

Childcare for Islington (CFI)

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

2009 Refresh of Summary Report

Update of Summary CFI Report – March 2009

In spring 2008, we published the first childcare sufficiency assessment, known as Childcare for Islington (CFI) 2008. This set out our findings about formal childcare – for children aged up to 14 or up to 18 with disabilities – to allow parents to work or study.

We have published a Childcare Strategy Action Plan 2008/11 to address the findings of the CFI. A summary of the action plan, along with the full and summary CFI 2008 reports, are on the Early Years page of the council website, www.islington.gov.uk.

The council is required to do a full childcare sufficiency assessment every three years. So the CFI 2008 Report is the main source of information on childcare sufficiency in Islington until the next full assessment is published in March 2011.

However, the council is also required to publish a short update or 'refresh' of its childcare sufficiency assessment by March 2009 and again by March 2010.

Summary of Conclusions

Population

The highest concentrations of children and young people continue to be in the north and east of the borough, but overall future population increases may be greater in the south.

Supply of Childcare

While there have not been major changes to the supply of all types of childcare, the following are the notable developments in 2008:

- there was a net gain of 131 nursery places, including 73 for under threes
- there was a net loss of 108 childminding places but still apparent high vacancy levels
- a new simplified charging policy for council-run or subsidised nurseries was phased in
- there appeared to be full take up of holiday provision
- take up of after school provision increased, although there still appeared to be some mismatch between supply and demand

- take up of breakfast clubs increased
- all primary and special schools were providing access to full (88%) or partial (12%) childcare services as part of their extended schools core offer
- children with disabilities benefited from the pilot for two-year olds and extra summer holiday provision funded through the Short Breaks project

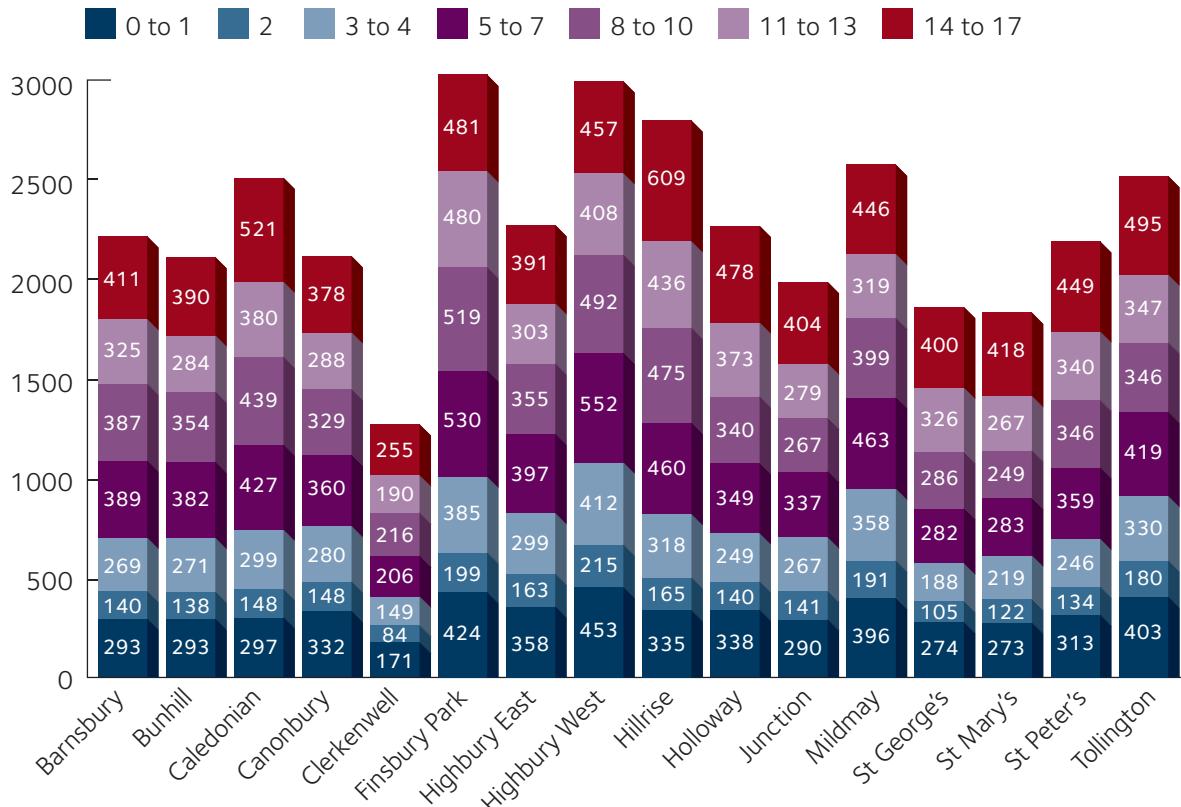
Other key developments impacting on demand for childcare

