

## Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017 – 2022



Ceredigion County Council

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### Purpose of the report:

Under the Childcare Act 2006 it is a statutory duty that Local Authorities undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA). The Act places a duty on Local Authorities in Wales “to secure, as far as is reasonably practical, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare in order to train, to work or to prepare for work”.

This assessment was undertaken in-house by local authority staff and followed the process identified in the revised guidance:

- Assessing the demand for childcare;
- Assessing the supply of childcare;
- Analysing the gap between demand and supply;
- Identifying barriers to childcare provision;
- Publishing the final assessment which will be available on the FIS website as of April 2017.

### **How the report was completed?**

- Consultation was undertaken with 150 parents/carers in face-to-face consultations by visiting 18 groups across the county.
- An on-line survey was made available to the public between September and December 2016. This was completed by 298 parents.
- An employer survey was distributed to a sample of 40 businesses across the county which included small, medium and large businesses. A response rate of 32% was received. Mainly from the small or medium sized employers.
- Children and young people were consulted with at the play day event in the square field in Aberaeron in August 2016. 4 after school clubs were selected to consult with by completing a paper questionnaire During December 2016.
- Registered childcare providers were asked to complete a Self-assessment of Service Statement (SASS) for Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). This information was shared with local authority staff in order to be able to analyse the supply of Childcare. Ceredigion achieved a 74.1% response rate to the SASS.
- Due to the inconsistencies within the SASS information received we decided to undertake our own provider survey which we received an 81% response rate.
- A number of key stakeholders and partners provided input into the development of this report which included Childcare Umbrella Organisations; Flying Start; Team Around the Family; Family Centres; Social Care Teams; Coleg Ceredigion and PaCE Advisers.

### **Setting the Scene:**

- Since the first CSA was undertaken in 2008 childcare has seen a number of changes in Ceredigion. Based on data from December 2016 there are currently **1,914 (CSSIW) registered childcare places** available, with **114 childcare providers** across the county, with an additional **289 places** for afternoon sessions. The total 1,914 places include

childcare places in Day nurseries, Childminders, Cylchoedd Meithrin / Playgroups, After School Clubs, Holiday Clubs and Open Access Play provision. Accessible high quality and affordable childcare is essential for families. It enables them to be able to access education / training or employment opportunities. Ensuring sufficient childcare is important to the economy of Ceredigion as it enables parents to be economically active.

- There has been a decrease of 108 registered childcare places since the last assessment was completed in 2014.
- The childcare workforce is a caring, dedicated workforce who continually strives to improve their own skills.
- There is an on-going funded/subsidised training programme available for staff which enables them to develop their continuous professional development.
- Funding from Welsh Government for the Flying Start programme has enabled a state of the art childcare setting in the ICC at Ysgol Bro Teifi. There is also the new provision Ffrindiau Bach Tegryn in Aberporth. The non-maintained funded settings value the support they receive from the Early Years Advisory Teachers.
- Welsh Government is committed to increasing the number of free childcare hours for 3 – 4 year olds to 30 hours per week. The current implication is that Ceredigion is in a poor position to take advantage of this due to the supply of childcare not meeting the demand.

### **Conclusions:**

Drawing upon evidence gathered from the parent / carer surveys, stakeholder's views, employers, surveys of childcare providers and children and young people the following conclusions have been identified:

- The current situation is that Ceredigion has an insufficiency of childcare to meet the required demand for provision which enables parents to access education, training or employment.
- The amount of regulations discourages some from becoming childminders. We have seen a significant loss of childminders over the last 12 months. There is a need for more childminders in particular areas – Cardigan, Aberystwyth, Tregaron & Aberaeron. Across the county there is a demand for more Welsh speaking childminders. In comparison there is sufficient childminders in Llandysul & Lampeter.
- Due to restricted number of hours' some staff can work in the sector it can be difficult to recruit, retain and have fully qualified staff, staff which are also Welsh speaking.
- Following the closure of one day nursery in Aberystwyth (75 places) there is a distinct lack of childcare provision available in the town which is preventing many parents to access education / training or employment.
- There is no full-day care provision available in Cardigan, south of the county. Whilst there are two nurseries in Lampeter.
- Childminders are generally more expensive than a place in a full-day care nursery.
- Non-funded educational settings are finding it hard to survive financially when three year old education has been transferred to the schools. Nevertheless parents receiving the three year old education benefit from this.
- The cost of childcare remains the biggest barrier for parents on low incomes.
- The parent survey reflects a high reliance upon using family and friends to provide the childcare. Ceredigion has a high number of working poor families who find the cost of childcare a real issue.
- There is a lack of funding to ensure sufficient support for children with additional needs to access mainstream childcare provision. Pre-school children can only access up to 10 hours per week during term-time. School aged children in out of school childcare settings can only access up to 200 hours support during the year. DASH is only able to pay the setting £7.00 per hour towards the cost of 1:1 support. Therefore, there is a trend in Ceredigion for providers to subsidise the real cost of childcare staff.
- There are 7 unregistered settings in the county – 1 Cylch Meithrin and 6 after school clubs.

- Parents have identified that more childcare providers need to offer a more flexible service – which they can start before 8:00 a.m. and work a little later until after 6:00 p.m.
- There is a lack of out of school provision for older children in some areas. Holiday time in particular is a real struggle for some parents.
- As a Local Authority we identified that the National Minimum Standards (NMS) developed by CSSIW should be strengthened to highlight the importance of the Welsh language in childcare. The NMS in its current form doesn't put any emphasis on providers to ensure the promotion of the Welsh language.
- Low density of population in rural Ceredigion makes it difficult for some childcare settings to meet expenditure/income targets and keep childcare affordable for the sessional care and out of school care sector.
- The future of three Cylchoedd Meithrin is under threat within the authority – Cylch Meithrin Bro Sion Cwilt because of numbers, Tregaron and Teifi Adpar because of uncertainty around future of location.
- Finding qualified staff to work in after school clubs for 12 – 15 hours per week is becoming more of a sustainability issue.
- Childcare providers are becoming more reliant upon the County Council sustainability grants which in themselves have been reduced £6,000 in the last year. With more settings having to pay rent to schools, pay for staff training, increase in national minimum wage, having to pay staff pensions – these are all impacting the sustainability of a setting.
- Families appreciate new area school development as it works well when the new area schools are able to provide the three year old education alongside the wrap-around provision of a lunch club and a Cylch Meithrin in the afternoon. A good example of this is Ysgol T. Llew Jones and Ysgol Bro Teifi.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Council needs to collectively work together with partners as far as is reasonably practical to increase the amount of childcare places to ensure supply meets demand.
- There is a need to attract more people to take up childminding in the areas identified where there is a lack of supply. This is particular for Welsh speaking childminders.
- We will need to ensure that Ceredigion is ready for when Welsh Government rolls out the extended 30 hour childcare offer. Work in partnership with schools / Childminders / Sessional day care providers and full day care providers to ensure sufficiency of places is available to meet the demand.
- There is a need to ensure that children with additional needs can access mainstream childcare settings and that there is sufficient funding available to support appropriate staff costs.
- Support the unregistered provision to become registered – 1 Cylch Meithrin and 6 after school clubs.
- Work with providers to develop more flexible childcare which is better at meeting parents needs before school and slightly later than 6:00 p.m. Ensure that parents are aware of what support is available to help with childcare costs. Promote the new Tax-free Childcare initiative when this will be introduced in the spring.
- Identify opportunities for non-funded settings to provide wrap-around childcare within a school will support the setting to be more sustainable.
- It is important that the Local Authority collectively provides support to Cylch Meithrin Bro Sion Cwilt, Teifi Adpar and Tregaron in ensure the future of the provision is maintained.
- This CSA report contributes to the needs identified in the Ceredigion Well-being Assessment. The overall aim of this CSA is to increase the number of childcare places for parents which is affordable, flexible and of good quality. This is particularly relevant to Ceredigion as demand overruns supply.

- Provide more clarity to parents regarding the difference between childcare and the three year old education.

**The way forward:**

These recommendations will be used to develop a five year action plan which will aim to address the issues highlighted. The aim will be for the local authority to work in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sector to ensure sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs. It is expected that progress made to address the action plan will be reported to Welsh Government on an annual basis.