

Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

2022 - 2027

Progress Report – Year 1 – 2022-2023

Childcare Unit

May 2023

Submission date to Welsh Government 30.6.2023

INTRODUCTION:

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) Progress Report has been undertaken as part of our statutory duty under the *Childcare Statutory Guidance (2016)* and the circular letter WGC 003 2021/WG21-28 “*Childcare Statutory Guidance (2016): Securing Sufficient Childcare and Child Sufficiency Assessments*” issued on March 15th, 2021.

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*”.

The 2022-2027 CSA report was submitted to Welsh Government in June 2022 following Cabinet approval.

The recommendations from the report were grouped into seven themes, which were used to develop the five-year action plan.

1. Sustaining / Enhancing provision
2. Recruitment
3. Economy / Sustainability
4. Housing
5. Additional Learning Needs
6. Welsh Language
7. Sharing Information

The action plan brings together key stakeholders to work with the Local Authority (LA) to address the actions identified to ensure we have sufficient, sustainable and flexible Childcare that is responsive to families’ needs in line with Welsh Government proposals and policies in an ever-changing landscape. This is Year 1 of our reporting cycle on the progress made in the 2022 – 2027 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) action plan.

It is disappointing to report that Welsh Government (WG) have failed to provide feedback on the content of the CSA and whether we addressed the statutory requirements placed on Local Authorities. It is difficult to report on progress without knowing if our full report is what was expected. WG have confirmed that ARAD research is evaluating all 22 CSA’s and that feedback will be provided soon. This is unlikely to be before the first progress report is due to be submitted.

However, this report demonstrates the amount of work Childcare Providers, partners and Local Authority officers have undertaken during the first year of reporting to respond to the action plan.

Childcare remains an ever-changing landscape. As a LA our focus during the first reporting period has been to identify how we support the sector during the post-pandemic recovery period and how we aim to address and meet new demands set by WG policy. These demands have often come with tight deadlines to respond. The following are some examples which we have had to prioritise during the last year:

- i.) Flying Start 2-year-old expansion,
- ii.) New capital funding available for small grants
- iii.) Opportunity to submit proposals for new larger capital projects.

- iv.) Responding to consultations to ensure the voice of childcare in Ceredigion was reported on, which included the National Minimum Standards review, Child Minding and Day Care (Disqualification) review and the Ceredigion Corporate Strategy.
- v.) Ceredigion piloting the live test system for the Childcare Offer National Digital System prior to national roll out.
- vi.) Introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales.
- vii.) Ceredigion invited to participate in the pilot to increase awareness of the Tax-free Childcare UK Government scheme.

The action plan identifies timescales; responsibilities and named officer or organisation responsible for reporting on progress. The BRAG system is used to monitor progress i.e., Blue for actions completed, Red for actions yet to start, Amber where some progress is being made and Green where actions are making good progress. The CSA updates are reported on a six-monthly basis to the Early Years, Childcare and Play Strategy Group, and to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

56 Actions identified in the CSA were included in the Action Plan that all agencies involved with Childcare contribute towards.

Progress made during 2022-2023 is summarised in the following table:

BRAG Status	ACTION							TOTAL	%
YEAR 1 QUARTER 4	Sustaining / Enhancing Provision	Recruitment	Economy / Sustainability	Housing	Additional Learning Needs	Welsh Language	Sharing Information		
Blue (B) – Action completed	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	5.4%
Red (R) – well behind target / concern that the action will not be completed	3	1	1	3	0	2	3	13	23.2%
Amber (A) – a little behind target	11	5	3	0	2	1	1	24	42.9%

Green (G) – on target	5	3	1	0	1	2	5	16	28.5%
TOTAL ACTIONS (56)	20	9	6	3	3	5	10	56	100.00%
%	35.7%	16%	10.7%	5.4%	5.4%	8.9%	17.9%	100.00%	

The following sections provide an overview of the progress made or issues identified during year 1 of the plan.

1 SUSTAINING / ENHANCING PROVISION

POPULATION - LIVE BIRTHS:

The following table provides data over the last ten years in terms of live births for Ceredigion. From the table we can see that the number of live births was decreasing, however, shows a slight increase in the last two years.

Live births in England and Wales: birth rates down to local authority areas	
ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 19 January 2023]	
measure	Live births
Date	Ceredigion
2013	638
2014	601
2015	632
2016	612
2017	553
2018	538
2019	521
2020	499
2021	536
2022	569*
	<i>*HDdUHB figure</i>

CHILDCARE PLACES:

The number of registered childcare places has continued to decline during the last year, falling from 1,596 in March 2022 to 1,438 in March 2023 which mirrors the national trend. This is a drop of 158 registered childcare places. The number of childcare places is reducing faster than the declining birth rate. Demand for existing childcare is high despite the declining birth rate since 2013. However, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 saw a slight increase in the birth rate

- 51 places were lost due to the closure of 1 Full Day Nursery (including holiday and after school provision);
- 2 After School Clubs closed; and
- 8 Childminders closed,

We are concerned that more closures are likely in the near future which will significantly impact the amount of childcare available.

During the same period the following settings opened:

- 1 new Sessional Care setting
- 3 new Childminders
- We have seen an increase in 7 newly unregistered after school clubs open during the year.

In summary – there is an overall loss of 7 settings and 132 places since the CSA baseline statistics were collated.

Childcare providers are working hard to survive with the national recruitment and cost of living crisis placing huge challenges on their ability to achieve full capacity within their settings due to staff shortage and managing energy overheads.

Traditionally there is a high reliance upon non-formal childcare in Ceredigion where parents rely on family and friends to care for their children, but many parents' working habits have changed due to the pandemic, which has had a further impact on the use of childcare.

Number of registered Childcare places based on CIW list (2017 – 2023):

Total number of places	Childminders	Sessional Day Care	Full Day Care	Out of School Care	Crèche's	Open Access Play	Total Places available
March 2017	369	474	516 (8 nurseries)	418	112	56	1945
March 2018	420	355	468	428	142	56	1869
March 2019	421	238	648	368	52	32	1759
March 2020	372	146	748	372	32	0	1670
March 2021	373	523	370	380	32	0	1624
March 2022	376	544	350	294	32	0	1596
March 2023	311	570	303*	222	32	0	1438

- This includes what is now classed as a sessional setting

	June 2021 (CSA BASELINE)		2022 End March		2023 End March	
	Registered Providers	Places	Registered Providers	Places	Registered Providers	Places
Sessional Day Care	8	131	9	146	6	102
Sessional Full Day Care	21	456	20	442	24	512
Full Day Care Nursery	6	306	6	306	5	259
Childminder	45	351	48	376	40	311
Out of School Care	9	294	9	294	7	222
Creche and Holiday Playscheme	1	23	1	23	1	23
Creche	1	9	1	9	1	9
TOTAL	91	1570	94	1596	84	1438

The Out of School Care provision continues to be a challenge. Working patterns have changed, but many families still require after school care and holiday care to enable them to access training, education or employment. There has been an increase in the number of unregistered after school clubs with 19 unregistered settings operating in contrast to just 9 registered settings.

CIW exceptions mean that any provision running under two hours per day has no requirement to register. Providing a service for just under two hours is enough to support many families. However, this means that families using these unregistered settings are unable to access help with childcare costs schemes such as Tax-Free Childcare, Childcare Offer for Wales etc. The setting itself also misses out on opportunities for grant funding.

Recruitment issues led to the closure of a registered after-school club by Camau Bach at Ysgol Gymraeg, due to this we lost 32 registered places. Families were in need of an after-school care to enable them to continue working. Therefore, after discussion with the Childcare Unit the school was supported to open an unregistered club. This is run by the school staff and is working well and meets the needs of families. It demonstrates that an unregistered club is better than no club at all otherwise approximately 25 to 30 children would be without childcare resulting in families having to reduce or adapt their working patterns.

Cylch Meithrin Llanfarian has been supported to establish an After School Club – 1 night a week, aiming to increase to 2 nights. Staff have completed the required Playwork training.

