

September 2025

Supported 2 year olds in Nottinghamshire Early Education and Support for disadvantaged children

Content

Section One	Introduction
Section Two	Joint Local and National Strategic Approach
Section Three	Data Analysis,
Section Four	District ward Analysis, Case Studies/Consultation
Section Five	Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of Report - From Autumn 2024 data gathered in Nottinghamshire has reported a drop in the take up of places for supported 2 year olds. This report aims to provide some local and national analysis to identify key issues and recommendations.

(For the purposes of this report - Nottinghamshire refer to 'disadvantaged 2 year olds' as 'supported 2 year olds'.)

Section One

➤ Introduction

Department for Education

Funded early education for supported 2-year-olds was first piloted in 2006. The offer aims to improve disadvantaged children's social and cognitive outcomes so that by the age of 5 they are as ready as their more advantaged peers to start and fully benefit from school.

The programme aims to provide good quality early education combined with support for parents, for example, to improve their confidence in supporting their children's learning and to deal with other challenges in their lives, such as health problems and family difficulties.

In September 2022 The Department for Education permanently extended eligibility for the two-year-old early education entitlement for a funded 15 hours place to disadvantaged children:

- if they are classed as a "looked after child"
- if they have left care through special guardianship or an adoption or residence order
- if they have an Education Health and Care Plan
- if their parents or carers are in receipt of certain benefits (FRAS) families receiving additional support.

This means that the most disadvantaged two-year-olds will be able to access early education regardless of their circumstances, subject to maximum income thresholds.

In July 2025 – DfE, [Giving every child the best start in life](#) continues to recognise the need for this level of funding:

Improving support for low-income families: We will work with local authorities to increase take-up of the 15 hours of the early education and childcare offer for two, three and four year-olds, ensuring low-income families, children with SEND and children in care receive the early education they are entitled to. We will engage directly with local authorities where take-up is lowest, supporting families through Best Start Family Hubs to take up their funded hours, addressing local variation in performance and tracking data through the new Local Government Outcomes Framework. As part of the Child Poverty strategy, we will also work with the Department of Work and Pensions to make it easier for parents to use Universal Credit Childcare and the funded hours together, helping them to access work. (page 30)

Section two

➤ Joint Local and National Strategic Approach

This section includes statements from key stakeholders and the local authority on how Nottinghamshire currently ensures families have the right information, at the right time and the support they need in order to either, access their supported 2 year funded place and/or targeted services.



Healthy Family Teams [Healthy Family Teams | Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust](#)

The Healthy Families team are part of the Healthy Families Programme, an integrated service for children, young people and families which brings together care provided by health visitors, school nurses, the Family Nurse Partnership Programme (for first time teenage mums) and the National Childhood Measurement Programme.

- *Children, young people and families will receive care from this service from before birth to their late teens when they need it, regardless of where they live in Nottinghamshire.*
- *A Specialist Public Health Practitioner leads each Healthy Family Team. Other staff in the teams are Public Health Practitioners, Senior Assistant Public Health Practitioners, Assistant Public Health Practitioners, Community Health Assistants, Screening Assistants and Administrators. By working together, each Healthy Family Team member will support families and children in different ways depending on the type of help required*

The Healthy Families team complete a 2 year review which is offered to all 2 year olds, this contact provides parents with information relating to the 2 year funding. This information is also shared via RECAP (digital platform for sharing information) and additional promotion via e-platforms e.g. Health for Kids [Health for Kids | Nottinghamshire](#). There is also information within the child's unique personal child health record (PCHR) known as the "red book".

If a family does not attend their review, information is sent via a communication annex, this is a health communication system to ensure all families receive the same information.

The Healthy Families team contacted 2115 two year olds in 2024/2025 to offer a 2 year review, of that 1709 reviews were completed, 406 did not receive a review but further information was shared via recap or communication annex along with a signpost to Family Hubs. It is not possible to identify how many of the 2115 were eligible for supported 2 year funding, but all families received information on how to apply.

Family Hubs

[Family hub networks in Nottinghamshire - information for families | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire aim to offer a range of help and support from pregnancy and throughout childhood into early adulthood, including with preparing for a baby, child development, parenting support, health and wellbeing, relationships and communication, finances and employment.

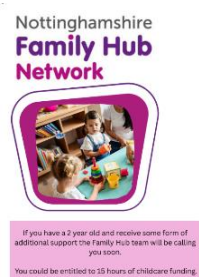
The Family Hub teams across the county offer a range of opportunities to share with families the supported 2 year funding offer, this includes:

- Having conversations with parents during 1-1 and group sessions about childcare
- Brokerage service telephone calls to parents of children who are eligible for the 2 year funded places
- Sharing information during full family assessments
- Displays in buildings promoting childcare and the 2 year supported entitlement
- Sharing posts on social media promoting the 2 year supported entitlement

The Family Hub teams also work collaboratively with the Healthy Families Teams from colleagues referring for support, to joint decision making at allocations meetings and co-delivery of services to families within buildings across our local communities. As part of this process eligible supported 2yr olds are identified and the opportunity for them to access a funded childcare place is discussed.

However, local intelligence tells us that not all eligible families want to utilise their childcare funding. This information is gathered through the Family Hub brokerage service. Through this service families are contacted who have not activated their code to access their 2 year supported childcare place. Feedback from parents assists us in our analysis of what barriers there may be for families.