- The economic recession is beginning to impact on businesses and employment.
- Welfare benefits changes for lone parents are likely to impact on demand in 2009.
- Help for lower-income families and parents in transition to work through the Childcare Affordability Programme (CAPO5) is due to end in 2009. We are waiting for details of new pilots which may benefit some Islington families after April 2009.

A. Population

There have been no significant changes in population estimates since the CFI 2008, with an estimated 36,500 children and young people aged 0-17 projected in 2007 for 2008.

0-17 Population of Islington



Source: GLA 2007 Low (Post London Plan), for 2008 year

There have been minor changes to the spread of children across the wards:

- in 2006, the wards with the greatest percentage of children were Highbury West, followed by Finsbury Park and Tollington
- in 2007, Finsbury Park ward had the most children, followed by Highbury West and Hillrise

But overall, the highest populations of children and young people remain in the north and east of the borough (in the Hornsey and Highbury Area Children and Young People's Partnership or ACYPP areas), and lowest in the Finsbury ACYPP area (south).

The overall population of Islington is projected to increase from 187,000 in 2006 to 212,900 in 2026 (over 13%), with most increases predicted for the south of the borough¹.

The main language groups in Islington continue to be (after English) Turkish, Bengali, Somali (which is the fastest growing), Spanish and Arabic, in that order.

¹Islington Core Strategy

B. Supply of Childcare

Islington has a good range of childcare, offered by a mix of voluntary, private and council providers. This has not changed substantially in the past year, apart from a slight but notable drop in the number of childminders.

Under Fives overall:

- about 4,640 places in 116 nurseries in October 2008, compared to about 4,600 in 116 nurseries in CFI 2008, including nursery classes
- about 2,100 places in reception classes in primary schools in February 2009, compared to about 2,140 in CFI 2008
- about 500 under fives childminder places (202 childminders) in February 2009, compared to 530 places (228 childminders) in CFI 2008.

B.1. Childminders

In the period January to December 2008, 11 new childminders were registered (with 36 places), while 44 childminders closed (144 places), meaning a net loss of 108 places. With the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2008, all providers, including childminders, were transferred onto the new registers² – seven of the 44 were not transferred because they had not been minding for three years.

The resignations were highest in the Holloway and Hornsey areas (two of the six Area Children and Young People Partnership areas or ACYPPs) where supply had tended to be relatively high. But resignations were also quite high in the Highbury ACYPP area, where supply had been lowest in 2008.

Estimated figures gathered in October 2008 indicated that vacancy levels were still high – about 72% – but this figure included places of childminders that were no longer minding and places that childminders were not intending to fill. It is not possible to come to detailed conclusions about these vacancy figures.

²Ofsted-registered care provided for children on two registers: the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register (this has two parts: a compulsory and a voluntary part). Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

B.2. Nurseries

B.2.i. Changes in places

In the period January to December 2008, five nurseries were registered (with 313 places), while five were closed (182 places), giving a net gain of 131 places. This increase broke down by ages as follows: 42 under twos; 31 two year olds; 58 three and four year olds.

