

SUBJECT:	CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2022-27
DIRECTORATE:	Children & Young People
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	Wednesday 2nd March 2022
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To inform Members of the current situation regarding childcare in Monmouthshire.
- 1.2 To fulfil our statutory duty to complete a detailed Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every five years.
- 1.3 To identify any potential gaps in childcare provision or barriers preventing families from accessing childcare and to develop an action plan to address these issues.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-27 for submission to the Welsh Government.
- 2.2 To utilise existing resources and grant funding to address the gaps highlighted through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and develop additional childcare, where necessary, in line with the action plan.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places a statutory duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and a duty to carry out childcare sufficiency assessments every five years.
- 3.2 Overall, the quality of childcare in Monmouthshire is considered to be at least good and many settings offer excellent childcare provision.
- 3.3 There are currently 110 childcare providers across Monmouthshire that are registered with CIW; there are also two after school clubs that are not registered as they run for under two hours a day and unregistered play provision (Monmouthshire Games and SHEP) that is often used by parents as cheap childcare during school holidays. These settings are spread fairly evenly throughout Monmouthshire, considering the population and demographics of each area, as indicated in the following table:

Childcare Type	Number of Providers by Area					
	Abergavenny	Caldicot	Chepstow	Monmouth	Usk & Raglan	Total
Childminder	13	13	9	7	2	44
Full Day Care	8	9	4	6	4	31
Sessional Care	3	3	4	2	0	12
Out of School	8	6	5	2	4	25
Open Access Play	2	2	2	3	0	9

- 3.4 Considering the take up of places, number of vacancies, waiting lists and feedback from parents, it appears that there are generally sufficient childcare places available to meet the current demand in all areas of Monmouthshire.
- 3.5 The number of childminders has reduced by more than 30% over the last two years, so there is a need to recruit more childminders.
- 3.6 Although there are currently sufficient childcare places for children under 5 years of age, the rollout of free childcare for 2 year olds is likely to increase demand and this may create a pressure for places in some areas.
- 3.7 There is demand for additional after school places in Abergavenny that runs until at least 5.30pm to meet the needs of working parents and carers.
- 3.8 There is a limited supply of holiday clubs and they are not available in all areas of Monmouthshire; however, many childminders and full day care settings are also providing holiday care.
- 3.9 Open access play provision is only available during term time and only in the four main towns.
- 3.10 There are only two nannies in Monmouthshire that are registered through the voluntary approval scheme and we have no information relating to any nannies that are operating within the authority, although we know that there are parents using a nanny for childcare.
- 3.11 Childcare during atypical hours, such as overnight and at weekends, is a potential gap that has been highlighted through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
- 3.12 There is insufficient Welsh medium childcare provision in Monmouthshire, and this is a significant gap. At present, there is one bilingual childminder in Abergavenny, one full day care provider offering childcare for children aged 2-5 years in Abergavenny and sessional care for 2-5 year olds in Caldicot and Monmouth. There is no Welsh medium provision in Chepstow or Usk & Raglan and none of the existing providers operate during school holidays, apart from one childminder. None of the out of school care or play provision is available through the medium of Welsh.
- 3.13 Affordability has been highlighted by parents and stakeholders as the main barrier that prevents families from accessing childcare in Monmouthshire.
- 3.14 Foundation Phase Nursery provision, Flying Start childcare and the Childcare Offer are all schemes that help parents with the cost of childcare. All full day care and sessional care providers and 86% of childminders are approved to offer funded childcare places through one or more of these schemes; take up of places is very good.

4. ACTIONS:

- 4.1 Register ten new childminders across Monmouthshire and support existing providers to at least maintain the current level of provision.
- 4.2 Develop three full day care or sessional care providers or extend existing provision to offer more places for 2 year olds.
- 4.3 Develop an after school club in the Abergavenny area or increase the number of after school places offered at an existing setting.
- 4.4 Develop an additional two holiday clubs in different areas of Monmouthshire.
- 4.5 Develop open access play provision in Usk & Raglan and rural areas.
- 4.6 Increase the opening hours of at least one existing childcare provider in each of the five areas of Monmouthshire to include atypical hours such as before 8am, after 6pm, overnight and at weekends.
- 4.7 Establish a cylch meithrin in Chepstow and another in Usk & Raglan so that each of the five areas of Monmouthshire has Welsh medium pre-school provision.
- 4.8 Encourage existing Welsh medium providers to extend their hours and to consider providing childcare during school holidays.
- 4.9 Open after school provision in the two Welsh medium primary schools.
- 4.10 Provide Welsh training and activities to enable at least 15 providers to change from English only to English with some bilingual elements.
- 4.11 Encourage and support existing out of school clubs and any new childcare settings that are developed to register with CIW.
- 4.12 Support childcare settings to move over to the new digital system for the Childcare Offer.
- 4.13 Continue to promote the Family Information Service and advertise the availability of financial support to assist with the cost of childcare.
- 4.14 Collate information on nannies in Monmouthshire and add this to the Dewis website.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 There is already a Childcare Development Officer in post that is funded through the Early Years budget; their role is to provide business support to new and existing childcare providers and to facilitate training.
- 5.2 The Welsh Government provide the Local Authority with a Childcare and Play Grant. This grant can be used to sustain existing childcare settings, to develop new provision, to raise the quality of childcare provision and to meet any gaps highlighted by the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The indicative grant allocation for April 2022 – March 2023 is £70,785; however, there has also been additional funding of just over £100k awarded during the year in the last two financial years.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment is attached, which incorporates Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty.
- 6.2 The main purpose of the CSA is to inform the Local Authority on the current position relating to childcare and any potential gaps, to ensure we are able to meet our statutory duty to provide sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents. Supporting parents and carers to work will have a positive impact on those who might potentially suffer socio-economic disadvantage. This, in turn, will contribute to the wellbeing goals of creating a prosperous and more equal Wales with cohesive communities and a thriving Welsh language.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education has been consulted with as part of this assessment and they have developed strong links with existing childcare providers. Regular safeguarding training is offered to all childcare providers and take up is monitored to ensure settings are complying with regulations and are fully aware of safeguarding practices. Childcare providers are also encouraged to complete a Safeguarding Audit (SAFE) every two years.

8. CONSULTEES:

- 7.1 Childcare providers and parents or carers were asked to complete an online questionnaire to establish the supply of childcare in Monmouthshire and the demand for places.
- 7.2 Consultation took place with relevant stakeholders such as umbrella organisations, schools, Job Centre Plus, neighbouring local authorities and other departments within the Local Authority.
- 7.3 Focus groups took place with children currently attending childcare provision.
- 7.4 All comments received through consultation have been incorporated within the final report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-27 Full Report with Annexes

9. AUTHOR:

Sue Hall
Early Years Manager

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644461
E-mail: susanhall@monmouthshire.gov.uk