

**JOINT EDUCATION & YOUTH AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting	Thursday 25 th July, 2019
Report Subject	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer Social Services
Type of Report	Statutory

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are many reasons why families choose childcare, and the benefits it offers for their children. Often, childcare is a necessity because a family requires an income to get by financially. Many parents require support in their childcare choices and want to be assured that their option is the best for their child and the family.

Flintshire have a comprehensive Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) that looks at i) the supply of childcare in Flintshire including: type, quantity of provisions, location, costs, places available, choice and ii) the gaps in childcare including: location choice, barriers to take up provision, places unavailable. This report provides an overview of an Annual Progress Report that has been produced to assess progress against the actions, priorities and milestones identified in the CSA.

Positively, the report also identifies the CSA as the basis of a successful bid to Welsh Government for early year's capital. The capital programme is aligned to the 3-4 year old childcare offer to facilitate and support the co-location of the childcare provision and foundation phase to create a wraparound childcare provision wherever possible. For 2019-21 there are 12 schemes amounting to £5 million. There is also £440k allocated for small capital grants to support all registered providers with the childcare Offer.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	Committee to scrutinise the effectiveness of the Council's strategic response to securing sufficient, sustainable, and high quality, childcare within the county that is responsive to the needs of children and their families.
2	To support the on-going work and commitment to the delivery of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every five years and the annual Progress Report.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT
1.01	<p>Many parents require support in their childcare choices and want to be assured that their option is the best for their child and the family. Childcare offers long-lasting social, economic and academic benefits for children and parents. Studies have shown that children, including babies and infants, benefit from a childcare environment. Finding quality childcare where children are supported, engaged, encouraged and exposed to positive attitude can help set the groundwork and support intellectual and social outcomes. Parents often create social capital as a result of interaction with other parents, benefitting their community.</p>
1.02	<p>The Childcare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) provides a legislative basis for the vital role local authorities' play as strategic leaders in the local provision of childcare. The 2006 Act reinforces the framework within which local authorities already work – in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent, community and maintained sector – to shape and secure children's services and focuses in particular on the provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs <p>This is developed with partners via the Flintshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) group in accordance with its Terms of Reference; and;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information, advice and assistance relating to childcare to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child <p>This is delivered by the Family Information Service under <i>Section 27</i> of the 2006 Act). During 2018 the Dewis system was adopted as the childcare</p>

	resource database by the Family Information Service, and progress continues to be made on a new childcare website (www.fis.wales) accessible online.
1.03	<p>The local authority has the responsibility and lead role in co-ordinating effort across services; enabling different organisations such as childcare providers from all sectors, Jobcentre Plus, community focused schools, integrated family centres and local health services to work together to secure sufficient high quality, sustainable provision that is responsive to the needs of children and their families.</p> <p><i>Section 22</i> of the 2006 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 access education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work. This duty is supported by the Welsh Government PaCE programme (Parents and Childcare in Employment) which is designed to tackle poverty through sustainable employment by providing individual support to out of work parents who consider childcare to be their main barrier to accessing employment and / or training opportunities.</p>
	Flintshire’s Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
1.04	The Childcare Act 2006 requires all Local Authorities in Wales to carry out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every five years. Flintshire’s CSA for 2017-2022 looks at the supply of childcare in Flintshire (including type, quantity of provisions, location, costs, places available, choice) and the gaps in childcare (including location, choice, barriers to take up provision, places unavailable).
1.05	The CSA (Appendix 1), has been refreshed for 2019 through an Annual Progress Report (Appendix 2), and details the actions, priorities and milestones to maintain strengths and address areas for development. This annual progress cycle sustains focus, and activity in supporting and developing childcare provision, and is led by the Childcare Development Officer for Flintshire.
1.06	In order to carry out the assessment and gather the information required to achieve and deliver a successful CSA and Progress Report, it is necessary to undertake detailed consultations with a number of individuals, groups, agencies and organisations which are summarised in Section 3.00 of this report. To fill the gaps requires cross service and key stakeholder support, working with childcare providers. The CSA is led by the Family Information Service.