The places gained were mainly in the Highbury and Holloway ACYPP areas, in children's centres and in one new large private provision. The supply in Highbury was the lowest in the CFI 2008, particularly for under threes. In 2008, it gained 95 places (of which nine were for under twos, 16 for two-year olds). However, this gain was for the temporary accommodation of North Islington children's centre, and in August 2009, this centre will move to its permanent location in Tollington ward (Hornsey ACYPP area). However, the new children's centre then opening on the Highbury site (Conewood) will provide 52 places, of which 12 will be for under twos and ten will be for two year olds.

Two of the nurseries that closed were small private nurseries. One voluntary and one maintained setting closed. The other closure was a change in registration name (maintained children's centre) so no places were lost. The closures were spread across the borough. They were slightly higher in the Hornsey ACYPP area, but this was next to Holloway ACYPP area which gained places.

B.2.ii. Vacancies in nurseries

According to the childcare supply audit in summer 2008, vacancy levels (including nursery classes) were roughly similar to those in 2007, although slightly higher for the younger age groups and lower for the three to five year olds. These are set out in the tables below.

Table 2 - Places and vacancies in nurseries

Area Children and Young People Partnership Area	0-2 Registered Places	2-3 Registered Places	3-5 Registered Places	0-2 Vacancies	%	2-3 Vacancies	%	3-5 Vacancies	%
Barnsbury	44	103	369	1	2	8	8	19	5
Canonbury	102	179	656	3	3	11	6	22	3
Finsbury	70	95	390	5	7	3	3	12	3
Highbury	123	232	405	15	12	23	10	28	7
Holloway	167	219	473	1	1	10	5	11	2
Hornsey	133	222	655	11	8	46	21	52	8
Grand Total	639	1,050	2,948	36	6	101	10	144	5

Source: childcare supply audit 2008

B.2.iii. Affordability of nursery places Childcare Affordability Programme (CAP)

During 2008, the council continued to manage the Childcare Affordability Programme (CAP) Phase 1. This has been very helpful in making childcare either more affordable or flexible for lower-income families. It has also helped nurseries to offer services to a broad range of families and remain sustainable while doing so.

Parents accessing those places as of December 2008 are due to be funded up to the end of December 2009, but nurseries have not been able to take new parents on to the scheme since January 2009. Therefore, take up of places has understandably begun to reduce.

Vacancies were highest in the Hornsey ACYPP area, particularly for twos and over. They were relatively high for Highbury, even though supply was relatively low there.

Table 1 – Vacancies in nurseries

	Under 2s	2s	3-5s	% U2s	% 2s	% 3-5s
2007	27	75	177	4%	7%	6%
2008	36	101	144	6%	10%	5%

In June 2008, the take up was as follows:

- 26 out of 28 affordable places (93%) offered in four settings
- 77 out of 82 flexible places (94%) offered in eight settings

In December 2008, the take up was as follows:

- 22 out of 28 affordable places (79%) offered in four settings
- 58 out of 86 flexible places (67%) offered in seven settings

See Section C.3 below in relation to CAP Phase 2.

B.2.iv. New under fives charging policy

In January 2008, a revised charging policy was phased in for all nurseries run or subsidised by Islington Council. Following extensive consultation, it was agreed that the cost of subsidising the 467 new places to be developed as part of the Children's Centre Strategy was to be shared through increasing the council subsidy and increasing charges to parents. As well as extra support to parents with accessing tax credits, a new discount was introduced for disabled children.

There are now three charging bands (previously there were ten) related to gross family income: Band One up to £30,999; Band Two £31,000 to £54,999 and Band Three £55,000 and over. In addition, there are marketised rates nearer to actual costs.

The weekly charges in September 2008 ranged as follows:

Under threes all-year-round:

Band One £150 to marketised £250

Three year olds term-time only (TTO):

Band One £108 to marketised £209

Four year olds TTO³:

Band One £86 to marketised £209

(Holiday rates for three and four year olds were similar to under threes' charges.)

In autumn 2008, in the maintained sector 27% of parents were in Band One, 18% in Bands Two and Three, 16% in marketised places and 38% had been admitted through the Children in Need panel and not charged due to their economic status. In the voluntary sector, 65% of parents were in Band One, 19% in Bands Two and Three, 8% in marketised and 8% admitted through the Children in Need panel.