Some of the reported reasons for eligible children not attending childcare are:

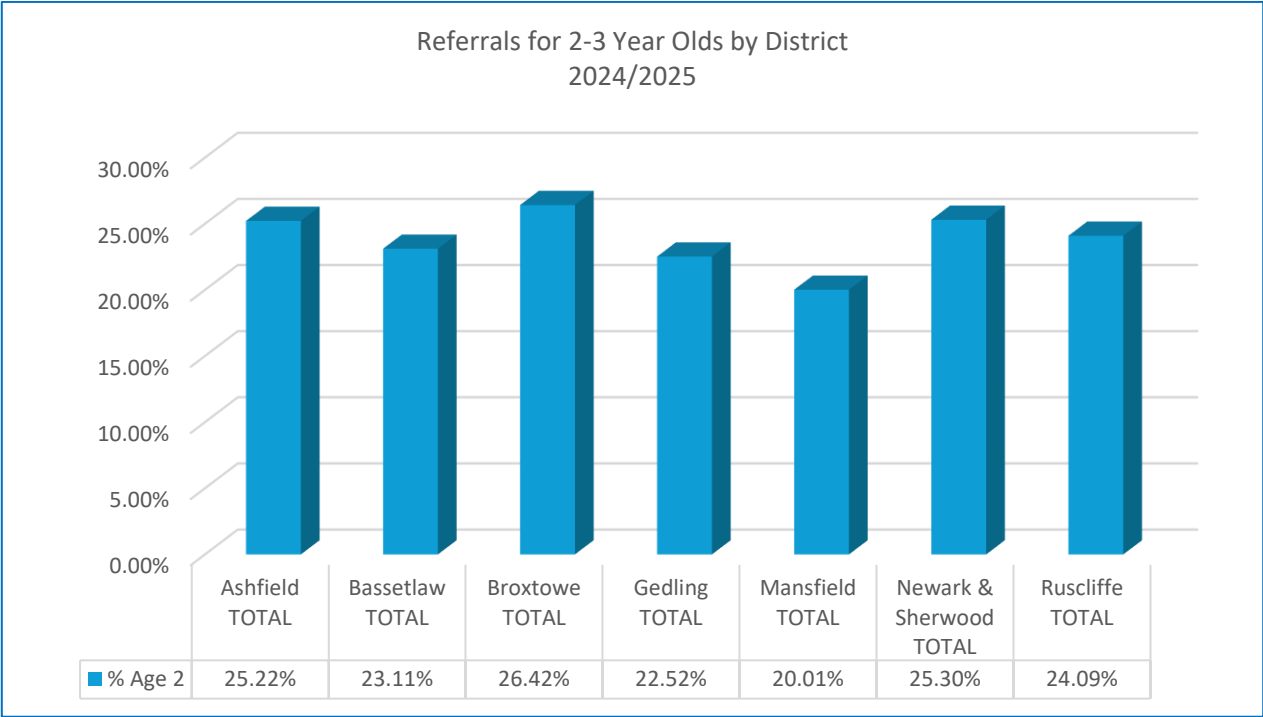


- Lack of childcare places in their locality
- Lack of appropriate childcare – where additional charges are made, places for SEND children
- Family circumstances
- Transport
- Parental choice

What is important to acknowledge is that if families choose, for whatever reason, not to access their childcare place there are additional services locally that can offer support to both the parents and the child.

Family Hub contact data below demonstrates the numbers of families with 2 year olds where these additional services were accessed. *Unfortunately, this data report cannot distinguish of these children how many were also eligible for supported 2 year funding.*

Data reporting period: 1/4/24 – 31/3/25 is shown below:



County wide there were a total of 2,519 referrals made to support families with a 2 year old child. Of the 2,519 referrals received for children aged 2yrs during 2024/2025 there were a total of 1,952 with characteristics identified which show the following at the point of referral *N.B It is not mandatory to capture the characteristics information at the point of referral therefore these numbers could be higher.*

District	Total Number of Characteristics at Referral	Affected by Domestic Abuse	Affected by Substance Abuse	Living in Rural Areas	Low Income / Worklessness	Mild / Moderate Mental Health	Parent / Expectant Parent is a Care Leaver	Single Parent	Teenage Parent	BAME	Child in Need	Child Protection	Child Looked After
Ashfield	522	22	3	92	135	41	1	68	27	112	4	13	4
Bassetlaw	242	10	6	57	74	21	0	27	2	34	4	7	0
Broxtowe	280	19	7	1	79	24	4	50	7	74	6	9	0
Gedling	225	3	1	87	29	10	0	13	5	72	4	0	1
Mansfield	275	23	6	19	87	27	0	37	14	44	7	5	6
Newark & Sherwood	216	20	9	44	35	23	1	31	2	39	4	7	1
Rushcliffe	192	20	0	23	41	11	0	28	0	63	6	0	0
County Total	1,952	117	32	323	480	157	6	254	57	438	35	41	12

Following referrals Family Hub data reports that during 2024/2025

District	No of children aged 2yrs accessing a targeted Group 24/25
Ashfield	169
Bassetlaw	103
Broxtowe	98
Gedling	79
Mansfield	77
Newark & Sherwood	128
Rushcliffe	40
County Total	694

District	No of children aged 2yrs accessing 1:1 Support 24/25
Ashfield	194
Bassetlaw	67
Broxtowe	61
Gedling	61
Mansfield	79
Newark & Sherwood	107
Rushcliffe	56
County Total	625

Quality and Attainment Team

The Early Years Quality and Attainment Team support early years settings including preschools, day nurseries, schools and childminders. On a termly basis a discussion takes place with the setting regarding the progress of children who are eligible for the supported 2 year funding along with other vulnerable groups such as children with SEND, children known to children's social care etc. These conversations focus on:

- The development of the child in the EYFS Prime areas of learning which are Personal Social and Emotional development, Communication and Language and Physical development.
- Where children are making less than expected progress advice and guidance is given to support their learning and consideration as to whether referrals to other services such as speech and language are appropriate.
- To support staff in the setting training, development and toolkits can be accessed via the Q&A team:
 - Well Comm toolkit - This helps the settings to support children's speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Settings are encouraged to use this with all supported 2-year-olds to ensure children needing support are identified with the aim to close the attainment gap
 - Emotion Coaching training - This offers an approach to support positive behaviour which focusses on the promotion of wellbeing through a relational approach centred around attunement and co-regulation
- Additional deprivation funding is offered to those supported 2 year olds who are not yet reaching the expected level of development at 3 years in Communication and Language. How this is used is not prescribed, it could be used to purchase resources e.g. the Well Comm toolkit, to back fill staff to attend SLC training or to provide 1-1 or small group time with the child(ren) on a regular basis.

Early Years Technical Specialists

This team receive data from the Department for Work and Pensions of children who are in families in receipt of qualifying benefits. The team use this data to enable colleagues to:

- establish county, district and ward level data for parents who are eligible but have not applied for their funding.
- establish county, district and ward level take up rates of parents who have applied for the funding and are attending a setting.
- establish county, district and ward level take up rates of parents who have applied for the funding but are not attending a setting.