1.07	All of the information gathered for the Assessment and subsequent Progress Report has been analysed to present a picture of childcare supply and demand by post coded area as proscribed by the 2006 Act. In addition to the collation of this quantitative statistical data, representative umbrella organisations, providers and those accessing the childcare market have been surveyed to provide qualitative information. (See Section 3.00 below).
	Annual Progress Report – key issues
1.08	<p>The Annual Progress Report (Appendix 2) identifies core strengths including an assessment that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ childcare is well located and meets the needs of the majority of parents ✓ childcare is generally reliable ✓ the majority of respondents believed childcare is of good quality
1.09	<p>However, there are clear areas of pressure, and gaps, which have been identified through an:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ assessment of demand ➤ assessment of supply ➤ analysis of supply and demand of overall provision ➤ identification of issues facing specific categories of parents
1.10	<p>The Annual Progress Report identifies the action/milestones that have been achieved during 2018/19 to respond to the gaps and areas for development. Highlights include work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit more childminders, particularly in rural areas • Support the registration of Open Access Play-schemes • Improve awareness, amongst agencies and training providers, of the availability of crèche facilities in Flintshire • Provide more information relating to nannies on the Voluntary Approval Scheme to be made available through the Family Information Service (FIS) (this is currently under review by Welsh Government) • Encourage relevant childcare providers to widen the age range they cater for • Promote of the availability of Working Tax Credits or Universal Credits and Employer Supported Schemes (including the new, nationwide Tax Free Childcare scheme) • Enhance and extend provision to meet the childcare needs of those working atypical hours before 8am, after 6pm, overnight and at weekends • Develop holiday care provision in Mold and Holywell • Provide more Welsh medium childcare of all types across Flintshire, particularly full day care

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and encouraging all childcare settings to provide at least some bilingual elements • Encouraging families with other languages to use established childcare settings <p>Many of these themes require sustained action with progress relating to planned improvement milestones.</p>
1.11	The next full CSA is due by 2022. Work is already taking place to improve provider and parental involvement and feedback in the assessment to ensure a deeper understanding of the issues to enhance the assessment of demand, sufficiency and areas for development.
1.12	<p>Other issues reflected in the Action Plan include ongoing challenges to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure continuing development and sustainability funding for the sector • Consistent and regular promotion and prioritisation of the grants available to settings and parents • Enable continued investment in IT support for settings to be involved in the sufficiency assessment • Achieve consistency with other programmes including the 3-4 Year Old funded Childcare Offer reciprocating the offer with bordering counties or Early Entitlement; FIS streamlining the Extra hands grant procedures; • Secure funding for the mandatory training schedule for supporting childcare providers and other training opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD); • Promoting level 2 and Level 3 courses across all settings and introduction of the qualifications framework.
1.13	Work will continue throughout 2019/20 to respond to these challenges with progress reported in the annual report for 2019/20.
	Childcare Offer and Capital Investment
1.14	From the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the Early Years partnership Flintshire was able to submit a successful bid to Welsh Government for early year's capital. The primary purpose of the capital programme, for the 3-4 year old childcare offer, is to facilitate and support the co-location of the childcare provision and foundation phase to create a wraparound childcare provision wherever possible. Any new building or refurbishment should create an indoor and outdoor environment for children ages 3-4, which will be calm, uplifting, safe and attractive as well as efficient, tough and flexible representing good value for money for the lifetime of the building. The building must be a standard suitable for the delivery of registered childcare. For 2019-21 there are 12 schemes of approx. £5million. There is also £440k allocated for small capital grants to support all registered providers with the Offer. Decisions are made on a partnership basis with key stakeholders,