The high proportion of children admitted through the Children in Need panel or of parents in Band One reflected the high level of need and comparatively low incomes of many Islington families.

B.3. Provision for school-aged children.

Again, a range of provision has continued to be on offer, before and after the school day and during half-terms and school holidays (particularly the summer). Some has been provided directly by schools, some by voluntary providers, and a limited amount by a council-run adventure playground.

Key to this being possible has been ongoing local authority and/or Government grant funding. Given that funds to support the childcare strategy are limited, the council and its partners are in the process of reviewing funding for childcare for school-aged children. The aim is to ensure funding is targeted more effectively at good quality provision that is needed, mainly to enable parents to work or study, while minimising disruption to the current provision.

As part of that review, we have monitored **take up** of holiday and after school provision receiving this funding.

Holiday places – compared to 2007 (81% average take up of places), there was an increase of 28% in the average take up to 109% for the period April to September 2008, as a handful of providers filled more places than they had actually been funded for. Some of these places may also have been open-access. The extra take up occurred particularly in the Highbury and Hornsey ACYPP areas. In short, there appears to be no surplus in supply of holiday provision, and anecdotally there appears to be possible unmet demand.

³Note, this applied to maintained sector – in voluntary sector, there was the same charge for three and four year olds.

After school provision – the 18 after school providers receiving funding (childcare grant) reported an average occupancy of 87% for the period April to September 2008, up from 57%.

According to local monitoring information, this 87% average broke down as follows:

- two adventure playgrounds had occupancy of 120% as a result of providing more childcare places than were actually funded for (note, possibly some of these places were open access rather than childcare)
- schools filled 59% of their places (down from 62%) but this does not include non returns from two schools
- the voluntary sector providers (excluding adventure playgrounds) reported 110%, up from 58% occupancy

More information is needed to establish a clear picture of supply and demand of after school provision, but it appears that there may be some continuing mismatch between supply and demand within school settings. This may in part be due to the relative newness of this formal childcare provision and that it tends to run alongside school-based activities, some/many of which are free.

Breakfast clubs – as of November 2008, there were breakfast clubs in 34 primary schools and one special school (for the secondary pupils). Two of these clubs opened in autumn 2008. No clubs had closed as of October/November 2008. There are two clubs due to open after Easter 2009 – with these, there will be breakfast clubs in 82% of Islington primary schools.

Average attendance at breakfast clubs has shown a gradual increase since autumn 2006 (when it was about 14 children attending) to about 17 children attending per club. It appeared that, compared to approximate figures in 2007 when about 457 places overall were being used on average, take up in November 2008 had risen to about 543 places on average. This implies that breakfast clubs are becoming more established and better used.

Extended Schools Core Offer

Currently 44 of Islington's 50 primary and special schools are providing access to full or sustainable childcare services as part of their Extended School core offer (the remaining six have some term-time childcare). These comprise a variety of services both on and off the school site, often working in partnership with other schools or voluntary sector providers. This compares with the position in September 2007⁴, when there were 39 schools in Islington providing a full or sustainable offer as part of the childcare element of their extended services provision.

B.3. Provision for children with disabilities

B.3.i. Pilot free offer for two-year olds

Islington Council was one of 16 local authorities (LAs) initially taking part in a pilot to offer 12.5 hours a week free early years care and education to disadvantaged two year olds. At the beginning of the pilot, LAs were able to determine the eligibility criteria. Islington decided that parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) / disabilities would be prioritised. Fifty children per year have benefited so far from the pilot, and feedback from the parents has been extremely positive. From April 2009, the pilot authorities are required to prioritise low-income families. Islington aims to continue to include children with SEN/disabilities within the pilot. The offer is to be extended to 109 and then to 169 places in April 2009 and 2010 respectively. It will also increase to 15 hours a week in line with the increased hours for three and four year olds by 2010. The places are mainly in the children's centres to ensure that parents access the full range of support services.