The parents who haven't applied or are not attending a setting receive an email and text message with details of the funding and how to apply for the funding. The Family Hub Team brokerage service also follow up with a phone call for those who apply but don't take up a place.

Early Years Project Officers

Early Years Project Officers (EYPOs) play a critical role in analysing early years provision across districts. By rigorously analysing district and ward-level data, EYPOs ensure that there are sufficient, high-quality childcare places available where families need them most. When gaps are identified, EYPOs work proactively with local providers to develop and expand childcare provision, directly supporting community needs.

Their influence extends beyond data analysis. EYPOs are key contributors at district meetings, where they lead discussions on childcare take-up rates and collaborate on strategic approaches to improve access for eligible families.

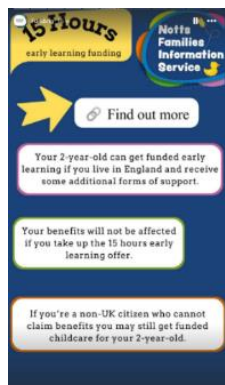
Families Information Service

[Families information service | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

The Families Information Service directory of childcare providers identifies which providers accept the 15 funded hours for two-year-olds, and parents can filter the list of providers to show this. On the [Nottshelpyourself | Find childcare](#) search page we have a pre-filtered search button to display these providers making it as easy as possible for parents to find this information on the website.

Childcare funding leaflets are available in all Family Hubs, libraries and other community venues to promote the childcare funding options available, encouraging parents to find out what they are entitled to, linking back to where the information about this is found on Notts Help Yourself using QR codes.

Organic social media promotions take place every month focusing on childcare funding across our Facebook and Instagram pages, including the 15 funded hours for two year olds, our Instagram pages also have a childcare funding highlight to allow people to find this information easily from the page. Childcare funding posts are also shared on the Family Hubs Facebook pages.



[Funded 2 year old places for families receiving some additional forms of financial support | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)



Section three

➤ Data Analysis

National, East Midlands and Statistical Neighbours Data

The most [recent data \(2025\)](#) reports that Nottinghamshire take up rates for the first time have dipped below the national rate of 65%.

However, these nationally published numbers do not include children attending under the new working criteria but who also appear on the DWP list as eligible for supported 2 year funding.

Take up rates - In Nottinghamshire we count all eligible children in our take up numbers:

71% with working criteria and also on DWP list (61% without working criteria).

National Guidance states that Local Authorities should count these children in supported take up numbers. This demonstrates that Nottinghamshire's rates compare with other authorities in the East Midlands and across statistical neighbours

National (2024)

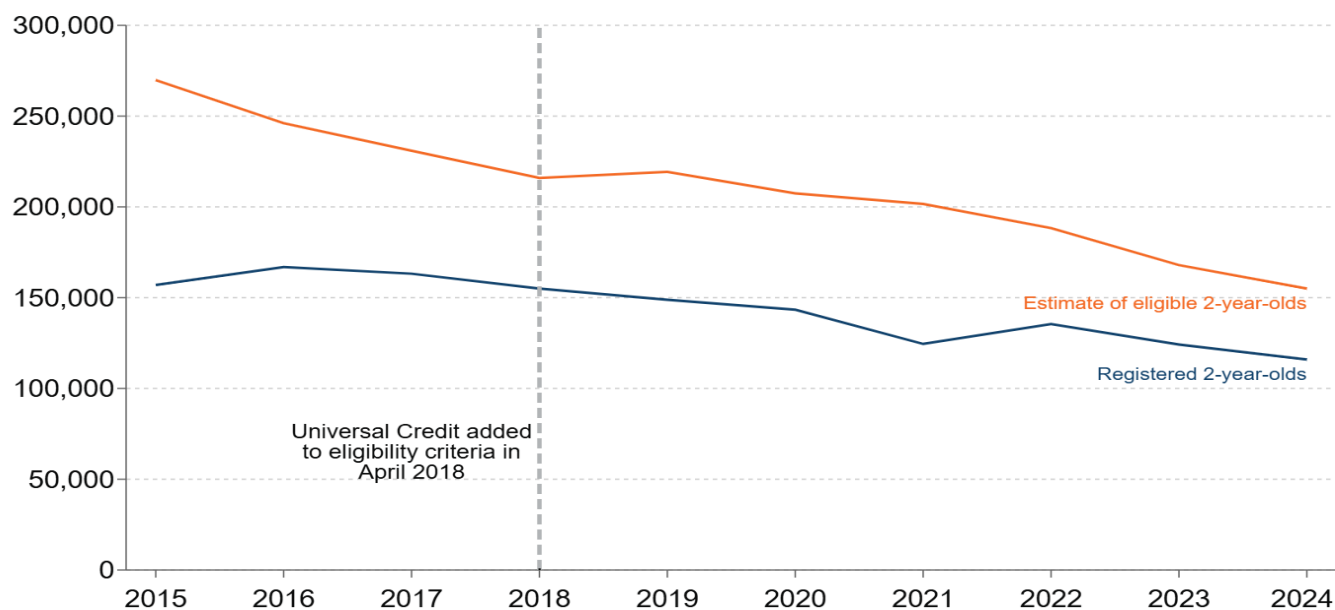
Department for Education report: education provision: children under 5 years of age – reporting year 2024
[Education provision: children under 5 years of age, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

National data reported in 2024 that 115,900 eligible 2 year olds were registered to access a funded place, this figure was down by 7% (-8,400) since 2023 and down 31% (-51,100) compared with 2016. However, whilst those eligible saw a decline the take up rates were up from 74% to 75% in 2023.

The number of disadvantaged 2-year-olds eligible and registered for the 15-hour entitlement continued to decrease, however the take-up rate increased. This is due to three factors i) falling birth rate in recent years, ii) the transition to universal credit from legacy benefits, and iii) income thresholds for the eligibility criteria remaining unchanged whilst average incomes have risen in recent years.

