effective models of strategic planning for 5-14 childcare, and will disseminate the findings of this work;

- use all the funding streams available for this age group in a strategic and co-ordinated way, for example funding for play, gifted and talented, Aiming High for Disabled Children, disadvantage subsidy and youth funding;

- make it easy for parents to access information on the full range of childcare and supervised activities on offer for 5-14s – both inside and outside of schools, including through the Families Information Service;

- ensure that this information is in a format that parents can access and easily understand;

- ensure that families’ needs are met over holiday periods and deploy their sufficiency, funding here as a priority;

- encourage all private and voluntary sector childcare providers to register with Ofsted (if they are eligible to) so that parents who use them will be able to obtain support through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

**Case Study 4: Isle of Wight [supplied by 4Children]**

Currently, 95 per cent of primary schools on the Isle of Wight provide access to childcare all year round, and there is an integrated approach to commissioning extended services, healthy schools and children’s centres.

This successful approach is summarised in: ‘Making the difference together – our journey so far’ (Isle of Wight Children’s Services, 2008)

The Directorate of Children and Young People updated the Council’s Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2009, and brought together a planning group in November 2009 to prepare for the CSA 2011, integrating the work of extended services, early years and childcare development, sufficiency planning and disability access teams to ensure that the supply of childcare and activities for 5-14s meets demand.

**Extended Services**

8.23 Extended services clearly play an important part in meeting the childcare needs of the 5-14 age group. The Government has committed that every school will offer extended services by the end of 2010. As at 31st March, 96 per cent of all schools are providing access to the extended services full core offer.

8.24 The full extended services core offer includes, for primary schools: offering access to wraparound childcare in response to demand, 8am-6pm, 48 weeks a year, on the school site or through other local providers; and a varied menu of before and after school activities. At secondary schools, it includes a varied menu of before and after school activities such as study support (e.g. homework clubs), sport, music and arts – all in a
safe place to be. The core offer is a ‘safe place to be’ for children where parents can be assured that their child is supervised and that there is someone in charge of the activities taking place.

8.25 Local authorities will need to pay special attention to the commissioning relationship with colleges, schools, school trusts, and clusters of schools, to take account of their relative independence and own role as commissioners of children’s services.

8.26 The DCSF guidance for funding extended services (September 2008) makes clear that schools need to work in partnership with their local authorities, with other schools, the PVI sectors and other children’s services to develop services which can complement, not duplicate, existing provision. This is available at: http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/es_dcsf_fundingguidance_sep2008.pdf

8.27 Schools are legally required to consult local authorities in order to identify local demand and unmet needs, and to communicate the range and timing of the opportunities they plan to offer. Local authorities should advise schools, using the findings of their childcare sufficiency assessment, on areas of unmet needs and how these can best be met. They will need to offer all schools the benefits of partnership work, which could include sharing the joint commissioning unit’s skills and experience, and supporting schools and clusters through procurement decisions to ensure that services are cost effective and strategically aligned.

Holiday Provision

8.28 The first round of childcare sufficiency assessments highlighted difficulties for parents in accessing affordable holiday provision.

8.29 DCSF will be running holiday provision pilots in 2010-11 with a group of local authorities that will be exploring different approaches to developing and improving holiday provision, ensuring parents are able to access and afford it, and sharing ideas and practice. The findings from these pilots will be disseminated on the childcare sufficiency part of the ECM website.

4Children have been working closely with three local authorities during 2009-10 (Cornwall, Coventry and Oxfordshire) to explore best practice around setting up, managing and co-ordinating holiday provision. They have published a practical wallchart, Wish You Were Here, which gives a variety of practical advice on what local authorities and providers should consider when setting up or managing holiday provision, including suggested timelines; advice for overcoming some of the barriers which providers and local authorities sometimes encounter; and success factors for running good holiday provision. It also signposts a variety of other useful resources which local authorities may find useful.

The wallchart can be found at: http://www.4children.org.uk/information/show/ref/1905
**Quality Improvement**

8.30 For childcare to be sufficient, it must be of good quality. High quality early learning and childcare gives children the start they need to succeed in school and beyond.

8.31 High quality provision has three interrelated elements:
- a well qualified workforce leading practice;
- high quality content provided in a safe, secure and stimulating environment; and
- practice which is responsive to a child’s needs, interests and abilities while encouraging and facilitating parents’ involvement.

8.32 Local authorities should foster and drive forward a culture of continuous quality improvement across childcare provision that is characterised by high expectations for children’s learning. This means working with all providers, whether or not they are required to register, to improve continually the quality of their provision.

8.33 Embedding this culture should be based on a robust annual cycle of monitoring, planning, support and challenge from local authority Early Years’ Consultants, as well as Strategic Improvement Partners (SIPs) and others.