A small rural school has been trialling an after-school club with the aim of supporting families and increasing numbers. However, the take up has been low and it will not be sustainable to keep this operating beyond July 2023.

One of the actions was to investigate the possibility for existing providers (two Cylchoedd Meithrin) to increase capacity by opening an after-school club to replace the two after school clubs that closed during the pandemic. This would be an additional service within their current full-day care registration rather than creating new provision. However, little progress is being made with regards to re-opening new After School Clubs in Cardigan and Penparcau within the existing day care provision due to recruitment issues.

The following parent responses from a Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs National Survey 2022 highlight the difficulty parents face in accessing childcare in Ceredigion:

- *Can't afford childcare as there is no point in me working for minimum wage to [pay] childcare costs for 2-year-old, my husband is the only one bringing in money with no other help*
- *Within the Ceredigion area childcare is limited. I started looking for childcare for my boy when he was around a month old. Most childminders were fully booked and didn't have spaces until 2023. Some mothers told me they had to book a space for their child when they were 28 weeks pregnant!!!*
- *We would really like a school holiday play scheme in the Llandysul area.*
- *There is a major lack of childcare in general but in particular for children under 2. Aged two they can attend meithrin, however this is only for a couple of hours*

per day, if you work full time it's pretty useless as you need to collect the child from meithrin and take them elsewhere for the remainder of the day, and that's only if your employer is flexible enough to allow multiple drop offs/collection. Our child will be 3 in December and will then start meithrin, although the hours are 9-3 and neither myself or my partner work 9-3 so we have yet to work out how we will arrange collections!

- I myself am a registered childminder with my own 2 daughters who are both under the age of 3. This makes it difficult for me to be able to provide childcare in my area as our ratio numbers are so strict. I can currently only have 1 more child under the age of 5. I have had no interest for children aged over 5 years old as I feel there are plenty of childcare options available to them. Children under the age of 5 is a completely different scenario. I get enquires weekly for children under this age but I am unable to help these families. I have a waiting list up until 2024. I strongly believe that if Childminder ratios for under 5's were reconsidered it would solve a lot of childcare issues in the area. As you can imagine with me only being able to care for one child under the age of 5 at £4.75 per hour that doing this is barely worth my time. I have been seriously thinking of closing my setting as I feel I put in so much effort with very little financial reward.*
- The reason I have decided to work from home is because there is lack of childcare in my area and times and ages, they cater for e.g. over 7 and do not provide evenings.*
- We have to travel 30 minutes (one way) twice a day to drop off and pick up from Nursery during holidays. There's a lack of childcare in our area, especially for under 2.*
- There isn't any out of school hours provision in my local area*
- You have not asked about the availability of childcare. Mid-Ceredigion does not have sufficient childcare providers, in particular for children too young to attend Meithrin, so under 2s. The only registered provider is a significant drive away and despite applying before my next child is even born, 16 months in advance we are only able to secure 2 days. This does not encourage mothers back to work and does not encourage people who grew up in the area to return and raise children.*
- Childcare and sickness has been more difficult - children are sick more often due to lack of mixing and settings are understandably more cautious to any rise in temp or sniffle etc*

Ceredigion responses made up 3.9% of all responses with a higher than national response from parents of 0–3-year-olds.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND THE IMPACT ON CHILDCARE

Since the pandemic, the Childcare sector has faced many challenges with having to adapt to new ways of working, but the last year has seen increasing stability with regards to returning to a 'near to normal' mode of delivery of their services. However, the sector was further impacted with the national recruitment and cost of living crisis, which impacted upon them as businesses, as well as parental affordability of using their service.

Recruitment issues have become increasingly challenging across the country – not only regarding recruiting qualified staff for settings, but also with the recruitment of

volunteer members for the setting/Charitable Organisation Committee which is essential for continuity of service.

Various research documents published have confirmed additional challenges such as speech and language and development delay within the cohort of children born during the pandemic at a national level, which has added additional pressure to the childcare sector staff.

- ‘*Not all babies are in the same boat: Exploring the effects of socioeconomic status, parental attitudes, and activities during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on early Executive Functions*’
- [The impact of COVID on early childhood education and care and opportunities to strengthen the system | Family and Childcare Trust](#)

CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty rates in Ceredigion are of concern, as Department of Work and Pensions figures show that Ceredigion has the highest proportion of children in absolute low-income families in Wales, where 25.9% of children (2605 children aged 0-15) are living in Relative low income, and 18.8% living in absolute low income in the year ending April 2022.

CHILDCARE OFFER

This was the fourth year that we had full roll out of the Childcare Offer across all four counties as a delivery authority for Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys.

Welsh Government developed a National Digital System, based on elements of the Ceredigion bilingual in-house system, and the team worked closely with the development of the new system with WG contractors.

Ceredigion was awarded a contract to pilot the live test scheme alongside Gwynedd:

- Ceredigion participated in the live test of the national system involving three settings and 10 parents in July 2022.
- Following the live test, national roll out was implemented across Wales, providers were encouraged to register on the system by end of October 2022.
- Parent application form opened November 2022 for January 2023 start.
- Legacy system remains in place until September 2023.

During 2022-2023, **£8,327,380** has been paid out to providers in all 4 counties in return for the booked childcare offer hours (on our inhouse’ legacy system).

County	No. of approved applications April 2022 – March 2023
Ceredigion	354
Sir Gar / Carmarthenshire	920
Powys	799
Sir Benfro / Pembrokeshire	542
TOTAL	2615
TOTAL PAID between April and December 2022	£8,327,380.00 from Legacy system plus National Digital System January - March TBC by Welsh Government

- The new national system is now in operation together with the old legacy system until the end of the summer.
- With the new system being so new, there is still work on-going with the system to further develop it.

Ceredigion data only:

Period	£ paid to providers	No. of Children benefitted	Additional Support Grant / Special Educational Needs
April 2022 – March 2023	£1,003,056.21 plus WG payments from October to March TBC	354	6

WG have invested more money into the Childcare Offer and Early Years Education and as a result all children are funded at £5.00 per hour. This was a three-year commitment by WG before it would be reviewed and entailed an increase of 50p per hour for the childcare and education fees. However, this was introduced before the cost-of-living crisis and before the NLW and NMW increases went up again in April 2023. Providers are reporting that they are now running at a loss or only just breaking even as they are not allowed to include a top up fee for parents. This situation cannot continue much longer for fear of seeing further closures. Three-day nurseries have reported that they are losing out 0.40 per meal due to only being allowed to charge parents up to £2.50 for a hot meal. But the outside caterers that supply them charge £2.90 per meal due to increase in cost of food and energy. Providers are therefore having to take the loss which is a huge blow in the current climate. This needs to be addressed by WG as a matter of urgency to ensure that the childcare rates match the cost of inflation.

FLYING START

Flying Start (FS) delivers four core service elements of:

- Early Years Health Service
- Childcare
- Parenting Support
- Early Language Support

Services are provided through

- The Early Years Health Team which consists of Health Visitors and Family Support Workers who can offer intensive support when needed.
- Funded sessional Childcare of the highest quality for children aged 2 - 3. The childcare is provided within a setting of your choice for 2 and a half hours a day, 5 days a week for 39 weeks of the year
- Parenting Support through 1:1 work or in local groups
- Support to develop children's speech, language and communication skills through 1:1 support or a group to nurture skills and awareness.

Flying Start has continued to fund 12.5 hours of childcare per week for 2–3-year-olds in the 5 Flying Start areas (within specific postcode areas of Cardigan, Penparcau, Llanarth, Llandysul and Aberporth).