	including the school modernisation team, head teachers, Early Years Support team, umbrella organisation partners including Early Years Wales, Mudiad Meithrin, PACEY and National Daycare Nursery Association.
1.15	The Childcare Offer has been successful in Flintshire, however, the takeup has been a 'disruptor' to other programmes including Flying Start and the Foundation Phase. The partnership continually monitors the childcare sufficiency and work together on any impacts due to a reduction in spaces, and impacts on child pathways. For the first time in 11 years, 2019 saw the need for Flying Start to introduce eligibility criteria being unable to make a full offer in some locations due to closure of some settings e.g. Flint as a short term remedial action. It has been necessary for cross-partner approach to address some of the situations. Since the introduction of the Offer there are 12 out of 30 holiday play schemes providing care from three years old. And out of 24 After School Clubs registered to care for 3 year olds 8 have recently extended their registration to this lower age range. Some are now remodelling their business model and are catering for before and after school provision, catering for children in the extended age range of 8-11 years. Some childminders wishing to increase their numbers have been deterred due to incurred costs from Flintshire's planning department.
1.16	Information to parents and settings is available through a variety of mechanisms including 'Childcare Choices', Welsh Government booklets, FISF newsletters to childcare settings, DEWIS, FIS Childcare Choices, FISF 'help with childcare costs' leaflet, universal credit support, social media and the www.fis.wales website.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The local Authority is required to carry out a full CSA every five years and produce an annual review of the CSA's Action Plan. The Flintshire County Council Childcare budget is used to support the expenditure for these processes, however, the budget has been considerably reduced since 2015/16 and the Childcare Development Officer post and administrative support post are funded from Grant. During 2018-19 the childcare grant was used by December. A business case was presented to Welsh Government and extra grant monies secured for a further quarter (Jan – Mar) to meet parent and setting requests.
2.02	The FIS Training Schedule is funded from the Children and Communities grant. This Training Schedule generates a small income which provides for delivery of a further Training Schedule for childcare providers across the county.

2.03	Occasional additional funding streams are secured to support the work of the Childcare Development team. For example the Disabilities Consortia applies grant funding administered by Action for Children which enables the processing of the Extra Hands grants, including the Childcare Offer SEN grant.
2.04	Significant childcare capital funding has been secured for 2019-21. Governance arrangements have been developed to ensure appropriate oversight and project support/management both within Flintshire and with Welsh Government as part of the grant conditions.
2.05	There is also £440k allocated for small capital grants to support all registered providers with the Offer. Decisions are made on a partnership basis with key stakeholders, including the school modernisation team, head teachers, Early Years Support team, umbrella organisation partners including Early Years Wales, Mudiad Meithrin, PACEY and National Daycare Nursery Association.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>In order to gather the information required to achieve and deliver a successful Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan, it is crucial to consult with a wide range of stakeholders.</p> <p>Under schedule 2 of the Statutory Guidance appropriate stakeholders have been identified and involved in the undertaking of the Assessment and the development of the Action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Children Board; • Umbrella / Professional partner organisations - Included on the membership list for the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Years Wales (previously Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association (Wales PPA)); ○ Mudiad Meithrin; ○ National Day Nursery Association (NDNA); ○ Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY); ○ Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Club (CPCKC) <p>The <i>Childcare Act 2006</i> states that the EYDCP is responsible for “....ensuring the fulfilment of the duty under Section 22 and Section 26 of the <i>Childcare Act</i> to secure sufficient childcare provision and to assess, on an annual basis, the sufficiency of childcare in the Local Authority area.” (WG Guidance Circular 013/2008 p6). The Flintshire EYDCP will work</p>

collaboratively with relevant agencies to achieve the priorities identified in any Action Plans of the statutory *Childcare Sufficiency Assessment* (CSA). (Extracted from Flintshire EYDCP Terms of Reference – please refer to Appendix 4).

