

Education Place Planning

10th January 2024



Somerset
Council

Introduction

The Council has a statutory duty to make sure there are enough childcare places to enable parents to take up or remain in work and training; to have free early years education for all eligible young children in their area; and undertake an assessment of the sufficiency of childcare places in its area at least every 3 years, with an annual update, and publish the assessments in the prescribed manner.

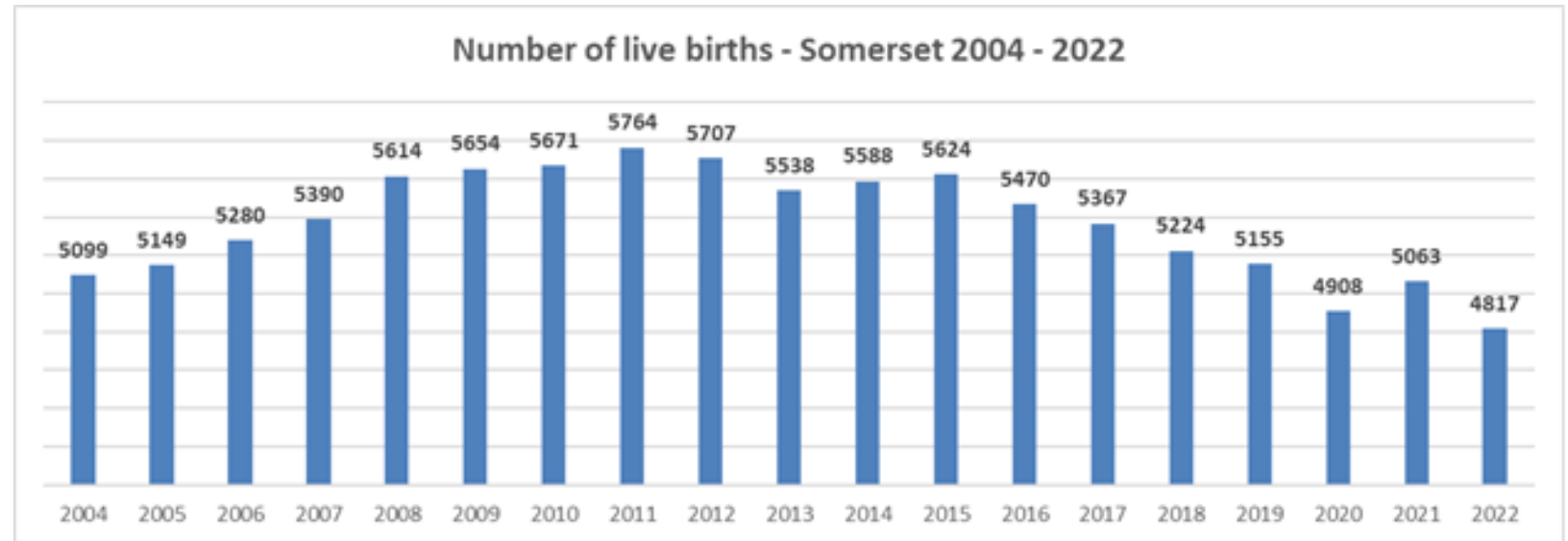
Childcare Act 2006

The Council also has a duty to make sure there are enough school places for children and young people who live in the county and to make sure these places are of good quality with enough space to promote parental choice and diversity and to undertake an assessment of the sufficiency of school places in its area with annual updates.

Education Act 1996

Somerset Context

On the whole, Somerset's pupil numbers are in gradual decline, a key factor being the falling birth rate in the county:



While the overall trend is a gradual decline, development in certain areas is resulting in increased pupil numbers, whilst pupil numbers in some rural areas are reducing dramatically, creating viability challenges.

Somerset Context

Until the pandemic, housing developments and the families migrating into Somerset to live in them were offsetting birth rates.

Since then, the Phosphates issue has slowed the rate at which planning applications are approved and more recently, higher interest rates have impacted on house sales.