During 2022 – 2023:

- 10,061 childcare sessions were funded.
- 288 children received Health Visitor Flying Start services
- 364 children under 4 allocated to FS Health Visitors
- 1197 Face to face contacts
- 148 newly eligible Flying Start children were offered childcare.
- 82% attendance rate was reported during this period.
- Transition meetings were held for 100% of children transferring from nursery to school at age 3.
- 62 learners trained in Planning in the moment

Due to the number of children in Flying Start areas declining over the last few years Ceredigion applied for an extension for the current areas to be increased to take in the whole of the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) to meet our cap of 561 children. This has been approved and families will now benefit from all four elements of Flying Start in:

- Llanarth,
- Llandysul,
- Aberystwyth Rheidol 2,
- Penparcau 2 and
- Aberporth 2

At the time of undertaking the CSA, WG announced a commitment with Plaid Cymru to increase childcare for 2-year-olds. Little was known at the time what this would entail. Over time it became clear that this was to be an expansion of Flying Start.

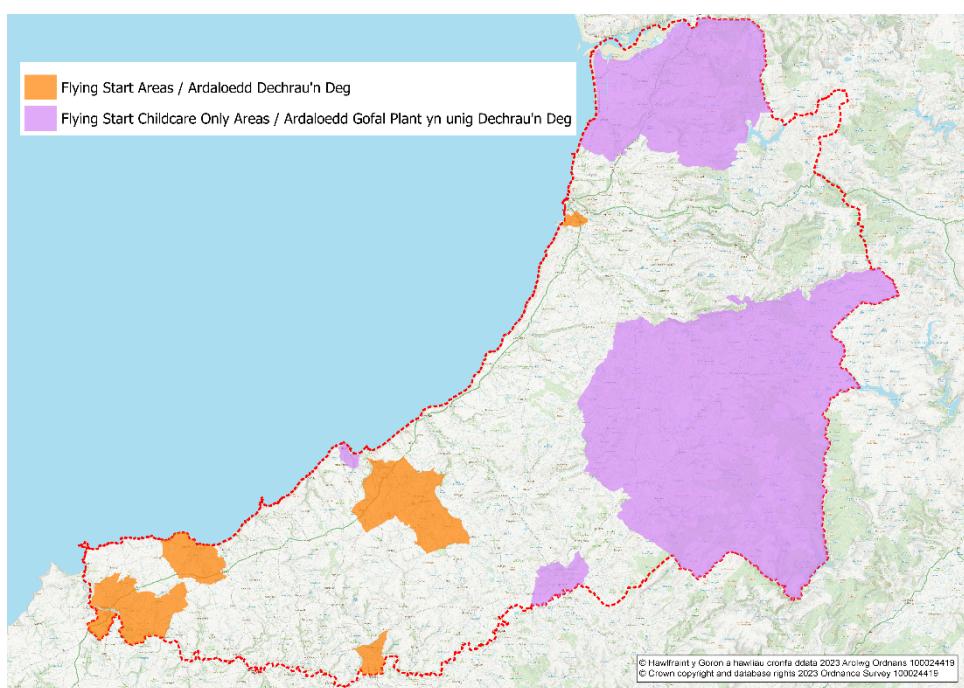
Llechryd was identified as the area to pilot in Phase 1 of the Flying Start expansion (all elements), and the programme began in September 2022. 100% of all 2-year-old children within the area were supported (3 children) with access to childcare.

Over time the expansion of Flying Start changed to only include the Childcare element for 2–3-year-olds who would be eligible for 12.5 hours of funded childcare for 39 weeks of the year. This is to be rolled out on a phased approach, and WG set a target of 38 children for Ceredigion. We were expected to use WIMD data to identify our areas of need. A significant amount of data was collected, and a working group created to identify the areas for Expansion.

Further funding was announced just before Christmas 2022 enabling us to increase the number of areas for expansion. Business plans for the local authority (Phase 2A and 2B) were submitted to WG by 13 January for roll out in April 2023. The following Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's) areas were identified for the expansion to begin in April. WG confirmed approval of these in March 2023:

- Lampeter 1 & 2,
- Tregaron
- New Quay
- Borth
- Ceulanmaesmawr
- Lledrod
- Llangeitho

Map demonstrating the traditional Flying Start areas and the new Flying Start areas:



Although these areas have been approved and families are now eligible for 12.5 hours a week of funded childcare, the availability of childcare is proving to be an issue, particularly in Lampeter 1 and 2. The one-day nursery and three childminders are full to capacity. The LA are working with the day nursery to try and find a suitable venue in order to be able to open additional sessional childcare places which will enable families to receive this service.

Llanfihangel Ystrad was another area which was identified by the working group that would have benefited from the expansion, as Llanfihangel Ystrad were ranked seventh

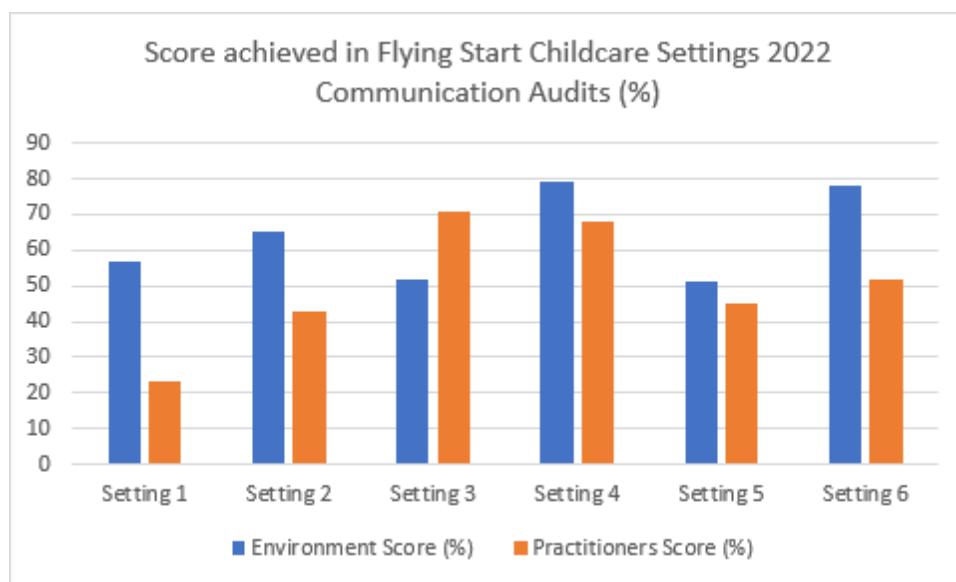
most deprived area on the WIMD data. But, due to the lack of availability of childcare it was not included in the proposals.

As Expansion 2 is the childcare element only, this is proving difficult to get the children on the FS database without Health Visitor and Family Workers referrals. However, some of these areas are Pathfinder areas and the Family Workers and officers in those areas have been able to support the project. With the roll out on a phased basis it is difficult to promote the scheme county wide without raising families' expectations. WG have not confirmed how they intend to roll out the programme as a universal service.

Flying Start offered a varied training programme to childcare settings during 2022-23:

- Wellcomm
- Jabadao
- Introduction to Attention Programme (in partnership with SALT)
- Introduction to Schemas
- Introduction to Planning in the Moment - 56 staff members (childcare staff, family workers, speech and language therapists) received this training in January 2023. Most settings have now taken these ideas to improve the environments and the service they provide.
- Introduction to Flying Start Childcare

Results from Communication Audits carried out in the 6 main Core FS Settings.



FLYING START OUTREACH

- 25 children benefitted from Flying Start Outreach during 2022-23.
- 32% of these children have emerging needs or ALN and most had individual speech and language programmes provided by a speech and language therapist.
- 13 different Childcare Settings were used consisting of 10 Non-Maintained Settings and 3 Childminders.
- 100% of the families responded that their child was happy at the Childcare Setting.

Quote from a parent benefitting from FS Outreach:

"Our daughter is thriving since attending this nursery and we are very grateful for this setting; they are extremely accommodating as our daughter has additional needs. They are more than willing to assist her with her ongoing development and welcome any advice given by professionals in order to help her reach her milestones."