⁴Report 2007 from Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)

B.3.ii. Short Breaks - Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC)

The Government wants disabled children to be a priority, both nationally and locally. So it has established the AHDC programme for 2008/11, committing substantial new funding and measures which are designed to make the system work better for such children.

In response to what families told the Government, most of the funding for Aiming High for Disabled Children will be to provide regular and reliable short breaks from caring. While this is not specifically childcare to help parents work or study, the short breaks could give parents the space to develop their skills and progress on the journey towards employment. The Childcare Strategy Action Plan aims to dovetail with the Short Breaks project.

In 2008/09, there were only limited funds for the Short Breaks strand as LAs did the necessary research and consultation to be able to demonstrate they were ready for the considerable sums to be released in April 2009 and especially from April 2010. Nevertheless, in Islington extra capacity was offered to parents during summer holidays 2008. In particular, parents of children with disabilities in 36 assessment places in children's centres were offered up to two weeks' holiday provision (normally these places are term-time-only) free of charge. Extra capacity was also offered to older disabled children using three holiday playschemes. Given the positive feedback from parents, consideration is being given to offering similar extra capacity during summer holidays in 2009 and after school club provision, subject to confirmation of funding from April 2009.

C. Factors Impacting on Demand for Childcare

C.1. Impact of the economic recession and employment trends

It is too early to be clear what impact the recession is having on demand for childcare. Nationally, it is predicted that there will be more demand for flexible, part-time childcare, but also for informal childcare given salaries may be increasingly squeezed.

From local analysis of businesses and employment opportunities in Islington (so not specifically about Islington residents), the general picture of the economy is varied. There appeared to be an increase in enterprises and employment opportunities in the last three months of 2008, but this may have been seasonal. It looks as if the recession is beginning to affect some sectors of the economy. Here are some headlines:

- unemployment figures over the last few months have been growing steadily
- cafés and restaurants show a varied 'drop off' in trade
- some sectors are showing no decline in vacancies eg lower end of retail women's clothes market
- many women, especially from black and minority ethnic communities, are still keen to work in childcare and schools
- there are fewer, lower-level practical jobs in areas like warehousing
- increasingly basic and IT skills are needed for all jobs
- new growth is hoped for in the 'green' economy from horticulture to recycling

C.2. Welfare benefit changes

JobCentre Plus (JCP) have estimated about 1,000 Islington parents were affected by the first phase of changes in November 2008, when lone parents whose youngest child was 12 were required to seek work. By May 2009, JCP should be able to confirm that figure, and hopefully project the number of Islington lone parents who will be affected by the next two phases in October 2009 and October 2010, when lone parents whose youngest child is ten and then seven will be required to seek work.

Early feedback from lone parents so far affected has been particular concern about finding affordable after school childcare.

C.3. Childcare Affordability Programme (CAP) pilots

In July 2008, the council began a CAP Phase 2 pilot to support parents in transition to work. This has contributed significantly to the childcare costs (for children aged 0-14) of these parents. It has been highly successful, particularly in supporting single parent households – JobCentre Plus have been invaluable partners in this pilot. As of February 2009, 70 children of 56 parents (54 lone parents) had been supported of whom:

- 8 were seeking work (nine children)
- 15 were starting work (17 children – one with special educational needs [SEN])
- 30 were in short-term training (41 children – one with SEN)
- 3 were volunteering (three children)

The funding for CAP Phase 2 ends in March 2009. We are waiting for details of new pilots from April 2009 which may benefit some Islington families.

C.4. Islington's Core Strategy

This document sets out the borough's vision of the future development of Islington up to 2025 and beyond, such as new housing, given development pressures and the need for environmental sustainability. Following consultation in 2008, the next stage of the document to be published in autumn 2009 should give useful information that relates to the demand for childcare. The key point to make at this stage is that the main impacts on Islington in terms of economic activity are likely to be in the south of the borough, around King's Cross, and possibly in the east.

For more information about what this summary contains in Turkish, Somali, Spanish, Arabic and French, please contact the Childcare Strategy Team – details below.

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