

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	6 July 2023
LOCATION:	Hybrid
TITLE:	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) 2022-2027 – Year 1 Progress Report (2022-2023)
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For Members to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the Ceredigion Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) 2022 – 2027 Year 1 Progress Report - submitted to Welsh Government 30 June 2022.
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	Monitoring of legislative duty

BACKGROUND:

The Statutory Childcare Guidance 2016 places a statutory duty upon Local Authorities in Wales to undertake a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every 5 years, keeping their assessment under review every year through their annual reporting to Welsh Government. Section 22, of the Act places a duty on local authorities to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, provision of Childcare that is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area to enable them to take up, or remain, in work; or undertake education or training. Childcare Providers include Day Nurseries, Childminders, Sessional Day Care (Cylchoedd Meithrin and Playgroups) and After School Clubs/Holiday Playschemes. They are inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to become **Registered Childcare Providers**. Some settings deliver Foundation Learning education for 3-year-olds and are inspected by Estyn.

The CSA report was undertaken by the Childcare Unit, Ceredigion County Council who followed the prescribed regulations and updated guidance as set by Welsh Government in completing the CSA. The CSA fulfils the local authority's duty to assess demand and supply data of registered provision and develop a five-year action plan, to support the development of sufficient Childcare across Ceredigion. Childcare is required to be responsive to parents needs in that it is accessible, affordable, and flexible and of good quality.

The 2022-2027 CSA report was submitted to Welsh Government 30 June 2022 following public consultation and Cabinet approval. Year 1 Progress Report was required by WG by 30 June 2023. The Year 1 Progress Report collates the data, information and actions undertaken by all partners working within or supporting the Childcare sector in Ceredigion represented on the Early Years, Childcare and Play Strategy Group that meet on a quarterly basis.

The first CSA was undertaken in 2008 and recorded 1,573 registered childcare places with 116 providers. Places increased to its highest in 2017 with 1,945 places.

March 2023 figures show that the number of places has declined down to its lowest point at **1,438 registered places** with **84 Childcare providers**.

The following table demonstrates the decline in childcare places over the last six years.

Total number of Childcare places	Childminders	Sessional Day Care	Full Day Care	Out of School Care	Crèche's	Open Access Play	Total Places available
31/03/2017	369	474	516	418	112	56	1945
31/03/2018	420	355	468	428	142	56	1869
31/03/2019	421	238	648	368	52	32	1759
31/03/2020	372	146	748	372	32	0	1670
31/03/2021	373	523	370	380	32	0	1624
31/03/2022	376	588	306	294	32	0	1596
31/03/2023	311	614	259	222	32	0	1438

Childcare and Play sector professionals are committed to providing a high-quality service to the children in their care. They are a dedicated workforce who continually strive to improve their own skills, with most only being paid the National Minimum/Living Wage. The pandemic has shown that providers are resourceful, adapt to change and are now working in a 'new normal'. However, qualified professionals, who are faced with moving goalposts (increased qualification requirements and responsibilities etc.), are looking elsewhere for employment in other sectors in order to be valued and appropriately paid for their skills.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Gaps identified:

The Ceredigion Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022 – 2027 has highlighted some significant gaps in the Childcare market that need to be addressed.

7 key themes were identified in the Action Plan, and progress made by the Childcare Unit and key partners have been collated.

- Sustaining / Enhancing Provision
- Recruitment
- Economy/ Sustainability
- Housing
- ALN
- Welsh language

- Sharing information
- Ceredigion has an insufficiency of Childcare to meet the required demand for provision which enables parents to access education, training or employment – especially in the After School, Holiday and Full-Day Care provision.
- There is a demand for Childminders across the county - especially Welsh speaking Childminders.
- There is still no Full-Day Care provision available in the south of the county – which was highlighted in the last CSA.
- There is no Sessional Childcare facility in Lampeter.
- Cost and location of Childcare are the biggest barriers for parents.
- Additional funding required to support Children with additional learning needs e.g. Cynllun Cyfeirio hours are not sufficient to support all Children.
- Providers are reporting that they are finding it difficult to recruit staff that have the appropriate qualifications and are able to converse in the medium of Welsh in order to be able to work in a Childcare setting.
- There is still a high reliance upon using family and friends to provide the Childcare.
- Unregistered activity clubs for Children are driving registered Childcare out of the market. The National Minimum Standards need to revisit the Child minding and Day Care Exceptions Order Review.
- Any future re-organisation proposals that draw 3-year-old education into schools may have an impact on the childcare providers within the locality. Appropriate actions will need to be considered to mitigate any effect on childcare provision which will impact the LA's statutory duty of securing sufficient childcare.
- Welsh Government's commitment to the funded Flying Start childcare for 2-year-olds is being phased out in some areas – need to ensure sufficient supply of childcare is available to meet parental demand in areas of recent increased birth rates.