CHILD DEVELOPMENT FUND OUTREACH

- 65 children benefitted from Outreach Childcare under the Child Development Fund (CDF) during 2022-23.
- 35% of these children have emerging needs or ALN and most had individual speech and language programmes provided by a speech and language therapist.
- 25 different Childcare Settings were used consisting of 4 Private day Nurseries, 16 Non-Maintained Settings and 4 Childminders.
- 48% of the children receiving Outreach Childcare also received support through a Family Worker.
- 100% of the families responded that their child was happy at the Childcare Setting.

Quotes from families:

- *"It's been something he has needed for a while; he's settled in very well and home life has been a lot better. His understanding of everything has come on in just a short space of time as well."*
- *"He has come along so much since being there, he loves to be there which has such a positive effect on our home life. His speech has improved massively. He loves the staff and his friends there."*
- *"The change in him already is very positive. He's gone from a little boy who was afraid of strangers to being confident and relaxed around people he doesn't know. He's taking more interest in his surroundings and showing me things and pointing to them. At first, **** was shy and got upset when we left him with the childminder. Within a few short weeks he's become very excited when we tell him where he's going. As soon as he sees his backpack he runs to the door and points outside. Without the funding I've received I'd be totally lost. I'm very grateful for this opportunity and I know that **** is benefiting greatly from it."*

The Child Development Fund was put in place as a result of the pandemic. However, this funding has now ended in March 2023. From above it is clear the difference that this funding made to enable families to access childcare when normally they would not have been able to afford it. Whilst at the same time this funding has contributed to the sustainability of the setting and ensuring employability of the staff.

CONSULTATION / LEGISLATION CHANGES

Changes to the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare

The Local Authority and CWLWM partners all responded to the consultation on the Review of the National Minimum Standards and the Child Minding and Day Care (Disqualification) (No.2) (Wales) Regulations 2022.

Proposed changes to the NMS include:

- first aid requirements (Standard 10)
- child minders working with assistants (Standard 13) (childminders)
- childcare qualifications for day care providers (Standard 13) (daycare)
- supernumerary member of staff (Standard 15)
- quality (Standard 18)
- safeguarding (Standard 20)

Work is ongoing with Welsh Government with regards to the publication of the refreshed NMS whilst they review feedback around qualifications, training and the supernumerary standard with the aim of publishing in Spring 2023. The revised NMS will bring about changes which we and partners will have to support the sector on following final publication.

PACEY Cymru has commissioned the independent review of childminding due to the decline of childminding in Wales and awaiting publication of the report.

Additionally, September 2022 saw the implementation the New Curriculum for Wales, and new Early Years Additional Needs Code. Additional training was provided to all Childcare settings.

Ceredigion County Council Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 Consultation

As a result of responding to the Corporate Strategy 2022 – 2027 where we expressed a need to ensure that Childcare is recognised as a part of the foundational economy. Childcare has been taken into consideration throughout the strategy. Four Corporate Well-Being Objectives have been identified, in which childcare has an underlying role for each of the themes:

1. Boosting the economy, supporting businesses and enabling employment
2. Creating caring and healthy communities
3. Providing the best start in life and enabling learning at all ages
4. Creating sustainable, greener and well-connected communities

The Corporate Strategy has included Flying Start, Childcare Offer and promotion of Tax-Free Childcare as well as supporting the development and sustainability of registered childcare provision under the priorities for Boosting the Economy, as well as pursuing initiative to recruit staff within the Corporate Well-being objective 2022-2027.

[**Link:** Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 - Ceredigion County Council](#)

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

2 RECRUITMENT

As already identified in the first section, recruitment issues are having a significant impact on the childcare sector right across the county and nationally. Providers are reporting that they are having to re-advertise posts as new staff are not coming forward. Finding staff with the right qualifications and the ability to speak Welsh is also another factor in the difficulty in recruiting. Staff are leaving the sector to go into other employment, some are moving on to jobs within schools whilst others are leaving the sector altogether in search of better paid jobs. This is a national issue which needs to be addressed and is not something Ceredigion can tackle alone.

NDNA have met regularly with network chairs representing the sector to gather first-hand the concerns around recruitment and retention. These have been noted and monitored in CWLWM's issue log and shared with Welsh Government. As part of the UK wide campaign to support the early years workforce NDNA launched the 'First Five Years Count' campaign which highlighted the important work of the early years' workforce. An employer's toolkit, supporting providers in Ceredigion to develop a workforce/ recruitment plan to suit their needs. NDNA Cymru have also developed a career progression chart outlining the routes and opportunities available to the early years workforce and this has been promoted in Ceredigion.

What has been achieved in 2022 – 2023:

- 5 attended 5 childminder briefing sessions with Local Authority
- Childminding course was adapted to be delivered on-line
- 1 childminding course delivered through the LA
- 3 completed the training with Ceredigion
- 3 undertook the Childminding Briefing session course with Pacey
- 4 receiving mentoring support from the Childcare Unit
- Regular promotion of becoming a childminder or opportunities to work in childcare are undertaken e.g. attendance at the National Eisteddfod in Tregaron
- A training audit was undertaken with childminders. Results were used to support the identification of childminders for the Flying Start expansion.
- We continue to offer the annual mandatory training programme along with opportunities for continuous professional development training opportunities.
- 17 events attended by staff from the Childcare Unit to promote working in childcare.
- 87% of childminders have now undertaken ALN training with the EYALNLO (further information available in section 5)
- Help with Childcare costs information flyer developed and shared with Council employees.
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs has supported the WeCare Wales Stakeholder group to develop an Early Years, Childcare and Play campaign. The campaign aims to support the childcare sector with the issues in recruiting and retaining staff and focussing on Childcare as a career choice. Promotion of childcare as a career is underway to support recruitment across the sector.
- 20 undertaken Playwork Training with Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs.

TRAINING:**Paediatric First Aid 2022-2023:****Number of staff completed Paediatric First Aid Training 2022-2023:**

Quarter	No. of Paediatric First Aid Course	No. attendees
1	6	22
2	4	19
3	4	29
4	5	34
TOTAL	19	104

During the pandemic, there was a waiting list for renewal of qualifications which has now been addressed.

Paediatric First Aid	Number of courses	Number of certificates awarded
2020 - 2021	7	30
2021 - 2022	37	167
2022 – 2023	19	104

Ceredigion County Council e-Learning and online courses are available for the sector to access which includes Food Hygiene, Child Protection and Safeguarding Levels 1 & 2 and many more courses. **260** attendees participated in the following courses during 2022 – 2023:

E-learning Courses	TOTAL April 2022 - March 2023
Cleaning in the Workplace	1
Connect To Kindness (e-learning)	2
Equality and Diversity (e-learning)	9
First Aid Awareness (e-learning)	2
Food Hygiene (e-learning Welsh Medium)	1
Food Hygiene (e-learning)	16
Health and Safety (e-learning)	8
Health and Safety in the home for Personal Assistants	1
Identifying Mental Health Difficulties in Children and Young People (e-learning)	17
Infection Prevention & Control for Care Workers (e-learning)	4
Manual Handling of Objects (e-learning)	4
Manual Handling of People for Care Workers (e-learning)	2
Mental Capacity Act Awareness (e-learning)	3
Prevent Awareness training to include WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent)	1
Protecting Individuals at Risk of Vulnerability Crimes (e-learning)	3
Risk Management	2

Safe Administration of Medicines (e-learning)	5
Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk Level 1 (e-learning Welsh Medium)	3
Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk Level 1 (e-learning)	59
Unconscious Bias for Teachers (e-learning)	9
Understanding Autism (e-learning)	23
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (e-learning)	10
Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (e-learning)	3
Well-Being of Future Generations (e-learning)	3
Welsh Language Awareness (CCC) (e-learning)	9
TOTAL	200

The Childcare Unit also arranged or delivered other courses/information sessions which included:

Ceredigion County Council Online training courses	Attendees
First Aid at Work	6
Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)	15
Safeguarding Children Level 2 (Welsh Medium)	4
Safeguarding Children Level 2	41
2 Online Clwb Clyd Network sessions for Childminders	17
TOTAL	83

Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan

Welsh Government published the Anti Racism Wales Action Plan in July 2022 and are funding CWLWM to deliver training to the Childcare and Play sector.

