

Executive Summary Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022

The Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2016, made under Section 26 of the 2006 Act, requires local authorities to prepare assessments of the sufficiency of childcare provision (Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – CSA) in their area and to keep these under review.

Data has been collected over Summer and Autumn 2021 and analysed to write the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment by Spring 2022. The assessment report will be translated and out for the required 28day public consultation during May 2022. The report will start move through the Local Authority's governance processes throughout March to July 2022 and a draft will be submitted to Welsh Government by the deadline date of end of June 2022.

Data sources include the most up to date available at the time of writing, which includes:

- information provided by childcare providers submitted to Childcare Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as part of their annual Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) in June/July 2021
- information held by CCBC on the Education database and DEWIS as well as local knowledge
- information supplied by childcare providers on vacancies and waiting lists as a part of their SASS submissions
- information gathered by the Welsh Government's Parental survey carried out in Autumn 2021
- data available from online data sources, such as the Office for National statistics (ONS) and its NOMIS service
- Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)
- Local Development Plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report 2021
- local demographics are from the Census data which is only available from the 2011 Census.

This CSA for the year 2022 is written against a backdrop of the global Coronavirus pandemic which has also led to changing demand and work patterns and creates more unknown demand in the future than in previous assessments.

Despite the timing of the Self-Assessment of Service Statement during the grips of Covid and the perceived impact of the pandemic, the childcare picture in Caerphilly has remained relatively unscathed and at the time of writing, the sufficiency of childcare places for working families remains adequate. There was substantial support offered via Welsh Government grants to help sustain the sector as well as huge effort from the Early Years team to support the sector. However, while delivery of childcare is getting easier in terms of restrictions and control measures, the full impact of Covid 19 is not yet quantifiable and may only be seen fully in years to come.

There appears to be very few childcare places available for weekend, late evening, or overnight care, with some parents noting this need in the Welsh Government parental survey. There is a need to understand if parents need greater awareness of the provision available or if there is insufficient to meet demands for atypical shift patterns.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan sets a target for 26% of year 1 children in Welsh medium Education by 2032. There are equivalent targets for 26% of childcare places supporting Welsh language development. To meet this target in 2032 there is a need to increase the Welsh speaking workforce, develop more Welsh language childcare provision as well as move existing childcare provision along the linguistic continuum. When planning the future expansion of the Flying Start Programme, collaboration is needed with Mudiad Meithrin in order to support the development, robustness, and sustainability of management committees / trustees to support local Cylchoedd Meithrin to operate effectively.

4 parents stated there was no suitable provision available in their language which was neither Welsh or English, although the language required was not stated. The data states there are 2 Polish speaking and 1 Spanish speaking childminders. However, this area needs more detailed understanding for parental need in order to support development of future provision.

The parental survey also identified the need to ensure families have the correct information for financial assistance available through Tax-Free childcare as well as funded placements, to support those who are struggling to pay for childcare where parents feel it is too expensive and not affordable on their wage.

The assessment report analyses the change in childcare types of provision, including a substantial decrease in childminders, an increase in number of providers offering Flying Start placements, although there have been increases in places across the borough to meet parental demand. The Welsh Government is undertaking specific research (due Autumn 2022) regarding the reduction in childminders nationally which will inform future planning and development.

The analysis identifies the changes by provision type in each of the five community planning areas. However, there is an identified need more generally to increase the provision delivering Assisted and Supported placements, and Early Years Education placements, to enable parental choice for funded places. With the expansion of the Childcare Offer to students from September 2022 there is likely to be increased demand for places for 3-4year olds. The commitment to expand the Flying Start programme to deliver funded part time placements for all 2year olds will also require additional places to be created to meet the anticipated increased demand.

The need to develop additional provision for 2-4year olds to meet current expansion commitments of Welsh Government programmes will also require an increase in the workforce and continued improvement of the quality of childcare provision. There is also the need to understand further the current recruitment and retention issues faced by the childcare workforce in order to plan how to retain staff better in the future. Safeguarding training and Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act training and further support will be needed to ensure settings remain compliant moving forwards.

21 parents noted they struggled to find appropriate care to meet their child's emerging or diagnosed disability. It is unclear if this feedback is about suitable provision, funded provision, or lack of awareness of current support and placements available. Further work will be needed to develop suitable appropriate childcare for children with emerging needs and diagnosed disabilities, as well as increase the number of settings able to offer Assisted and Support placements.

Sustainability of the childcare sector has been a concern throughout the response to the pandemic, and there have been many grants to ensure settings remained sustainable while impacted by covid self-isolation, staffing issues, reduction of children taking up places, restrictions to meet control measures. However, this is still a relatively unknown factor that requires ongoing work to ensure settings change their business models to meet the changing needs of families returning to work places.

There is a need to further corroborate SASS data with existing local knowledge to ensure that our understanding of available childcare throughout the borough is accurate in terms of our ongoing duty to review supply and demand of childcare both now and in the future. Further investigation of localised data will be needed in order to plan in detail to meet the Welsh Government's commitment to expansion of the Childcare Offer and expansion of the Flying Start programme. The childcare action plan to accompany this Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report, will identify in more detail the specific areas of data development work needed to plan for expansion of provision and the locations they will be needed.