8.34 In developing a quality improvement strategy as part of securing sufficiency, local authorities should be aware of the National Quality Improvement Network (NQIN), set up by the National Children’s Bureau (NCB), which provides linked mentoring, peer support and sharing of good practice arrangements focused on quality improvement. The Network aims to introduce greater consistency in how quality is benchmarked and improved across existing local authority schemes. In particular, local authorities should use the quality improvement principles developed by NCB as a key tool in steering the development of their performance management systems. In addition, the National Strategies website supports EYFS and quality improvement in general: [http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears/supportingprogrammesandresources](http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears/supportingprogrammesandresources)

8.35 The Code of Practice on delivery of free early years provision advises local authorities to use the EYQISP assessment process to identify which settings are categorised ‘good’ or above (or equivalent) and concentrate free entitlement funding on the highest quality providers, i.e. those categorised ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’ (or equivalent), prioritising those with the highest ratings first.


**Workforce**

8.36 The childcare workforce is the single biggest factor determining the quality of provision.

8.37 The Government has allocated substantial funding to strengthen the qualifications and skills of the early years workforce, and is looking to local authorities to help achieve the following specific aims:
- all full daycare settings in the PVI sectors to be graduate-led by 2015, with at least two graduates in settings serving disadvantaged areas;
- making level 3 the minimum qualification level for anyone working in the early years and childcare workforce by 2015; and
- encouraging more graduate leaders to achieve Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). There are now just over 4,000 with EYPS and a further 3,600 currently undertaking training towards the Status.

8.38 Local authorities should have developed, in partnership with PVI providers in their area, a trajectory for making sure all local full daycare providers employ a graduate leader by 2015 and be monitoring progress against this. They should also agree with providers the level of funding available and any conditions attached.

8.39 Increasing the qualification levels of the non-graduate parts of the early years workforce is also a high priority. The Government is committed to, over time, making level 3 the minimum qualification level for anyone working in the early years and childcare workforce, and will consider making this a legal requirement from 2015.

**Childminding**

8.40 Childminding is a unique form of childcare provision which potentially offers a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness to parents’ needs. Nationally there are close to 60,000 childminders, so local authorities should regard them as a significant part of their childcare provision.

8.41 Whereas most of those working in the childcare sector have ready access to a formal leadership and management structure and peer support systems, childminders – as sole practitioners – are not able to access these, other than through networks or other schemes, run with a dedicated co-ordinator. Ofsted figures underline that childminders who are part of a quality improvement network achieve better results than those who are not.

8.42 At the time this guidance was published, approximately 70 per cent of local authorities had developed a childminding network, or similar arrangement. Our aim is to give all childminders the opportunity to join a network based on standard minimum criteria and principles to ensure greater consistency between them.

8.43 The new free entitlement Code of Practice states that childminders should be part of a recognised quality improvement network, and have at least a level 3 qualification (or be working towards one), if they wish to be funded to deliver free places.

8.44 DCSF has been working with the National Childminding Association and others (including a selection of local authorities) to develop a new networking approach for supporting all childminders, enabling them to deliver the 3 and 4 year old free entitlement and access other funding to enhance further their professionalism and the quality of their provision. This new national framework will ensure a consistent approach while allowing local authorities flexibility to adapt it to local circumstances. The model is due to be consulted.
on in Spring 2010, with the final version published on the Every Child Matters website later in the year.

**Regulation**

8.45 The Childcare Act 2006 introduced a new registration framework to drive up quality and give parents greater assurance that essential standards have been met.

8.46 Ofsted operates two Registers:

- The Early Years Register (EYR) – for care for children from birth to the 1 September following their fifth birthday; and
- The General Childcare Register (GCR) – consisting of 2 parts:
  - the compulsory part – for care for children aged 5 to 8
  - the voluntary part – for care for children of any age that is not required to be registered

8.47 As part of securing sufficient high quality childcare and meeting their duty under section 13 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are required to support providers in satisfying the registration and regulatory requirements.

8.48 It is vital that childcare providers adopt recruitment and selection procedures and other human resources processes that help to deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children, or are otherwise unsuited to work with them, and, where appropriate, ensure that all potential employees have up to date child protection knowledge.

8.49 Prescribed recruitment and vetting checks should also be carried out. The vetting and barring scheme was launched in October 2009 with the introduction of new barred lists containing the names of people barred from working with children. From July 2010, the scheme will begin to register and monitor childcare workers. This will provide employers with a more effective and streamlined vetting service for potential employees. All providers must have an effective safeguarding children policy and practice in place and ensure all members of staff understand the procedures. Local authorities have a role to play in ensuring that childcare providers are able to do this.

**Information for Parents and Families**

8.50 Information empowers families to make the right choices for them and demand good quality childcare provision. The Government is committed to the provision of high quality, accurate and timely information accessible to all parents.

8.51 Local authorities are required under Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006 to provide information to the public on childcare and related services. They should also provide a brokerage service to families who do not easily find childcare that meets their needs. Families that include a child with a disability could be advised to seek advice from Contact a Family, a UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents.
8.52 This duty is delivered through a Family Information Services (FIS), or a locally badged equivalent. The FIS should provide comprehensive expert information, advice and guidance to parents on a number of topics in their area, including childcare and early years services, and particularly registered and non registered childcare; the free entitlement to early years provision for 3 and 4 year olds, and childcare settings that are
suitable for children with disabilities and special educational needs. The FIS should also be able to offer advice on affordability, including how to apply for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and the possible use of employer vouchers.