Link: [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: section b \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#) – Childcare and play Sector

Working with Welsh Government, DARPL (Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning) have developed the Senior Leader series of professional learning with a specific focus on Childcare, Play and Early Years (CPEY) which were launched in March 2023 and promoted to the sector.

CWLWM Training:

CWLWM partners offer a variety of training opportunities which can be accessed by its members for example:

- PACEY Cymru have raised awareness of the Welsh Government opportunity for childcare community mentors
- NDNA have continued to offer a full training programme which include a variety of webinars which include looking at the implementation of the new curriculum for non-maintained settings.
- Mudiad Meithrin has training available through its Academi programme. Academi conducts training via face-to-face, e-learning and online.
- Mudiad Meithrin also offer the Cam wrth Gam level 3 and level 5 GChDDP training which provides opportunities for individuals to learn whilst working in a setting.

Professional learning against racism by Liz Pemberton and Rachel Clark x4 sessions.

- Inclusion Policy, and Equal Opportunity.
- What is being anti-racist? x3 sessions

CONCERNS:

- Recruitment within the sector is currently a concern with many 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.
- It would be more beneficial for the sector if all staff had the Childcare Level 3 (as previously required) and the PIC/Leader of the Out of School Care setting held the Playwork Level 3. Continuing professional development e.g., Level 2 in Playwork could be available for the additional staff. This would support the retention of staff and remove the pressure from settings who are trying to be sustainable during these trying times.
- Out of the 10 settings that actively engage with the Childcare Unit approximately 22 staff currently hold a Playwork Level 3. Some staff are working towards a Level 3 although the issue is that only 1 staff member holds the qualification and if these staff become unwell or leave then the setting will be non-compliant with their CIW registration.
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Club (CPCKC) national club survey also indicated that recruitment and retention is still a challenge. CPCKC developed a [Become Playworker video](#) and [10 ways to press play on your Playwork career resource](#) to support recruitment nationally.

3 ECONOMY / SUSTAINABILITY

Childcare is an important part of the foundational economy in order to enable parents to access education, training or employment. Registered childcare can further support parents to access the financial support available to them to help with childcare costs to address in-work poverty and child poverty rates of Ceredigion.

The Ceredigion Corporate Strategy has identified the important role childcare plays and has included Flying Start, Childcare Offer and promotion of Tax-Free Childcare as well as supporting the development and sustainability of registered childcare

provision under the priorities for Boosting the Economy, as well as pursuing initiative to recruit staff within the Corporate Well-being objective 2022-2027.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability continues to be the biggest issue for childcare providers across the county, and this year was particularly challenging with increasing overhead costs and increasing staff wages. We have continued to manage to offer the Sustainability Grant to the sector and Childcare providers continue to be heavily dependent on this grant being available to support the staffing and overhead costs for settings, and for health and safety equipment for Childminders. This year Energy costs were added to the eligible items under the grant criteria. This grant is funded by the core budget and the Childcare and Play element of the WG Children, Communities Grant (CCG). However, the funding available for these grants continues to decrease annually.

Very worryingly a survey carried out across Wales by National Day Nursery Association (NDNA) highlighted that 88% of nurseries expect to make a loss or break even this year.

Table: The number of sustainability grants and the amount awarded in 2022 – 2023:

Childcare Provider	Sustainability Grant	Total
Childminders	18	£3,410.00
Day Nurseries	4	£8,640.00
After School Clubs	5	£4,850.00
Holiday Playscheme	2	£2,250.00
Sessional care - Cylch/Playgroup	12	£16,850.00
Total awarded:	41	£36,000.00

Cost of living crisis – quotation taken from a Sustainability grant application:

“Costs are rising across the business and with staff recruitment being such a challenge its vital to ensure we can work hard to maintain our staff.

We are PROUD of our staff team, many who are long term which in turn makes [Our] Childcare what it is today therefore we work hard on and plan for retention.

With the living wage increasing annually we are trying to ensure that we continue to have a scale in place to recognise staff for their qualifications and roles. This puts pressure on the business therefore any support with staff wage costs would provide support for our sustainability and help ensure that we can continue to retain our staff.”

In 2022 - 2023, the following Start up grants were awarded:

Childcare Provider	Start-up Grant	Total
New After School Clubs	4	£14,000.00

WELSH GOVERNMENT CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES GRANT (CCG) - CHILDCARE & PLAY GRANT:

The Childcare & Play Grant element of the CCG provides funding of £58,796 to address the gaps of the CSA. However, since the creation of this grant we have seen no increase in the budget for the Childcare and Play element. Funding has remained the same. This funding is utilised to contribute to staff costs of the Childcare and Training Coordinator, sustainability grants, the training programme, support children with additional needs to attend mainstream out of school childcare settings through Ymuno scheme and supporting the summer holiday DASH playscheme.

A reduction in the number of registered After School Clubs has had a significant impact on the number of children, families and settings taking advantage of the Ymuno scheme. As a result, the project was underspent this year. Therefore, the Ymuno funding was re-purposed to provide start up grants for the new after school clubs.

With the fragile nature of After School provision, we are concerned about future access to mainstream childcare for children with additional needs.

The Childcare Unit continue to be represented on the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) Steering Group which meet on a regular basis.

CHILDCARE OFFER CAPITAL GRANTS:

WG have heavily invested in the development of new childcare facilities across Wales, Ceredigion have been fortunate to benefit from a share of this funding as we have successfully been awarded **£3,207,261.00** between 2018 and 2022 through the Childcare Offer Capital Grant towards capital development. This funding has enabled:

- the repurposing of the Tregaron Swimming Pool into a purpose-built childcare facility;
- an extension at Ysgol Gynradd Cenarth for the development of a new Cylch Meithrin – Cylch Meithrin Nawmor;
- a purpose-built building at Ffrindiau Bach yr Eos replacing the old cabin originally installed when Flying Start began; and
- a new cabin for Cylch Meithrin Llanarth.

Cylch Meithrin Llanilar benefitted from funding to improve the facilities they offer. The funding enabled them to build an extension allowing the creation of a bigger kitchen, staff toilet and office space along with improving the outside play area.

Cylch Meithrin Rhydypennau had funding to make improvements to inside and outside of their cabin along with installing a canopy allowing access for children to be able to access the outside for free play.

Clwb Twts, Cywion ac Adar Aeron had funding to install a canopy, outside classroom and improve the outside play area.

A further **£552,000.00** was awarded for a Small Grant Scheme for settings and childminders. The small grants scheme has seen significant improvements made to childcare settings right across the county as many have made improvements to the inside and outside play areas. Evidence of this was recently highlighted in an Estyn inspection of Cylch Meithrin Pontrhydfendigaid who noted how the Cylch had made significant use of the outside play area.

Total Small Grant beneficiaries include:

- 28 Sessional Childcare settings – Cylch Meithrin / Playgroup
- 6 Day Nurseries
- 2 After School / Holiday Clubs
- 27 Childminders

An additional **£489,044.00** of Flying Start capital funding has been invested in the childcare infrastructure to support the Ffrindiau Bach yr Eos project and Cylch Meithrin Llanarth.

Childcare Capital Funding was initially secured to be included as part of the 21st Century Schools Dyffryn Aeron project for the childcare element to be included within the school. However, as this project was not completed within the identified timescale due to Covid this funding had to be returned to WG. However, we were advised to submit a new proposal under the new funding launched in 2022 – 2023.

CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS GRANT 2022-2025

Just as the CSA was completed WG announced that potentially new capital funding would be made available for a three-year period. This funding would bring together Childcare Offer, Flying Start and Early Years capital money into one pot. Further information would follow.