One factor to further explain this is that the fall in parents of 2-year-olds receiving legacy benefits which Universal Credit has replaced (a decrease of 197,000 between 2018 and 2024) has not been offset by the rise in those receiving Universal Credit (an increase of 136,000 between 2018 to 2024, following it being added to the eligibility criteria in April 2018). In addition, the maximum income thresholds for the eligibility criteria have remained unchanged in recent years whilst average incomes have increased.

Figure 2: Number of 2-year-olds registered and eligible for the 15-hour entitlement, 2015 to 2024



Footnotes

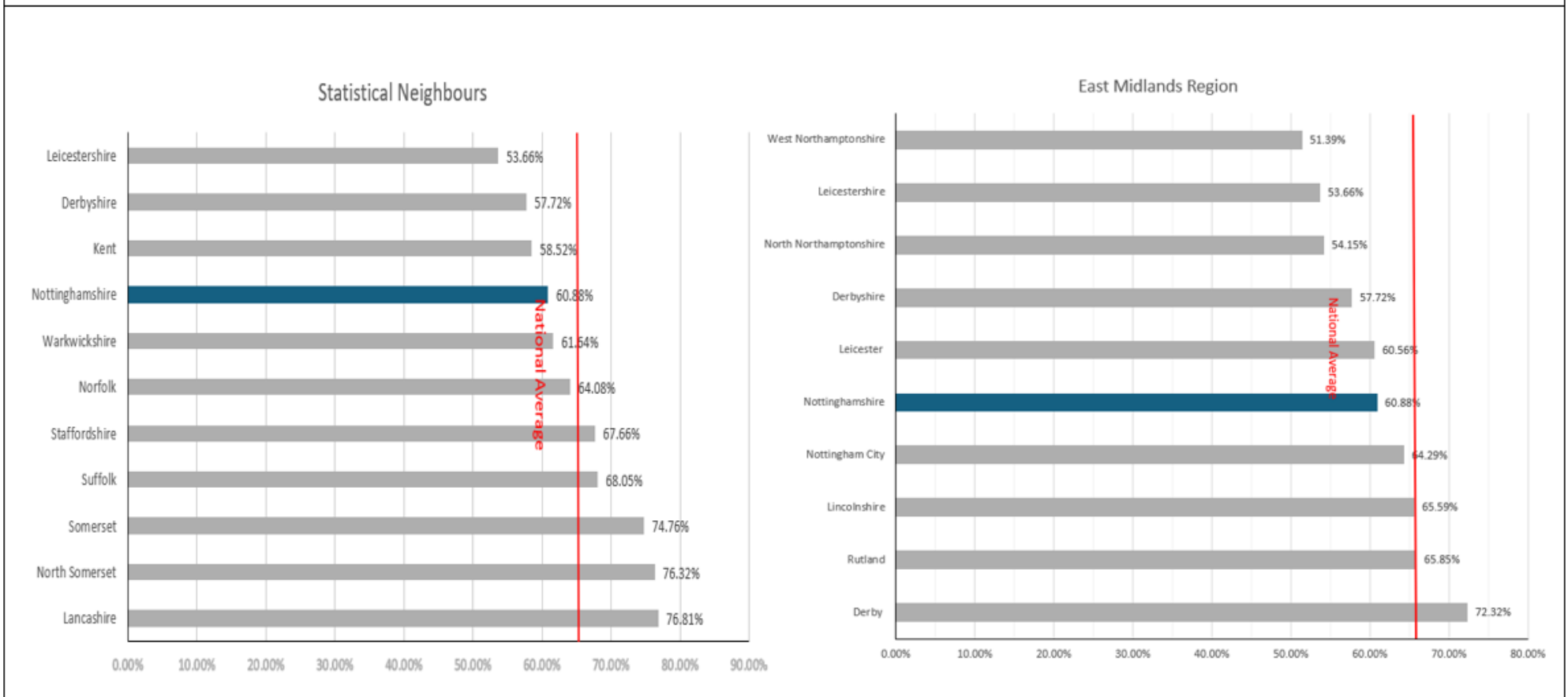
1. The estimated number of eligible 2-year-olds is derived from data supplied by the Department for Work and Pensions each November. It represents the best data available on the number of children meeting the benefit and tax credit eligibility criteria.
2. Data collected in 2021 (and to a lesser extent 2022) was affected by the impact of COVID-19 uncertainty on providers and parents. Further information is available in the methodology note.

Source: Early years census, school census, school-level annual school census, and Department for Work and Pensions data