Employment opportunities have drawn families to Somerset with Hinkley Point C (Sedgemoor) and the NHS (Taunton) both having an impact on demand for school places.

Primary pressures:

Chard (town) – increase of 27 on 2022 (forecast to increase by 3)
Taunton (town) - increase of 58 on 2022 (forecast to fall by 50)
Wellington (town) – increase of 13 on 2022 (forecast to fall by 15)
Yeovil (town) – increase of 34 on 2022 (forecast to fall by 24)

Secondary pressures:

Bridgwater - increase of 148 on 2022 (forecast to increase by 103)
Wellington – increase of 47 on 2022 (forecast to increase by 13)

Projection Modelling

When modelling pupil projection figures there are a number of factors which we are able to consider:

- Birth rate data
- School roll data
- Migration data
- Housing 'with a reasonable degree of certainty'

The limited scope of projection criteria has impacted on our ability to describe longer-term, strategic education needs.

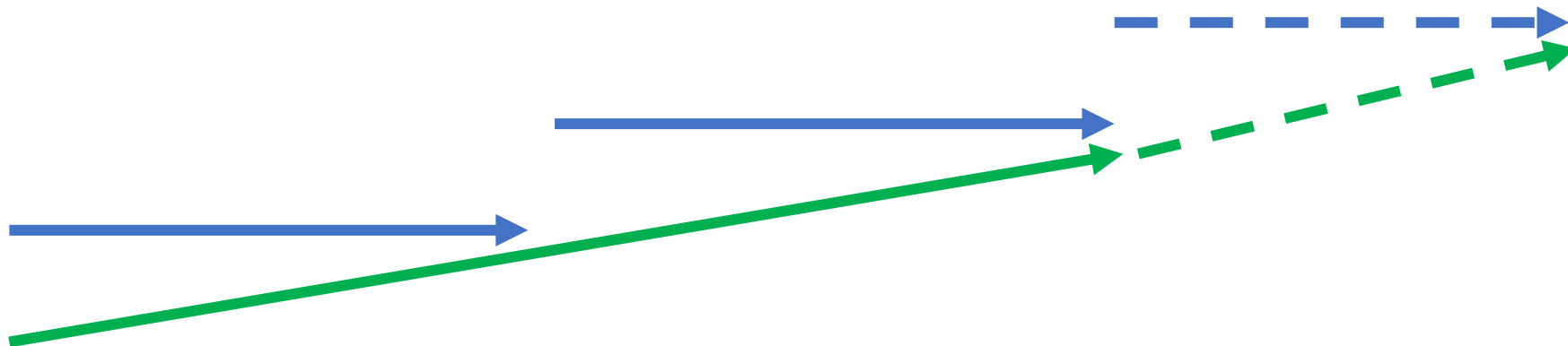
This is something we are actively working to improve, embracing the opportunities LGR has brought, particularly in regard to engagement with Planning teams.

Education Growth

Going forward, we have to be able to communicate a longer-term strategic approach to education growth.

We have to be able to produce projections in line with DfE requirements but also factor the impact of Local Plans into our calculations and ensure we and our partners understand our future education infrastructure requirements.

We're going to need to develop and resource a Strategy which is built on automated, multi-layered projection models and supporting qualitative commentary.



Pupil Yields

When considering the impact of housing developments, a key element is the anticipated pupil yield:

Early Years – 10 children per 100 homes

Primary – 32 children per 100 homes

Secondary – 14 children per 100 homes

SEND – 0.92 children per 100 homes

The DfE has recently verified this data for primary and secondary, SEND has been recently updated using local data and will be formalised through a NKD in the coming weeks.

Early Years yield is likely to rise over the coming 18 months as the Extended Entitlement agenda will increase the number of funded EY places which are required across the county.