Mid-October it was confirmed that £320,000 was available for Ceredigion for the period 2022 – 2023 as a small grants scheme once more. This did not allow much time to spend the allocation before the end of March.

The following table indicates the grant amounts awarded to 20 Childcare settings and 16 Childminders:

2022-2023 Childcare & Early Years Grant	Allocation	Successful number of settings	Total Awarded
Childminders	£10,000	16	£81,249.94
Childcare providers registered for 15 or fewer places	£10,000	2	£10,834.77
Childcare providers registered for 16 to 29 places	£15,000	12	£71,953.34

Out of School - Holidays		1	£15,000.00
After School Club		1	£8,200.00
Childcare providers registered for 30+ places	£20,000	4	£103,843.88
TOTAL		36	£291,081.93

We were unable to allocate the full grant funding in under six months and had to return the unspent allocation.

Further grant funding of £380,000.00 has been awarded for 2023 – 2024 to utilise as a small grants scheme once again, with similar funding expected for 2024 – 2025.

At the same time LAs were invited to submit proposals for large capital projects to address gaps in childcare and support the Flying Start 2-year-old expansion programme. A Proposals paper was submitted to WG in January 2023, and we are awaiting a decision on the next step.

One of the proposals put forward by Ceredigion for the large project is to secure a childcare facility for 2 – 4-year-olds as part of Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron. This will see the re-location of Cylch Meithrin Ynys y Plant move into the new school. Currently the Cylch can only accommodate 12 children. As highlighted earlier due to the lack of childcare spaces available Llanfihangel Ystrad was not included in the Flying Start expansion areas. Work is progressing to submit a Business Justification Case (BJC) for funding which will allow this development to proceed. If successful, this will provide 60 part-time Welsh-medium childcare spaces in the school which is much needed in this area.

CONCERNS:

- Childcare providers are reporting that the Flying Start childcare 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.
- 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.

4 HOUSING

The Housing data on new housing developments and social housing stock collated for the CSA was used as part of data analysis for Flying Start Expansion proposals.

Monitoring housing development will help plan for expected increase in demand for childcare places.

No further actions were met during this financial year.

5 ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN)

Additional Learning Needs Training:

The new ALN code being put in place between September 2021 and August 2024 creates a single system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with ALN. To ensure that all staff in settings and Childminders are aware of the code and their responsibilities the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) developed a specific training programme of 7 modules for the sector. This training continues to be well received

Funding through the Early Help funding through the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) and the Child Development Grant enabled us to pay staff time for undertaking this training. 87% of childminders have now completed the training. The CCG also enabled us to offer the training to additional staff within settings following the training leaders had received previously. A folder of resources accompanied the training and follow up support to answer any question or offer advice on completing a PRE ISRF was also available to attendees. This training has been of significant benefit to the Childminders as they are more confident to approach the EYALNLO if they have concerns regarding a child's development. The following comments were taken from the evaluation form to the training:

"Makes me more aware of any difficulties a child may have and how I can hopefully help them or get them additional help.

I feel that I have the confidence to address problems with the family's and they listen to me, As helping them understand managing their children's behaviour and working as one".

"One little girl is in my care and lacking language skills. We felt confident enough to discuss the way forward for the parents without worrying them."

CYNLLUN CYFEIRIO

The Cynllun Cyfeirio referral programme supports children aged 2-4 with a disability and / or additional needs to take part in educational play and learning opportunities during term time in a pre-school registered setting. Referrals are made by professionals, parents or staff of pre-school settings to a multi-agency Panel for approval. The scheme is funded by Welsh Government Children and Communities Grant and Ceredigion County Council funds and is managed by Mudiad Meithrin.

Support was provided to 175 children by the Ceredigion Cynllun Cyfeirio referral Scheme during the 2022-2023 financial year.

175 children were supported in the childcare settings through:

- reimbursement towards the cost of employing Helping Hands to the setting to support the children referred to the Referral Scheme
- support with the transfer from the childcare setting to the school
- support with organizing the necessary specialised training for the staff
- offer advice and support to the childcare setting

This number includes the children funded by all funding streams including those who receive support through the Childcare Offer Additional Support Grant (7 children).

CHILD DEVELOPMENT FUND

The pandemic resulted in many young children missing out on opportunities during the most fundamental years of their life by not accessing childcare due to many settings being closed. The impact on children's development has been significant and the sector is still seeing the impact of this. To help overcome this WG provided a Child Development Grant from 2020 – 2023 to try to introduce early support to help families address child development issues.

By working with Flying Start and other partners, 67 children received financial support to attend childcare through the Child Development Fund. They were placed with registered childcare providers and were therefore given the early intervention and support to their development, as well as supporting the families. The Flying Start Outreach referral process was used to prioritise children at more risk of developmental delay. 2022-2023 saw the final year of this additional grant.

OUTREACH FUNDING

Outreach funding was provided within the Covid Recovery grant to support vulnerable children to attend childcare settings.

In September 2022, 17 children who were supported with Outreach funding started their early years education, and funding was needed to pay for the 'top up' time they spent in the Childcare setting. Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant (EYPDG) funding was not sufficient to support these children.

There is a gap in supporting children to attend childcare once eligible for early education provision. The children need to be in childcare on a regular basis to support their development – but if not funded, parents are not likely to send them.

Feedback from provider regarding ALN within the Sustainability grant application:

“.... On-going – This is an issue that is on-going and I feel strongly about. There is a lack of support for children in full day care nurseries who have identified additional learning needs. This has been a real challenge for us for many years and currently we have 2 children with complex needs in our care.

The Helping Hands (Cynllun Cyfeirio) funding is the only support available for children over the age of 2 – this is only available for 10 hours per week – term time only to employ an additional staff member to support these children.

We have children who can attend full time 50 hours per week for 51 weeks of the year. In the past we have funded staff additional hours to support children in our care outside of the Helping Hands funding as I believe all children and families should have the same access to childcare regardless of their needs. However, in the current financial climate I can't afford to fund any additional hours- this limits access for these families and children.

Also, when caring for children with complex needs there is a lot of training hours involved to ensure that we can meet the needs of individual children and for their safety, this is also an additional cost for our staffing budget which is not considered within any funding support.

The term following a child's third birthday if the family / child are accessing the childcare offer, we have been able to access additional support for up to 30 hours which is much better – 30 hrs per week during term time and during school holidays enabling children to access more hours as well as additional grants for

CONCERNS:

- As highlighted by childcare providers (see quote above), 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.

6 WELSH LANGUAGE

NEW 2021 CENSUS DATA:

Ceredigion's population decreased by around 4,400 between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021). The population of Ceredigion fell by 5.9%, from just over 75,900 in 2011 to around 71,500 in 2021.

The percentage of Welsh speakers in Ceredigion fell from 47.3% in 2011 to 45.3% in 2021. In 2021, there were around 3,300 fewer Welsh-speaking Ceredigion residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011. The number of people who did not speak Welsh decreased by 650.

- The biggest decrease in Welsh speakers has been seen in the 3–15-year-olds age group. A decrease of around 1,052 people since the Census 2011, and 6.6 percentage points lower than Census 2011.
- The greatest decrease out of the other Welsh language skills was seen in the percentage of people aged three years or older “able to speak, read and write Welsh” decreased from 38.3% to 37.3%. This equates to around 2,525 fewer people, however, is smaller decrease than was seen for the percentage and number of people able to speak Welsh.
- There was only a small change in the percentage of people aged three years or older who could speak and read but couldn’t write Welsh” (a decrease of 0.8 percentage points since 2011).
- The percentage of people who “could speak but couldn’t speak or write” Welsh remained unchanged between the census years (staying at 4.9% of the population aged 3 years and over).