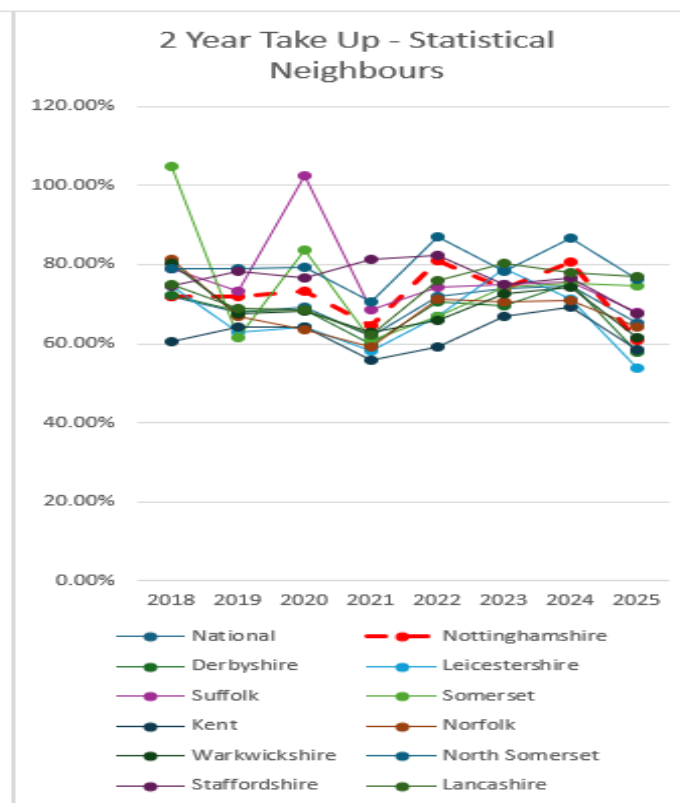
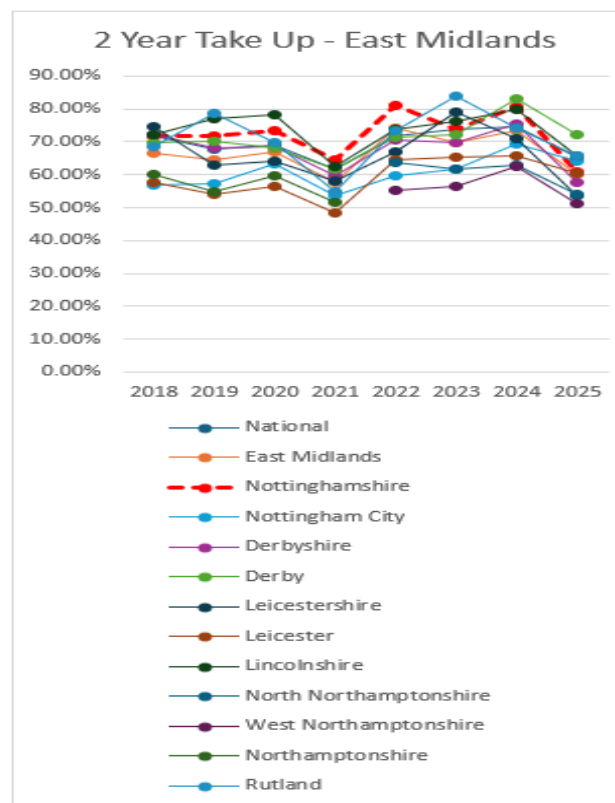
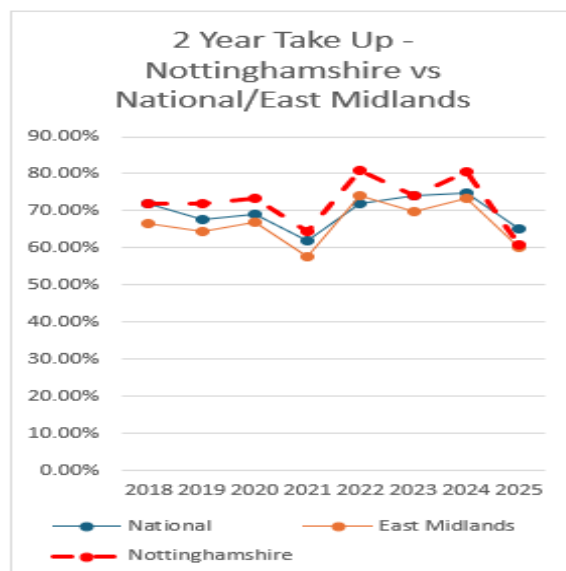
East Midlands and Statistical Neighbours 2025

These nationally published numbers do not include children eligible under working entitlements criteria and who also appear on the DWP list. National Guidance states that Local Authorities should count these children in supported take up numbers, inclusion of these children takes Nottinghamshire's rate to 71% for the spring and summer 2025 academic terms.

Locality authority % take-up rate for statistical and regional neighbours – Spring 2025

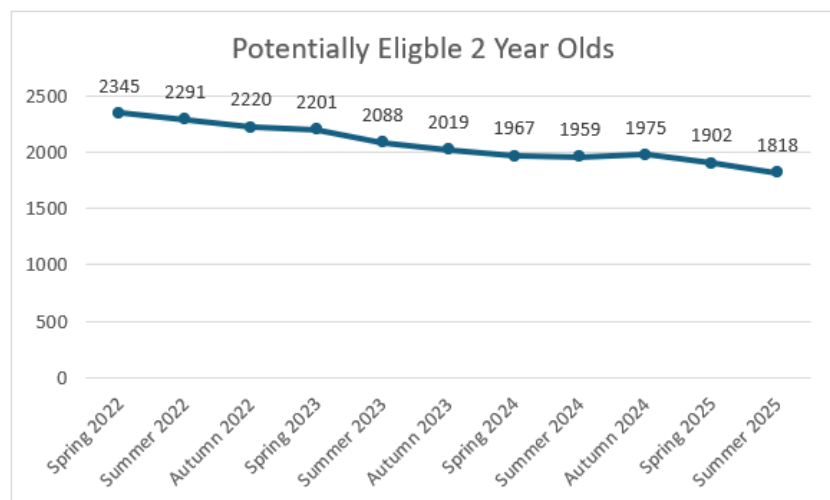


National, East Midlands and Statistical Neighbours Data Comparison



These charts demonstrate that Nottinghamshire are following a similar pattern to National, East Midlands and Statistical Neighbours since 2018. The decline for many statistical neighbours appears to coincide with the introduction of the working entitlements in April 2024. It is important to recognise that these figures do not include those who apply under the working entitlement but are also eligible for supported funding therefore reducing the reported take up data on these charts.

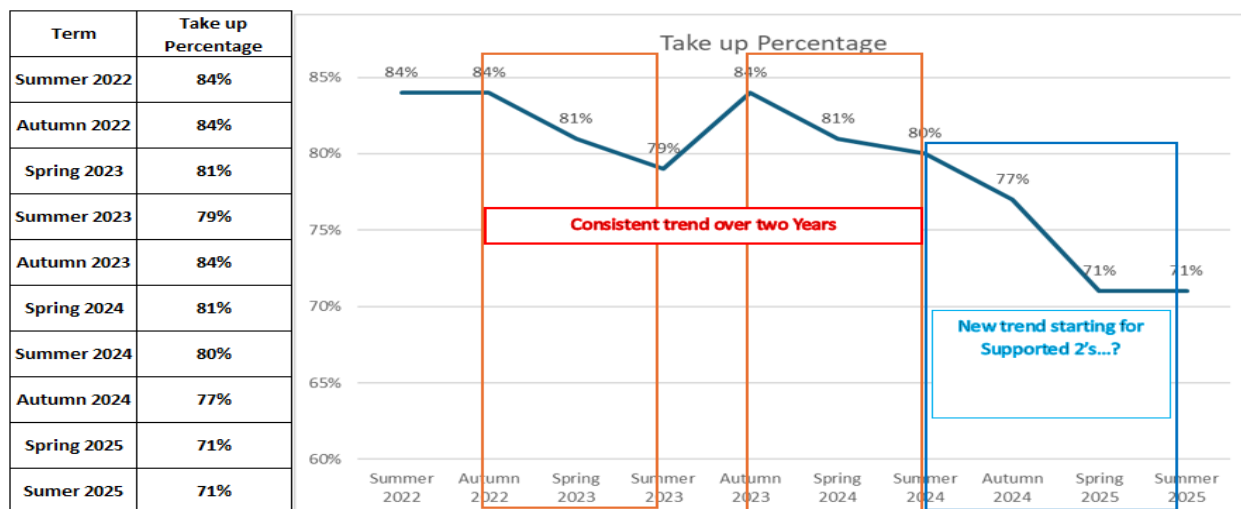
Department for Work Pensions - Nottinghamshire Data