CONCERNS:

- Insufficiency of childcare is an issue in supporting the WG commitment to roll out the Flying Start childcare entitlement for 2 – 3-year-olds to all, particularly in the Lampeter area.
- Recent data collection has demonstrated that Llansantffraed LSOA has experienced an increase in births, in an area of limited childcare provision
- Availability of registered Out of school provision remains an issue for working parents across the county. WG need to consider implementing Voluntary Registration with CIW in order for parents to access financial support through Tax Free Childcare
- Recruitment - many providers reporting issues in recruiting qualified staff. This is a national issue which needs to be addressed by WG through their childcare funding rates
- Childcare providers are reporting that the Flying Start childcare and Childcare Offer hourly rate determined by WG is not sufficient and it should be reviewed on an annual basis in line with inflation and National Minimum Wage.

- Backfill of staff to enable staff to attend training is becoming more of an issue. Settings can only release staff for training during evenings/weekends. This is more costly for settings and for the LA to deliver the training.
- Since September 2022 it has been a requirement that staff working in Out of School Club settings have a Play qualification. However, this is impacting settings as more Clubs are reporting difficulty in recruiting staff who have the appropriate qualifications of Playwork Level 2 or Level 3 as required by CIW.
- Work is underway to ensure lease arrangements through the Estates Department are in place. There is a need to ensure that all childcare settings have a legal lease in place securing the tenure of that provision on council or school property, particularly when grant funding has been obtained for the development of childcare facilities.
- Flying Start have identified a concern with regards to a 10-year lease agreement which is nearing its expiry. There is a risk that the childcare provider will be asked to move out. The LA needs to ensure that funding awarded for the delivery of childcare remains for that sole purpose and is not repurposed to support increase in school sizes unless a suitable alternative facility is provided.
- Childcare providers are reporting that the responsibility and added costs of employing additional staff to support children with Additional Learning Needs lies with them as providers. Children with complex needs are not having the financial support to ensure helping hands are in place to support them to attend full day childcare due to various scheme terms and conditions. Additional staffing costs cannot be passed on to parents. This is a concern for the providers' business sustainability especially when research by the National Day Nursery Association (NDNA) highlighted that 88% of nurseries expect to make a loss or break even this year.
- Work is underway to further develop the Family Information Service. The Family Information Service is an important service where parents are able to articulate their needs and access support and provision easily.

Actions to address gaps:

- The Schools Service are awaiting confirmation from WG with regards to possible 100% funded capital investment projects across the county which will support the increase in registered childcare places and provisions. The LA will need to support this infrastructure development once funding confirmed
- Work in partnership with all existing and future Childcare providers to ensure sufficiency of places is available to meet the demand for when Welsh Government rolls out the expansion of Flying Start childcare for 2-year-olds across the county
- Promote registered childcare provision in localised areas e.g. After School Clubs and increase the number of Childcare places for parents which is affordable, flexible and of good quality. This also contributes to the needs identified in the Well-being Assessment.
- Identify opportunities for sessional settings to provide wrap-around Childcare within schools which will support the setting to be more sustainable,
- Ensure Childcare is considered in all 21st Century school developments in line with Welsh Government Community Focused Schools guidance
- Request that Economy & Regeneration Services e.g. planning and property services consider Childcare availability within any housing development plans
- Ensure that all Lease agreements are arranged or reviewed in partnership with the Childcare provider
- Ensure the continuation of delivery for the integrated Family Information Service. This development would support the pilot of the TFC scheme and other initiatives.
- Local Councillors need to support the promotion of TFC as part of the pilot project once confirmed.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why		No. This is an Assessment of the sufficiency of Childcare Provision in Ceredigion
	Summary:		
	Long term:		
	Integration:		
	Collaboration:		
	Involvement:		
	Prevention:		

RECOMMENDATION (S):

- That Scrutiny is aware of the progress being made in implementing the current action plan.
- Make sure that Scrutiny is aware of the issues facing the Local Authorities in meeting its duty of securing sufficiency of childcare.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

- That Scrutiny is fully informed of the current issues and the plan to address them.

- Ensure Childcare is considered as part of the foundational economy of Ceredigion within any strategy plans and actions or infrastructure development within communities.
- To consider support or additional funding to address the gaps highlighted through the CSA and try to develop additional Childcare in the areas identified in line with the Action Plan.
- To take into account any Childcare needs in development of new or existing school premises.

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Date of Report:	6 July 2023
Acronyms:	CSA – Childcare Sufficiency Assessment CIW – Care Inspectorate Wales WG – Welsh Government FIS – Family Information Service TFC – Tax-free Childcare