Local First Approach

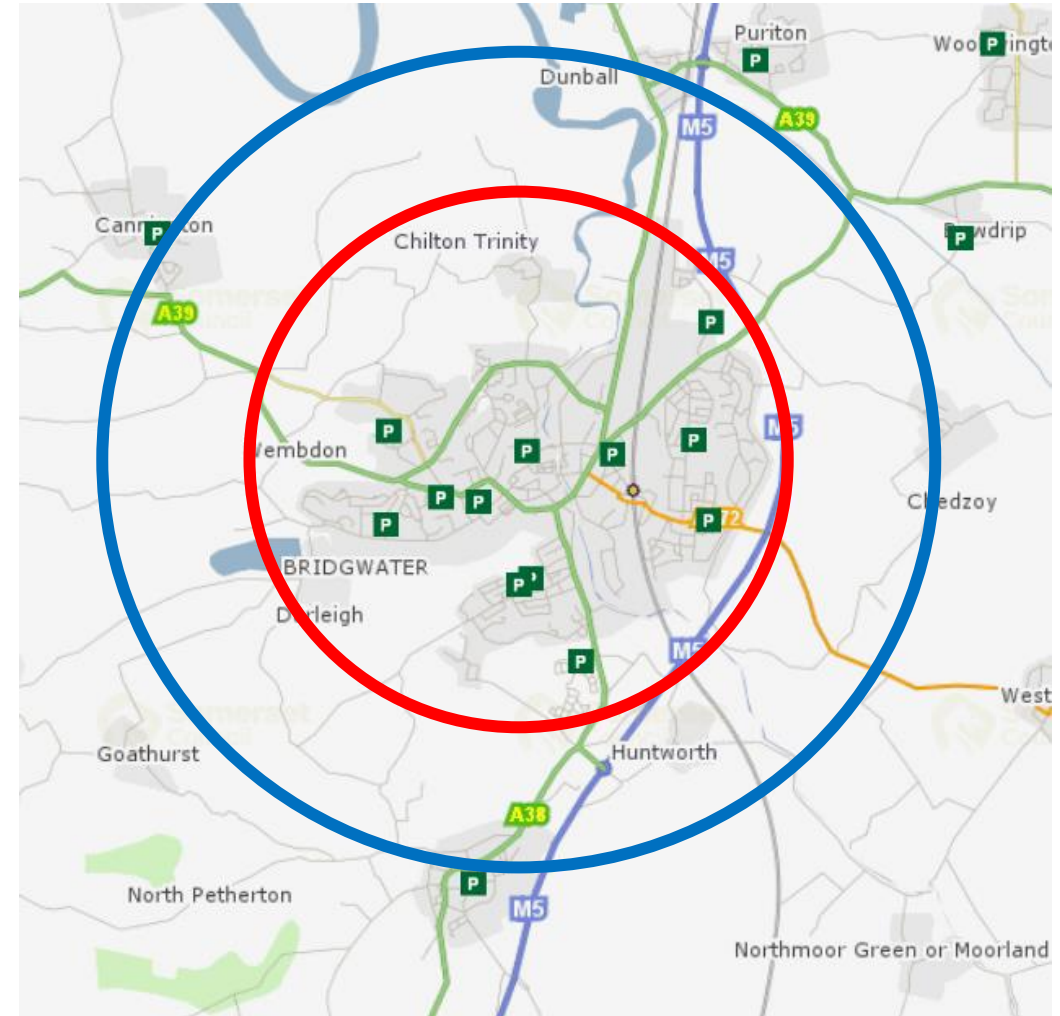
When planning places, significant regard is given to statutory walking distances:

Under 8 = 2 miles
8 & over = 3 miles

If sufficient school places are not available within these distances, the council incurs significant additional transport costs:

Taxi £25k - £30k per annum
Minibus: £30k - £35k per annum
Coach: £55k - £65k per annum

We would also face significant increases in school admission appeals as parents have the right to apply for a school place of their choice.



Developer Contributions

The DfE expects all new school builds, required as a result of housing development, to be funded by developer contributions. In reality, the collective call on those contributions (Housing, Education, Highways, Health etc etc) and the legislation which protects developers' profits, means that nothing is fully funded by contributions and that the Council will have to meet some of the cost required to deliver community infrastructure.