A caveat must be placed on the interpretation of the data results and conclusions drawn from them, as minimal access or low attendance of children under 5 years old at a Childcare Provider and/or school due to various COVID-19 restrictions and regulations in 2020-2021 has reduced opportunities for introduction to the language and Welsh immersion of those 2-4 year olds within sessional childcare settings. This may account for the lower number of children aged 3 years or older able to speak Welsh. Consideration must also be given to the overall Speech and language delay as identified within the DELPHI study which resulted in Child Development Fund money being awarded to address speech and language delay:

Baseline December 2019:

Language category of the service	Number registered Childminders	Number of registered Day Nurseries in Ceredigion	Number of registered Sessional Care in Ceredigion	Number of registered After School settings in Ceredigion	Total	%
Welsh	12	3	25	9	49	47.1%
Welsh and English	12	4	2	6	24	23.1%
English with elements of Welsh	16	0	0	0	16	15.4%
English	11	1	0	3	15	14.4%
	51	8	27	18	104	100%

End March 2023:

Language category of the service	Number registered Childminders	Number of registered Day Nurseries in Ceredigion	Number of registered Sessional Care in Ceredigion	Number of registered After School locations in Ceredigion	Total	%
Welsh	15	3	26	5	49	59.8%
Welsh and English (combined with English with elements of Welsh)*	16	1	3	2	22	26.8%
English	9	1	1		11	13.4%
*CIW have changed language categories.	40	5	30	7	82	100%

CHILDMANDING COURSE

A requirement of the Childminding course Unit 326 & 327 is that Prospective Childminders must demonstrate how they will incorporate the Welsh Language and Culture into their service as well as develop a Language Policy. We can deliver this course through the medium of Welsh with our last cohort all undertaking the course through the medium of Welsh. In partnership with Ceredigion the Welsh language initiative a Welsh Language Awareness session is incorporated into the course.

The loan scheme for the 10 'Sachau Stori' bilingual bags of a variety of books and resources available for Childminders to use with children aged 0-12 years was suspended for 2020 and has not been resurrected due to logistical reasons

CAMAU - Learn Welsh Scheme for Early Years Education and Childcare

The 'Camau' Learn Welsh scheme is a free Online Self Study course designed for childcare and early years practitioners, and promoted to the sector regularly through our Newsletters, training programme, and by our CWLWM partners. Link: [Camau | Learn Welsh](#)

Niferoedd dysgwyr wedi cofrestru ar gyrsiau Camau – Ceredigion	01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 - 31/03/2023
Number of Ceredigion learners registered on Camau courses		
Camau - Mynediad / Entry Level 1	22	10
Camau – Mynediad / Entry Level 2	4	5
Camau - Mynediad / Entry Level 3		2
Camau Chwarae - Mynediad / Play Level 1		1
Camau Chwarae – Mynediad / Play Level 2		1
Dysgwyr Unigryw / Individual Learners	22	16

*Data from National Centre for Learning Welsh: dysgucymraeg.cymru / learnwelsh.cymru

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP)

In accordance with the requirements of The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022–2032 (Wales) Regulations 2019, under Part 1 and Part 2 of the 1993 Welsh Language Act, Ceredigion County Council had the responsibility to prepare and carry out a Welsh Language Plan that specifically dealt with Education.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022–2032 for Ceredigion was approved on 20th July 2022.

Following recent approval of the WESP an action plan has been developed to demonstrate the implementation of the plan over the first five years. Some actions are long-term and ongoing and others timeframe specific. A forum has been established to monitor the progress of the action plan. Childcare is represented on the Forum by the LA and Childcare Umbrella Organisations who will all have a role to support the implementation of the plan in supporting the Welsh language in Ceredigion.

Welsh language Standards

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out a legal framework which imposes a duty on Ceredigion County Council, among other organisations, to comply with the Standards relating to the Welsh language.

Ceredigion is one of the traditional strongholds of the Welsh language. Ceredigion's Welsh speaking neighbourhoods and bilingual communities are the basis of its culture and daily life. The language is widely used in the workplace, in education and in the home. Welsh is also a vital part of local communities, organisations, clubs and societies.

The Welsh Language Standards' purpose is to give more rights for people to use Welsh in their everyday lives. The Standards impose a greater duty on Local Authorities to plan for and increase the use of the Welsh language.

The Welsh Language Policy on Awarding Grants was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 10 January 2023. This Policy has been developed to provide support to Officers to comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards when issuing and awarding grants on behalf of Ceredigion County Council.

The Policy states that an Officer responsible for awarding grants is required to keep a record regarding:

- the total number of grants issued.
- the number and % of applicants who have submitted their applications in Welsh.
- the number who have applied to conduct the interview for a grant in Welsh, if you conduct an interview as part of your assessment of the application
- the number of organisations that have further developed their use of Welsh as part of the conditions to receive a grant.
- This data will be required to include as part of the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Annual Report.

All CCG and HSG programmes continue to ensure all application processes and supporting documents for any grants issued are available bilingually, at all times.

The development of Ceredigion's (new) Language Strategy 2024-29 has begun, and CCG programme leads have participated in workshops contributing to its development.

Total number of grants issued from 10 th January 2023	37 <i>Welsh Government Childcare and Early Years Capital Small Grant</i>
Number and % of applicants who have submitted their applications in Welsh	10 applications= 27% of total Childminders – 16.6% (3 from 18) Settings – 36.8% (7 from 19)
The number of organisations that have further developed their use of Welsh as part of the conditions to receive a grant.	We are still collecting the monitoring reports - where the providers report on their use of the Welsh language within the service. See some examples below...

Example	
What effects will your service have on the Welsh language, and are those positive or negative? What steps will be taken to increase the	Please explain what you have done/implemented to increase the use of Welsh in your setting

<p>positive effects and reduce any negative effects?</p>	
<p><i>One of our main objectives from the grant was to replace our signage. As a result we have made our signage fully bilingual and this demonstrates that we are more than happy to enrol children with us of both languages. This can only have a positive effect on the setting.</i></p>	<p><i>We have recently had a Welsh Language provision assessment by our development officer to see how we can increase our Welsh provision. As a result we have implemented short, medium and long-term goals that are all achievable. She assessed with us where we are currently in relation to meeting the criteria for the Welsh active offer and then the steps that we can make to meet all criteria. One of our first steps is to enrol as many staff as we can on the Camau course. This is being considered by a number of staff and we hope to get them on it soon. In the short term we have increased the use and visibility of high frequency words throughout the nursery, Welsh activities have been more clearly indicated in our planning, the use of daily vocabulary is much more present throughout the nursery. Helpful translation websites have been made available to us. In the medium term we are looking to build up a resource library dedicated to Welsh resources and multimedia. The medium term also includes getting as many staff enrolled on the Camau courses. One of our long-term goals would be to have the ability to provide parents/prospective customers with policies, enrolment forms, newsletters, menus etc in the language of their choice and to also have at a minimum of 50% of our staff as competent and confident Welsh speakers.</i></p>
<p><i>My first language is Welsh although I work through the medium of both. I mostly communicate with the children in Welsh in preparation of them moving into full time education. I ensure that all parents are aware of this and are happy with it.</i></p>	
<p><i>Cymraeg yw iaith gyntaf y cartref ac rwyf yn cynnig gwasanaeth drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg i'r holl deuluoedd a'u plant. Mae hyn yn factor allweddol i sicrhau parhad i'r iaith.</i></p>	