Eligible 2 year olds

This Nottinghamshire data reports a similar picture to the national figures showing the numbers of eligible children on the DWP list declining, possibly due to incomes rising and thresholds staying the same i.e. less families in this group.

Supported 2 year Data of those families who apply and take up their place

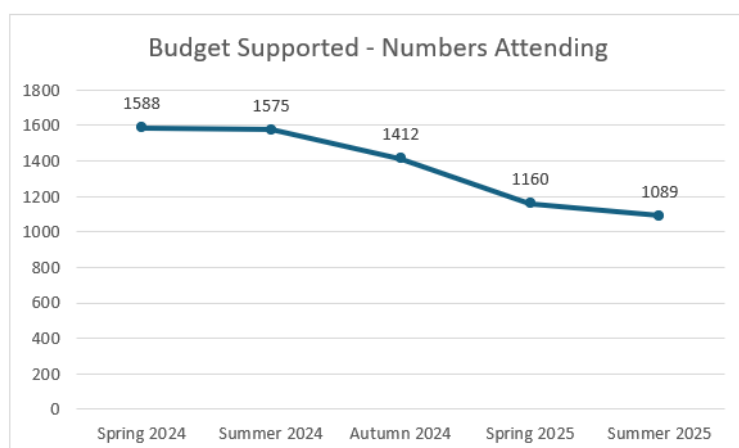


Overall Take Up Rates

A reduced take up rate, along with declining numbers is recorded which reflects national data.

However, what we can see is what appears to be a similar trend to previous years i.e. an anticipated dip in the Summer Term.

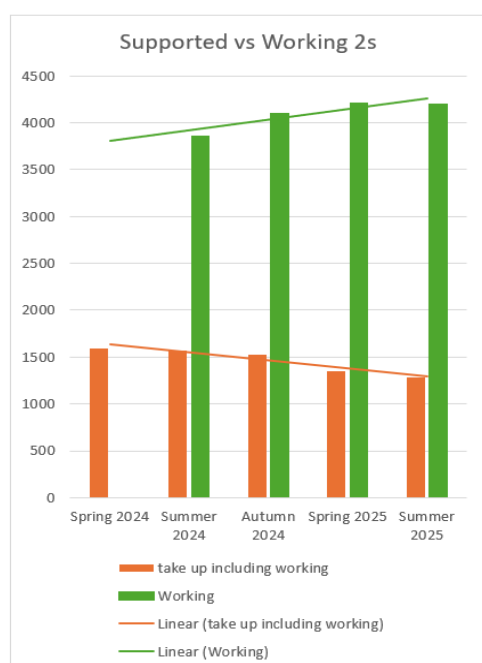
This graph shows in more detail the actual numbers of supported 2 year olds using their funding with a provider in Nottinghamshire.



Numbers attending

This information can also be presented at a district and ward level and is key for Early Years Project Officers and district teams in analysing locally where there is a drop in those taking up their childcare place.

Extended Entitlements for working family's v's supported 2 year olds in Nottinghamshire



- Numbers of working 2's increasing since summer 2024 - this shows how many have been paid from working families 2s budget
- Small number of children are eligible under both criteria – this line shows take up of all children on DWP list regardless of which budget they are being paid from. Some have applied via working families criteria rather than supported families criteria.

In April 2024 funding for working 2 year olds was introduced and this graph shows the increase in take up of those claiming for working funding for their 2 year old. What the graph also shows us is a decrease in those claiming for their supported 2 year old place.

One theory could be made that the working children are taking the childcare places that the supported 2 year olds would have previously accessed. However, the figures below suggest otherwise:

	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024	Spring 2025	Summer 2025
Eligible supported 2 year olds	1959	1975	1902	1818
Supported 2 year olds claiming funded hours	1575	1523	1346	1287
Working 2 year olds claiming funded hours	3858	4105	4209	4198

The number of supported 2 year olds that are eligible to claim funded hours has decreased by 141 since Summer 2024.

The number of those who go onto claim their supported 2 year funding has also reduced by 288 children.

Whilst there is a reported rise of 340 working 2 year olds since Summer 2024, the difference between the two is limited to 52 children.

Therefore, we should explore in more detail why there is a decrease in supported children claiming their funded place, as it appears the introduction of the funding for working 2 year olds is not wholly the reason for the reduced take up.

There is evidence from our initial research which has also included childcare providers to suggest there are indeed other contributing factors such as:

- The Department for Work and Pensions list shows a declining number of families who are eligible, possibly due to incomes rising and thresholds for funding staying the same.
- Available Places - Working families tend to secure a place earlier and therefore 2 year places can be limited. With the introduction of funding from 9 months, these children will be allocated a place moving forward into the 2 year room, again leaving very few available places for supported 2 year olds joining the nursery at the time their funding is allocated.
- There are a small number of eligible supported 2 year olds families who claim Universal Credit who can claim 85% of childcare costs. However, this does not cover any additional charges or consumable charges that the setting may charge for. This means for some families accessing their supported 2 year funded childcare place remains too costly for them.

Page 18 of the report explores further possible contributory factors.

Families who are eligible but do not apply for a funded place

We know from Department for Work and Pensions data that there are a significant number of families who are eligible but choose not to apply for their funding.