Those contributions also come through in retrospect, so we have to forward fund education infrastructure projects in advance to ensure places are available for children moving into developments.

Not having those places will mean the Council would have to transport children to the next nearest schools with places – this would be a significant ongoing cost. Parental preference and a general pressure on places in some areas would mean we would not benefit from any economies of scale, and we'd be transporting children across a wide geographical area in taxis and minibuses.

Extended Entitlement



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The Extended Childcare Offer

Funded childcare for working families

From **April 2024** working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks a year (a maximum of 570 hours per year).

From **September 2024** this offer will be extended to working parents of children from the age of nine months.

From **September 2025** working parents of children from nine months to five years will be entitled to 30 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks a year (a maximum of 1140 hours per year).

Somerset Context

Data from Spring Term 2023

- 7012 children accessed the Universal Entitlement of 15 hours per week of funded childcare (99% of 3 & 4-year-olds)
- 3843 children accessed the Extended Entitlement of 30 hours a week of funded childcare (54% of 3 & 4-year-olds)
- 1058 2-year-olds accessed funded childcare in Somerset (84% of eligible applicants)
- Somerset's EY population increased by 2% between 2022 and 2023 but is forecast to decline over next few years
- 459 providers – 177 childminders and 282 group provisions (excluding before and after school clubs and holiday providers) (August 2023)
- Overall, there are currently sufficient places to meet demand

DfE Data

- From April 2024 it is projected that 42% of the 2-year-old population in Somerset will use the new entitlement.
- From September 2024 it is projected that 35% of the 0 – 2-year-old population in Somerset will use the new entitlement.
- The MSOAs anticipated to require the most additional places are:
 - Stockmoor & North Petherton
 - Taunton Halcon & Monkton Heathfield
 - Yeovil Milford Park
 - Taunton Holway & Lambrook
- Grouping MSOAs roughly into EYCs this is mirrored and shows the most additional places are needed in Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton.



The Expanded Childcare Offer

Survey of Providers

The Education Places Strategy Team surveyed EY providers to investigate their readiness for the expanded childcare offer.

- 60% said they did not have the capacity to increase the number of places they offered
- 67% said their premises could not be expanded to increase the number of places offered; barriers included funding, staffing and space
- 59% said they had concerns about sustainability as a result of the expanded childcare offer - due to funding and the recruitment and retention of staff

The Expanded Childcare Offer

Other actions by the Local Authority

Somerset has received government funding (2023/24) of £91k for EY Expansion and £30k for Wrap Around Childcare. We have also been awarded £995,342 capital for the combined roll out of both agendas.

The Team is engaged with providers who may be able to expand to offer more places.

The Entitlements Team and Infrastructure Applications Team are working with Capita to ensure the new funding applications can be checked and processed.

Expansion of Wrap Around Provision



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Wrap Around Provision

From Spring Budget 2023:

- The government will give local authorities in England £289 million over two academic years, starting in September 2024, to set up wrap around provision in schools.
- Details on how funding will be released is emerging
- The 'ambition' is that all children are able to access 8am to 6pm childcare provision in school by 2026, either at their own school or in partnership with other local schools
- '8am to 6pm' not fixed, can be flexible based on local need

Wrap Around Provision

Survey Highlights

- 95% of schools offer a breakfast club
- 19% of schools offer after school provision until 6pm
- 20 EY responses offer wrap around provision, half of these being Childminders