<p><i>Welsh is the first language of the home and I offer a service through the medium of Welsh to all families and their children. This is a key factor to ensure the continuity of the language.</i></p>	
<p><i>I will be completing a Welsh course to improve my Welsh, All activities and daily conversations are done in Welsh/English</i></p>	<p><i>I will be working towards the active offer with support from the Childcare Unit</i></p>
<p><i>I will be offering policies and procedures, also contracts in the Welsh language</i></p>	<p><i>I am a Welsh speaker. I offer bilingual at my setting, I am to offer my policies in both languages to parents which will be made easier with a laptop rather than a phone</i></p>
<p><i>I use the Welsh language with children at the setting by speaking, singing, telling stories etc in Welsh throughout the day. Children who do not speak Welsh at home are hearing Welsh and have lots of opportunities to practice their Welsh at the setting.</i></p> <p><i>I celebrate Welsh culture at the setting e.g. recently we spent the day making cawl on a campfire and we spoke about the ingredients in Welsh and sang songs in Welsh. My own children recently competed in the Urdd Eisteddfod so we have looked at videos of people competing in the Eisteddfod on YouTube.</i></p>	<p><i>Many of the children at the setting speak Welsh at home, I discuss language preference with parents prior to starting a placement and am making every effort to speak mostly Welsh with those children who speak Welsh at home.</i></p> <p><i>We have been attending Cymraeg I Blant events and sessions where possible and I have been using the songs we learned there in the setting.</i></p> <p><i>As my confidence is growing I am now attempting to speak mostly Welsh with those parents and am encouraging those parents who are learners to speak Welsh with me. It feels supportive and encouraging to be trying together! I try to write my social media posts bilingually</i></p>
<p><i>The purchase of a larger table means that we can sit throughout the day as a group and as some children speak more Welsh than others, I believe that the communication will be centred more as a group rather than individuals. I aim make picture labels inside the doors of the units so the children will know what is stored in each cupboard. These will be supported with the corresponding Welsh words</i></p>	<p><i>I have started a Welsh language course online and slowly introducing new words into the setting as I grow more confident.</i></p>
<p><i>We mostly speak Welsh at my setting and the children will be encouraged to communicate through the medium of Welsh as they play. We will bring singing into this as I find the children from non</i></p>	<p><i>Welsh is the main language used at my setting throughout (food, play, communicating with children).</i></p>

Welsh speaking families learn well through song.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs (CPCKC):

As part of CPCKC's CWLWM work they promote and deliver the Welsh Promise to Out of School Childcare clubs to increase the use of the Welsh language, to support settings in working towards the Active Offer. The Welsh Promise is in three levels Bronze, Silver and Gold, a certificate is given once a setting has achieved their level.

Through Work Welsh funding Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs promotes the Welsh Promise to the Out of School Childcare sector to increase/develop their Welsh language skills. In addition to the Welsh Promise Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs also promotes the CAMAU Welsh language project to all Out of School Childcare clubs. CAMAU Learn Welsh course is a valuable course as it is an online self-study that allows practitioners to learn Welsh at their own pace. Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs Welsh Language Childcare Business Development Officers support practitioners throughout their training on CAMAU courses.

7 SHARING INFORMATION

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Early Years, Childcare & Play Strategy Group continue to meet on a termly basis. With the main focus of meetings being around the monitoring of the CSA action plan and sharing of information with key partners. Membership of the group includes representatives from the Childcare Unit, CWLWM partners, Early Years Education Team, Flying Start, Early Intervention, Healthy Pre-school Scheme, Health, DASH and many more.

We ensure that childcare is represented in a wide variety of meetings by attending the Public Service Board Tackling Hardship; Early Years Integration Transformation Operational Group, Pathfinder, Early Education meetings, Children and Young People's Forum, Dyfodol Dwyieithog, WESP Forum, Children and Communities Grant and more.

FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE (FIS)

In 2018 the Council's transformation programme moved the Family Information Service (FIS) over to Porth Cymorth Cynnar. They are utilising the All-Wales FIS website through Data Cymru as their Directory of Resources of local services through Dewis Cymru which also includes information on childcare providers.

Work is underway to further develop the Family Information Service within the new structure. The Family Information Service is an important service where parents are able to articulate their needs and access support and provision easily.

Ensuring the continuation of delivery for the integrated Family Information Service will support the pilot of the Tax-Free Childcare scheme and other initiatives.

EARLY YEARS INTEGRATION – PATHFINDER PILOT

Ceredigion are part of the Welsh Government Pathfinder Pilot & Early Years Integrated Systems Project. Representatives from a wide range of services including Health Visitor, Midwife, Family Centre, Homestart, Tîm Teulu, Childcare Unit, Early Years education and / or, childcare provider and Schools attend the Pathfinders meetings. The focus is on supporting families with children under the age of 5 in Lampeter, Tregaron, Borth, Aberaeron and New Quay.

As part of the work to pilot and test approaches to Early Years Integration Transformation Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion have worked together to formulate a Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales – [Working together to give children the best start in life \(earlyyearsstrategywest.wales\)](http://Workingtogether togivechildrenthebeststartinlife(earlyyearsstrategywest.wales)) strategy 2022-2026 has been published on the website.

The Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales is guided by the Welsh Government's agenda for providing better integrated public services as iterated in the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The strategy focusses on support in the first 7 years of a child's life, recognising the importance of these formative years in shaping the child's future health and wellbeing.

The draft strategy was widely consulted upon with professionals and service users throughout the region and amendments were made on the basis of feedback received.

The Strategy aims to promote collaboration between support services both at pre-birth and Early Years stages. The strategy is located within the Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales Website, which is a collaboration between Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire local authorities, Hywel Dda University Health Board and third sector partners.

Based upon extensive consultation with Service Users and Early Years Professionals, the Strategy for West Wales was written with the intention of promoting excellent services at every stage of Maternity and Early Years. The strategy aims to deliver:

- Positive engagement/ early intervention with families at the ante-natal stage.
- Positive Engagement with Families during Early Years
- Positive transition from Childcare to Early Years education

Furthermore, five strategic themes are identified as vehicles for achieving the above aims:

- Integrate our services
- Take a person-centred approach to service design
- Develop technology infrastructure and systems to enable collaboration
- Develop our Workforce
- Provide accessible information.

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER SUPPORT

The Childcare Unit continues to support the sector with monthly newsletters, visits and advice when needed by LA staff. Two Service Level Agreements are held with Mudiad Meithrin and Early Years Wales to fund Development Officers to support Cylchoedd Meithrin and Playgroups respectively from core budget.

- Mudiad Meithrin – 11 hours per week (term time) between 2 officers
- Early Years Wales – 7 hours per week

Childcare Wales Learning and Working Mutually Consortium - CWLWM

CWLWM includes the five leading childcare organisations in Wales which include Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, Early Years Wales, Mudiad Meithrin (Lead organisation), National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru) and PACEY Cymru (childminder support).

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

TAX-FREE CHILDCARE

Tax-free Childcare can support working parents with the costs of childcare for 0–12-year-olds. Families can get up to £500 every 3 months (up to £2,000 a year) for each child.

Ceredigion has been identified as one of five LAs in Wales to work with HMRC and Hempsall's in the coming year to support an increase in take-up of Tax-Free Childcare. Hopefully, this will lead to an increase in the take up in Ceredigion.

PARENTS, CHILDCARE AND EMPLOYMENT (PaCE)

Parents, Childcare and Employment, (PaCE) was a Welsh Government programme funded by the European Social Fund that provided support to economically inactive parents aged 25 and over, and parents aged 16-24 who are NEET where childcare is the main barrier to employment. Welsh Government worked in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to provide this individual support via a network of community-based Parent Employment Advisers across Wales.

PaCE provided services in and around Flying Start settings and Families First areas, complementing and not overlapping with other ESF operations such as Communities for Work. Since programme inception in 2015 7,481 have been engaged with 3,548 supported into employment across Wales. Within Ceredigion PaCE has engaged with 428 participants and seen 185 gain employment since inception, with 45 engaged and 11 found employment during 22/23.

Delivery of the PaCE programme concluded on 31st March 2023. During the last 3 months of the programme (January 23 – March 23) PaCE focussed its support on ensuring current participants have a smooth transition into alternative support programmes. PaCE worked closely with DWP colleagues to ensure disruption to the participants employment support journey was minimal.

Building on the success of PaCE (and Communities for Work), and incorporating the flexibility of its existing programme, it is good to note that CfW+ will continue to deliver employment support within the local communities for the foreseeable future.

CONCERNS:

- 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.
- Ensure the continuation of delivery for the integrated Family Information Service. This development would support the pilot of the TFC scheme and other initiatives.

Appendix 1:

Click on the icon to see copy of the Action plan (Excel format):

