

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Statutory requirement

Each Local Authority in England is required under section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 to carry out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment on a three yearly cycle. The purpose is to find out whether:

- There is enough registered childcare in the Local Authority area to meet the needs of working parents
- There are enough early education places for families who want them to access their entitlement to funded early education.

In Swindon this work is carried out by Swindon Sure Start Partnership (SSSP), a department of Swindon Borough Council.

1.2 Progress towards childcare sufficiency

Swindon's first assessment was published in March 2008. The broad findings of the assessment at the time were:

- The childcare market in Swindon is self-contained with very limited cross border activity and parents making highly localised childcare choices.
- There was a mismatch between over supply of registered childcare places with many vacancies and under occupancy, and at the same time unmet demand from a large number of parents who were struggling to find childcare, for example to meet the needs of shift work and atypical working hours.
- There were sufficient early education places to meet the needs of parents across Swindon as a whole but issues with under supply in specific localities.

A childcare sufficiency action plan was published identifying areas where Swindon Sure Start Partnership would work with private, voluntary and maintained sector partners in the local childcare market to make improvements. These actions were fed into the SSSP annual business planning cycle. Developments between March 2008 and March 2011 are itemised in section 3 of this report.

1.3 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011

This is Swindon's second assessment published in March 2011. Since March 2008 there have been some significant national events that have had an impact on the local childcare market in Swindon including

- The impact of the recession on the local labour market
- Changes in the way that childcare is registered and inspected by Ofsted
- Increased flexibility in the delivery of funded early education

The 2011 assessment confirms that the major childcare development needs in Swindon identified in the 2008 assessment are still valid for planning purposes from 2011 onwards ie:

- The need for flexible childcare to meet a variety of times and working patterns
- The need to fill gaps in availability of age appropriate out of school childcare
- The need to increase funded early education capacity in areas with an identified shortfall

- The need to provide parents with good quality information about their childcare choices and the provision of registered care
- The need to narrow the gap in childcare accessibility between families in targeted groups and families in the general population.

The 2011 action plan has been fed into the Swindon Sure Start Partnership annual business planning cycle.