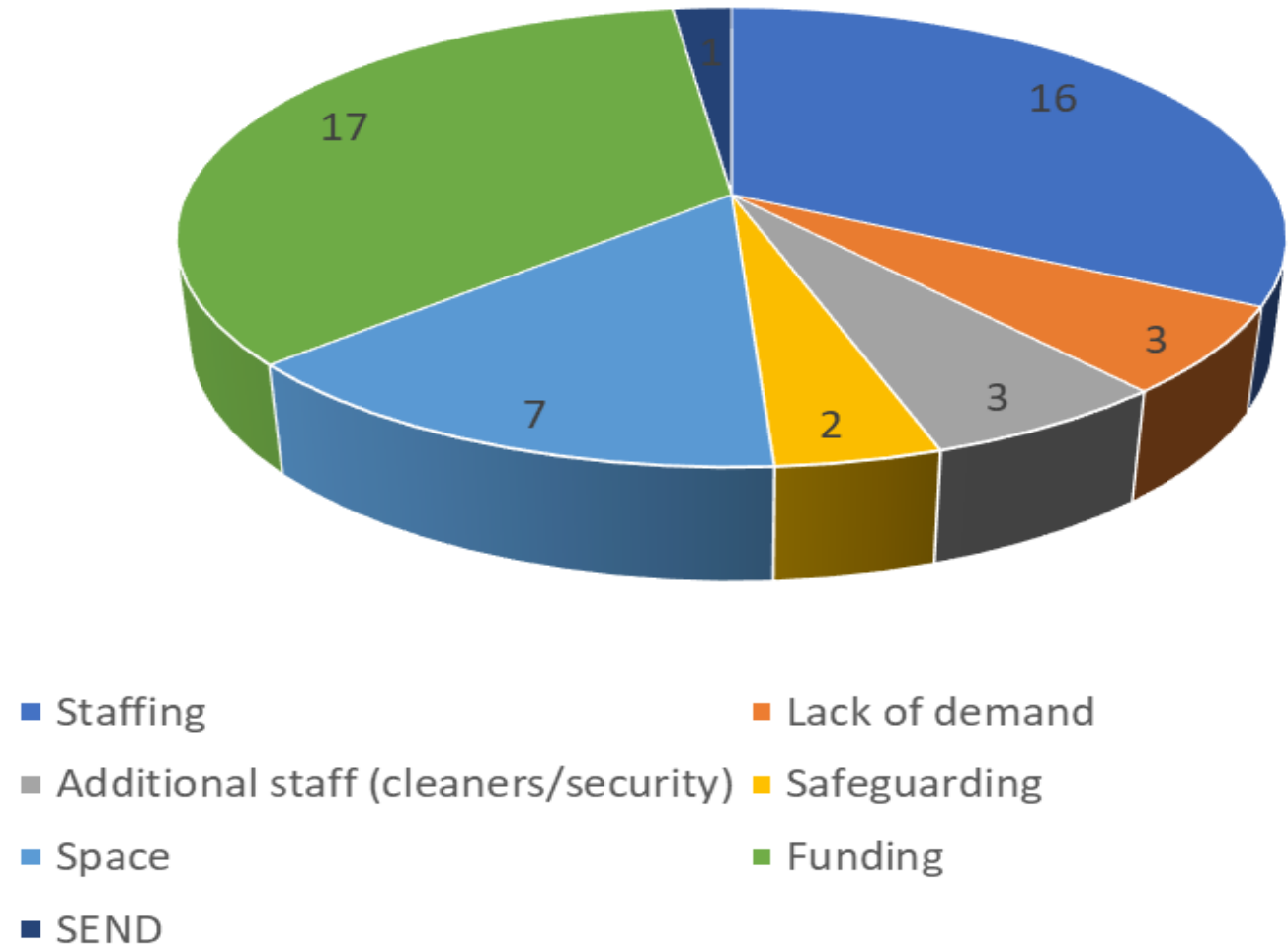
Wrap Around Provision

Barriers for Parents:

- Provision not offered 5 days a week
- Finish at or before 5pm
- High cost
- Schools not accepting tax free childcare

Wraparound Provision

Provider Barriers:



Actions

- Focus on wrap around care for school age children
- Mapping demand from parents / carers
- Cross reference with current and anticipated future levels of wrap around provision
- Strategies to address identified barriers, particularly staffing (recruitment and retention)
- Focus on barriers which prevent children with SEND accessing wrap around care

Questions



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