- **Welsh Medium Education Forum** – The lead officer for the Welsh Medium Education Forum chairs this forum as it regularly discusses issues related to childcare and early years education. These matters are also discussed at the Early Entitlement Partnership meetings which the Childcare Development Officer attends. And conversely the Welsh Medium Education Forum Chair, alongside the Mudiad Meithrin’s Deputy Manager for North and Mid-Wales region regularly attend the Flintshire EYDCP where there is assured co-ordination of issues related to local childcare in the Welsh medium sector;
- **Strategic Play Forum** – The Childcare Development Officer regularly corresponds with the Flintshire Play Development Team; attends Play Sufficiency seminars and is a member of the Strategic Play Forum. The Play Development Officer has provided a 100% response to all CSA surveys of Open Access Play-schemes, both registered and excepted;
- **Job Centre Plus** – The Job Centre Plus service is represented at Flintshire EYDCP meetings by PaCE (Parents, Childcare and Employment) representatives;
- **Care Inspectorate Wales** –The Early Years and Family Support Service Manager / nominated deputy attends a Biannual Engagement meeting with CIW. The Family Information Service team receives weekly reports from CIW containing the latest registered, cancelled and suspended registrations in the County;
- **Family Information Service** – The Family Information Service has provided integral support in the processing of SASS returns and the parental and employer surveys and this information has been used to inform the supply and demand sections of the CSA. The completed CSA is published and promoted via FIS information sharing channels so that it is accessible to parents / carers, childcare workers and other professionals with an interest in the sector;
- **Neighbouring Local Authorities** – Regular contact is maintained with neighbouring local Authorities which include Wrexham County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council and Cheshire West and Chester. Through consultation with cross border colleagues we have been able to share information regarding Early Years education places and parental enquiries. This information is included within the Cross Border section of the CSA report (Section 12);
- **Local Employers** – FIS support local employers by providing information to employees; attending jobs fairs; providing outreach support and surveying employers for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Local employers were contacted and several

	<p>completed a postal survey and this provided an insight into barriers that are faced by parents returning to work and the range of childcare services that are required to meet their needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other stakeholders consulted include – schools; local authority departments such as Planning, Housing, Lifelong Learning; the Healthy Pre-schools team and social housing landlords including Clwyd Alyn Housing Association. This consultation usually took the form of emails and face to face discussions.
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Staffing - The Childcare Development Officer and the Business Support Assistant posts within the Childcare Development team are funded equally from both the Flintshire County Council Childcare Budget and the new Children and Communities grant – Childcare and Play (formerly the Out of School Childcare grant prior to 2019/20). The FCC budget has, since 2015/16, faced considerable reductions and the Welsh Government funding element has not increased for several years in line with inflation or increased demand evidence - with a clear associated risk to available resources and ongoing operations.
4.02	Process costs – As above, and funded from the Flintshire County Council Childcare Budget, the CSA requires a staff commitment and a financial commitment to cover surveying and consultation and production costs.
4.03	There is a statutory duty upon all Local Authorities in Wales to produce a CSA; therefore failure to deliver a robust assessment will result in local scrutiny and scrutiny from Welsh Government, alongside an impact on the strategic planning and direction of the local childcare sector and a likely impact on employment opportunities.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (March 2017) without annexes
5.02	Appendix 2 – Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (March 2019)

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gail Bennett, Early Years and Family Support Service Manager Telephone: 01352 703953 E-mail: gail.bennett@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) – The inspectorate that has the powers to review Local Authority social services at a local and national level, to inform the public whether services are up to standard, to promote improvement of services and to help safeguard the interests of vulnerable people who use services and their carers. They also provide professional advice to Welsh Ministers and policy makers.</p> <p>Childcare Sufficiency Assessments: A report that brings together a range of different data and information to develop a picture of the current childcare market and to identify whether there are any gaps in supply.</p> <p>Dewis – Website and database with social care and wellbeing information.</p> <p>Family Information Service - A confidential and impartial information, advice and guidance service for families with children and young people aged between 0 and 19 years of age. The FIS work with public, private and voluntary sector organisations to ensure our customers know where and how to access information and support.</p> <p>Flying Start - Flying Start is a Welsh Government programme to provide a range of services helping children get the best start in life.</p> <p>Foundation Phase: the statutory curriculum for all 3 to 7 year olds in Wales, in both maintained and non-maintained settings.</p> <p>The Childcare Offer’: 30 hours of funded childcare and education for 3 and 4 year olds, in working families for 48 weeks a year.</p> <p>Working parents: both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), with each parent earning, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW). Some of this is still to be defined as the work develops.</p>