District	DWP district percentages of families not applying for supported 2 yr old funding <i>Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Data (April 2025)</i>
Ashfield	44.44%
Bassetlaw	53.47%
Broxtowe	47.75%
Gedling	48.65%
Mansfield	41.58%
N&S	48.50%
Rushcliffe	36.59%

Within the 7 districts local research reports the following reasons as to why eligible families may not be applying for their place.

Key issues identified:

- Limited / no childcare within specific ward area.
- Schools not taking 2 year olds where childcare provision is limited – in ward areas where schools enrol 2 year olds, often the take up rate for supported 2 year old places is much higher.
- Adequate childcare in the area with capacity, although affordability and additional charges could be an issue.
- Adequate childcare located in a particular ward area, but no vacancies and all report to be full.

- Large housing developments with affordable houses have seen an increase in the number of potentially eligible children and childcare in the area hasn't increased to meet demand.

Families who apply for funding but don't attend a setting

We know there are several families who apply for their funding and do not then go on to take up a childcare care place in a setting. To understand why this happens the Family Hub Teams contact families directly to discuss what the possible reasons may be. The percentages below are a representative of the data gathered from parents following this consultation:

- 25% awaiting a place at a preferred setting.
- 25% are looking for childcare.
- 22.50% parent has a place confirmed in the future.

Parent comments

- Children starting school in September and will then use their 3 year funding.
- Additional charges are too much.
- No places locally - looking for childcare.
- Parent doesn't want to send children to nursery.

Section four

➤ District Analysis and Case Studies/Consultation

Our data tells us that in some specific ward areas there are high numbers of families accessing their funded place with specific providers. Below reports by provider type where supported 2 year olds are accessing their place:

Day Nursery	59.69%
Preschool	20.84%
Childminder	8.37%
School	1.55%
Academy	9.10%
Independent	0.45%

District data in the chart below indicates that there is work to do to increase percentage take up rates. Using a solution focused approach we have contacted providers who are successfully offering a high percentage of supported 2 year old places. This has enabled us to share their models of best practice and to give them the opportunity to explain why they feel their offer meets the needs of supported 2 year olds.

District	Summer 2025 Two Year Take Up (including those eligible for both supported and working funding)
Ashfield	67%
Bassetlaw	52%
Broxtowe	53%
Gedling	65%
Mansfield	70%
Newark and Sherwood	77%
Rushcliffe	69%

Examples from settings with effective models of delivery for supported 2 year olds from within some of the highlighted ward areas.

Sconce Hill Preschool – Devon Ward, Newark and Sherwood

We are a setting that really care about the children and families in our community, we do find that most of our families find out about us by word of mouth and recommendation. We do not charge for consumables and are not profit run, so all our money goes back into the children, their learning and experiences. We spend the children's EYPP effectively, that could be from helping families out with extra sessions, healthy meals, or even well fitted Clarks shoes to help with core strength and development if needed, as these can be very pricey for struggling families. We invite parents in to make cheap, healthy meals with their children, this encourages healthy eating at home too.

Our parents feel confident to speak to us and feel supported when we advise on anything that could help with their child's development.

We have fundraising events which the families really enjoy with their children and with money raised we take the children to the farm, cinema, lots of outings in the community and we have parties twice a year with a bouncy castle.

Bircotes Preschool – Harworth Ward, Bassetlaw

We are very fortunate as a setting to have a lot of families coming back to us who have brought siblings or came to us themselves. As a setting we have been open over 20 years with a very low turnover of staff. We are prominent in the local area due to fundraisers, and many staff living locally.

We regularly post on social media to keep ourselves known and many people moving to the area see us put ourselves out there.

Our staff have also been with us for many years which makes returning parents feel at ease as they know us all already. We have regular celebrations for anything we can and feel we are more than just a preschool; we are a family.

The parents see every side of us, they see us covered in paint and glitter, soaking wet after a water fight or in fits of giggles, the children are allowed to be children, make mess, explore, risk take and be who they want to be.

We don't have any additional charges for any of our preschool children.

We also have a high number of SEN children which I believe is a positive that the parents feel we are a safe space to support their child's additional needs.

All children deserve to be safe and nurtured during their early years, and I truly believe as a setting we all do that.

Kindred Beeston Day Nursery- Beeston West Ward, Broxtowe

Kindred Beeston Day Nursery in the Summer Term 2025 has the highest number of supported 2-year-olds in attendance for the whole of the district ward. Data reports that a high degree of these children attend from neighbouring wards.

The nursery manager reports that the setting is easily accessible due to the train station, tram links and good bus routes and this may contribute to some of the reasons that parents choose this setting from several ward areas. The nursery does not make any additional charges, and they can offer a stretched or a term time only offer. Children can attend for a 'long day' 8am -6pm or Am or Pm, the nursery will try to be flexible where possible, place permitting and will always listen to a family's requirements and help where possible to meet the families and child's needs.

. Little Acorns, Blidworth Oaks Primary School – Rainworth South & Blidworth Ward, Newark and Sherwood

Thank you for recognising the work we are doing to support our families. Below is a quick bullet point list to highlight what we are about which could have an impact on why families may choose us.

- We strive to build positive relationships with families through older siblings who have or already attend our school.
- We don't ask for additional charges
- We offer weekly stay and play sessions to encourage families to drop in, in a relaxed atmosphere, where we can identify and offer places to children.
- Children who attend Little Acorns have priority places moving forward into the part time foundation unit.
- We are very inclusive
- We recognise the children are still very young so always work with the parents around the days/hours suitable for their child and then slowly build it up if wanted.
- Staff are well trained and always professional

Netherfield Primary School- Netherfield Ward, Gedling

The school currently offers 10 x 2-year-old places and has offered this for a number of years, they are well rooted and known within the Netherfield community to offer the places to children. There are no additional charges to families, apart from the cost of school lunch when the child has a hot lunch during the day. The school work tirelessly to try and accommodate the needs of their families

The school works closely with local groups, Jigsaw Homes, Gedling Borough Council, the Family Hub all call on them when they need input from children or school. The school are keen to maintain these relationships as it provides different experiences for our children and leads to developments in their community.