8.53 It is important that the information available to parents is:

- **up to date, comprehensive, accurate and impartial.** Local authorities should ensure that the processes they have in place to enable childcare providers to update their information are as clear and accessible as possible. They should aim to update their publicly available information within 2 working days of receiving any update.

- **provided in response to parents’ needs.** FISs need to identify and maintain intelligence on the varying needs of parents in their area, especially those who rarely use the service and those who may be socially excluded.

- **accessible.** Local authorities must ensure their information service is fully accessible and, in particular, that it reaches out to people who might have difficulty taking advantage of the service. The FIS should also ensure that information is made available through a wide range of outlets where parents are likely to visit. These include Sure Start Children’s Centres, GP surgeries, libraries, community centres, post offices, and schools.

8.54 In September 2009, an extensive online resource, the Family Information Directory (formerly the Parent Know How Directory) went live. It offers parents, and those working with them, the ability to search for information about childcare and family services in both their local community and nationally. The development of the Directory is designed to make it much easier for local authorities to meet their duty under section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006 to provide information to parents. DCSF is encouraging local authorities to make the directory available on their own websites to increase local parents access to information.

8.55 The Directory will also be increasingly available on a wide range of websites that families use, greatly increasing access opportunities and offering them a far greater choice of services, support and information then ever before. Organisations that have already implemented the Directory into their online services include Directgov, DadTalk and Parentline Plus.

8.56 As well as supporting parents and carers, the Directory information may also support local authorities when undertaking childcare sufficiency assessments. Local authorities will be able to access a wealth of local data from the Directory, including information on the searches made for childcare in a particular area.

8.57 DCSF is working closely with the National Association of Families Information Services (NAFIS) to support the development and delivery of the Families First Standards and award scheme. These are bespoke national standards that represent an important benchmark in ensuring families receive a high quality information service in their local area. Local authorities which sign up to the award scheme receive expert support in assessing their current service provision, addressing any weaknesses and compiling a comprehensive portfolio of evidence that they are meeting the standards.
Case Study 5: Family Information Service – County Durham

Receiving the Families First Award was a major achievement for the authority. It is a recognition of the important role the FIS has been playing in supporting the Authority’s childcare sufficiency responsibilities. Between Childcare Sufficiency Assessments, the FIS provide an essential running commentary on the state of childcare including: accessibility, affordability and quality. The work undertaken to meet the Families First award has strengthened and enhanced the support offered to the Assessment team, and the public as a whole, by providing efficiency and quality improvements. The link between the FIS and the childcare places team has been invaluable.
Chapter Nine
Additional Resources

Help and Support
DCSF will share tools and other material to assist local authorities in their sufficiency assessment and action planning, and provide regular updates on the process at:
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/earlyyears/localauthorities/aspectpractice/markets/sufficiency/sufficiency

Please e-mail any questions to DCSF on the assessment and action planning process to:
ChildcareSufficiency.TEAM@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services’ website provides evidence about what works in relation to different kinds of interventions: www.c4eo.org.uk

Further Information and Resources
Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant and Aiming High For Disabled Children Grant Capital Guidance – http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/publications/0/1856/
Securing Sufficient Childcare


Statutory guidance on Children’s Trusts, the local partnerships of agencies responsible for improving outcomes for children and young people – http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/_download/?id=8153

Reaching out to Families

- DCSF published in March 2010 Parenting and Family Support: Guidance for local authorities in England. This non-statutory guidance brings together the latest policy position, outlines the basic principles of sound commissioning and planning for parents and families and provides practical guidance, based on experience, on how to achieve high quality service delivery http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/workingwithparentscarersandfamilies/

- An Affordable Childcare Communications Toolkit that helps local authorities to promote childcare to local families, including materials that have been developed and tested by DCSF as part of its affordability campaign and which have proved to be popular with parents. For further details see www.dcsf.gov.uk/campaigns/childcare/

- One of the best forms of communication to parents is word of mouth. To support this, DCSF supported the Parent Champions project in 3 local authorities in London. Parent champions are people, often mothers, who are chosen from the ‘school gates’ community and given training to spread the word to other families about the advantages and availability of childcare. A ‘Parent Champion Toolkit’ highlighting good practice and recommended methodologies to support local authorities is available at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/campaigns/parent%5Fchampions/.

- It may be appropriate to use different strategies to reach parents in BME communities – a toolkit providing more details is at www.dcsf.gov.uk/campaigns/freeearlylearning/
Financial Support

- Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) publishes snapshot data twice a year on take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit at www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/cwtc-geog-apr09.pdf

- Daycare Trust has a ready reckoner to check on potential eligibility for the childcare element of WTC and in turn the site links with the HMRC’s more detailed calculator. See www.payingforchildcare.org.uk/workingtaxcrediteligibility.aspx.