From September 2025 the school will be able to offer an additional five full time equivalent 2-year-old places, having been successfully allocated early years capital funding to enable the environment to meet the needs of more 2-year-olds. These places will offer potentially 10 places to supported 2-year-olds in the Netherfield ward locality and enable the school to not only support working and disadvantaged parents, but more importantly give the children in the community, the very best start in life

Thank you to all the settings that contributed with their case studies for the report, not all are featured but have been helpful in establishing positive models of practice in offering places for supported 2 year olds.

The main features of successful delivery for families allowing them to access their supported funded place are reported as being:

- No additional charges for consumables
- Community engagement by the provider with families and other local groups
- Consultative and needs led use of additional funding to directly support the needs of families.
- Geographically accessible for families – walking distance or on a bus route
- Effective marketing campaigns
- Flexible
- Stay and play sessions to help families become familiar with the setting.
- Fully inclusive environments

Early Years Provider Consultation - Potential Barriers for Families

Early Years providers across the county were approached as part of network meetings in May 2025 to share their thoughts as to why some supported 2 year olds may not access their childcare place:

- *Childcare choices website is hard to navigate, often for more disadvantaged families and therefore it might not be clear how to apply*
- *Working families tend to apply earlier so all places are taken*
- *New guidance on transparency/consumables may put parents off even enquiring for fear of additional costs (even if it was waived)*

- *Parents want the middle of the day 9am -3pm and this isn't always financially viable for a private nursery and difficult to staff.*
- *Are the places flexible enough for supported 2 year olds*
- *A small number of eligible supported 2 year olds families who claim Universal Credit can claim 85% of childcare costs. This does not cover any additional charges or consumable charges that the setting may charge for. This means for some families accessing their funded childcare place remains too costly for them.*

Section Five

➤ Summary and Recommendations

We know from our qualitative and quantitative research that in Nottinghamshire we have further work to do, however we do have examples of effective practice and excellent models of delivery in specific ward areas that fully meet the needs for supported 2 year olds and some of those have been featured in the report.

Whilst Nottinghamshire data appears to reflect the National, East Midlands and Statistical Neighbours declining trend, we must continue to ensure that accessibility of childcare for those eligible families remains a priority, building on the positive models that we know exist. It is still early days for us to be certain of a continued downward trend emerging, but we must put recommendations in place to safeguard against this.

In April 2024 the funding for working 2 year olds was introduced and we must continue to monitor this to determine if this is the primary reason for the decline in take up of places and if not, what could be other influencing factors, We anticipate further national research into this should a downward trend continue, not only for Nottinghamshire but nationally.

Nationally there are questions that must be asked in relation to eligibility criteria and thresholds for families. There are potentially more families who could benefit from this valuable funding but who are now exempt due to wage increases, whilst the threshold of the funding remains the same.

Valuable information within this report using national and local data along with consultation from parents, colleagues and the early years sector, has enabled us to clearly recognize where we can focus our work in meeting the needs of families in order for them to benefit from the supported funding for childcare. Key questions and actions that need to be explored for Nottinghamshire include but are not limited to:

- How can we increase community awareness and support through marketing to encourage families to apply for funding and take up their allocated childcare place, particularly in areas where we know families are not applying?
- Consultation with local families has enabled us to identify that some families make an informed choice not to enrol their child into a childcare setting and want to care for them in the home. This being the case we must ensure they are able to access local support from the community should they need it.
- Exploring in more detail the feedback from our providers to determine:
 - If working families have indeed impacted on places for our supported 2 year olds
 - If there are enough places for supported 2 year olds to find a place near to where they live given the demand from working families
 - If places can offer enough flexibility to meet the needs of families
 - If eligible families can access places that are affordable for them – are additional consumable payments a barrier?

Recommendations

Nottinghamshire Strategies	Strengthen links with other Nottinghamshire programmes/strategies and ensure inclusion in as many other local strategies as possible, both in terms of ensuring that those working with eligible families are aware and therefore maximising the benefits for children and their parents/carers.
Funding	Consult with early years providers regarding the possible creation of a supported 2 year old premium to support funding rates.
Healthy Families Team	Better use of the DWP data to target eligible families – Are the children who do not present for their 2yr review the same children who are not applying for their funded place? If this information were available to HFT a more targeted approach could be used to support families awareness of childcare funding. Review and improve information to eligible families
Family Hubs	Brokerage service to explore with parents who are not accessing their childcare place if they are attending a community play session. The aim of this is to target those families who are not accessing their entitlement and/or any other services to try and promote access to either Family Hub sessions or community groups.
Schools	Where appropriate increase take up rates in schools from 1.55% and academies from 9.10%. Particularly in ward areas with no accessible childcare, could schools be approached to lower their age range and offer supported 2 year old places?
Quality and Attainment Team	To assess the use of targeted funding for supported 2 year olds and track outcomes, a recommendation would be to track a group accessing the supported 2 year old funding through to the end of the foundation stage to see the impact of this funding on the EYFSP good level of development.
Early Years Providers	Share examples of positive accessible, flexible and affordable provision including support for eligible 2 year old families to proactively influence other providers to offer more supported 2 year old places. In identified ward areas where take up rates are low, support providers with capacity to actively promote accessible childcare places.
Childminders	Increase take up rates with childminders from 8.37%. Research and consult with childminders across the county, particularly in more rural areas and isolated communities, how they could be a valuable part of a solution to extend the number of funded places for supported 2 year olds.
Marketing	Targeted marketing campaigns in ward areas where eligible families are not applying and/or applying but not taking up their place. This should be for families, community groups and local professionals. Does marketing to families and multi-agency teams actively promote schools and childminders as options for a family eligible for a supported 2 year place. Considerations to support marketing through childminder agencies and childminder network to explore how improved marketing could support increased take up. School communication networks to actively share marketing for supported childcare funding to local families.

Data	Continue to ensure families who are eligible for supported funding claim using this code in order to publish more accurate data of take up rates. Ensure best use of data analysis at district meetings to target areas of low take up and understand why and put appropriate actions in place.
Housing development	Ensure Early Years Project Officers are informed of affordable housing developments that may require increased 2 year provision.

(All data and content provided in this report was correct at time of publication)