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## neath port talbot childcare SUFFICIENCY assessment 2022

## FINAL 22 September 2022

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# introduction and context

## childcare in neath port talbot

### About Childcare Sufficiency Assessments

The Childcare Act 2006 requires Neath Port Talbot Council, and other Local Authorities, “to shape and support the development of childcare in the local area to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community.[[1]](#footnote-2)” This is to ensure that parents, carers and families are able to access the childcare they need locally. Local Authorities are therefore required “to assess the local childcare market to develop a realistic and robust picture of parents’ current and future need for childcare.[[2]](#footnote-3)”

Having sufficient childcare in Neath Port Talbot means that families are able to find childcare that meets their children’s needs and empowers parents and carers to make choices about work and training. This applies to all children up to 18 years of age, and children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. Sufficiency is considered in relation to a range of different groups and topics, rather than for all children living in Neath Port Talbot.

This report is an assessment of sufficiency using quantitative data about the demand and supply of childcare, alongside feedback from local parents, carers, children and young people about the provision of childcare in their community.

This information will be used to inform how the Council and its partners can support the local childcare economy for the benefit of families and settings.

### Overall Sufficiency in our Area

This assessment process has highlighted a need to:

* Help families access support and entitlements to help them with the cost of childcare in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and rising inflation.
* Support staff development and help settings recruit and retain staff into the sector.
* Address shortfalls in Welsh language provision.
* Ensure families with children who have disabilities, long term illnesses or additional learning needs can access the childcare they need and want.
* Address the gap in after school provision.
* In addition, there is no registered childcare provision: Aberdulais, Coedffranc Central, Dyffryn, Godre’r graig, Lower Brynamman, Pelenna and Trebanos.

# partnership working and consultation

## how engagement has informed the childcare SUFFICIENCY assessment

### Listening to childcare settings

The Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) undertaken by CIW in June 2021 provided a robust understanding of provision across Neath Port Talbot. To supplement this, we interviewed a structured sample of 22 providers from across the County. We also undertook 2 providers’ focus group sessions and 1 focus group session for people who work in childcare. Settings were also invited to participate in workshop discussions to inform the assessment process and action plan.

### Listening to parents, carers, children and young people

446 parents and carers completed the childcare survey. This data has been used to inform the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. In addition, we spoke to 197 parents and carers through a programme of 6 focus groups and attending events and activities such as Stay and Play Sessions.

### Listening to Employers

We interviewed 17 employers from across Neath Port Talbot to understand how childcare affects their ability to attract, retain and train staff. We also discussed the impact of childcare on their business.

### Listening to partners and stakeholders

We undertook two stakeholder workshop sessions with a wide range of organisations from across the childcare sector. This enabled us to understand the challenges facing childcare and to collaborate on an action plan for change.

### The policy context

We reviewed a wider range of local, regional and national policies that impact on how childcare is provided in Neath Port Talbot. This review has informed the assessment process, our understanding of gaps in provision and the action plan.

### Consultation on the draft

The Neath Port Talbot Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022 was published for a 28-day consultation period (from 1 July for 28 days) before being published on the Council’s website (Family Information Service) in August 2022.

# welsh in education strategic plan

## the future of welsh education in neath port talbot

### The Vision

Neath Port Talbot Council Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 shares the Welsh Government’s vision to:

*“Secure favourable circumstances through the country that support the language acquisition and use of Welsh language skills. We want to see an increase in language transmission in the family, early introduction of Welsh to every child, an education system that provides Welsh language skills for all.”*

The Welsh Government have set a target for Neath Port Talbot to increase the number of learners accessing Welsh-medium education of between 17% and 27% over a 10 year period. This target is based on increasing the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032. The Council’s ambitious plan is to exceed the upper range of the target set by Welsh Government.

Childcare has the potential to play a significant role in support the aspirations of the WESP, helping create and sustain demand for Welsh-medium education. The WESP is made up of 7 key outcomes, of which the 5 below arguably have links to the provision and accessibility of Welsh-medium childcare.

### Outcome 1: more nursery children / three-year-olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

The WESP seeks to generate a culture where high quality Welsh Language services for families are not just easily accessible and available, but in demand. It acknowledges the need to create that demand, highlighting a need to promote and communicate the benefits of the Welsh Language and bilingualism as early as possible in a child’s journey through education and services. There is a commitment to increase and develop Welsh language childcare provision, recognising that childcare providers are enthusiastic about offering more Welsh language opportunities in their setting. Within this outcome there are 6 outcomes related to childcare:

* Revisit the training run by Cefin Campbell with all staff working within EY in NPT, LA and Health (including SALT), childcare sector etc. It is important to regain some of the momentum lost during COVID, revisiting some of the good work that had started to impact how our own team members and our partners used and promoted Welsh and Bilingualism.
* Regularly review the ‘Neath Port Talbot Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Action Plan’ with an emphasis on improving access to Welsh medium and bilingual provision by identifying and filling gaps in provision.
* Based on 2020/21 data, there were 452 Flying Start childcare places per annum across our settings of which 65 were category 3 Welsh language and category 2 English/Welsh language childcare settings equating to a total of 14.4%. We have a target in Flying Start to increase this percentage to 20% within the next 5 years, 25% by end of the 10 year plan by expanding provisions/establishing new provisions.
* The Early Years team will continue to work with Mudiad Meithrin officers to develop and expand Cylchoedd Meithrin across the borough especially through their Set up And Succeed programme (Cwmllynfell and Tyle’r Ynn). We will continue to encourage all new and existing Cylchoedd to tender to deliver on our early years’ contracts including Flying Start, Early Years Education, Assisted and Supported Places as well as the Childcare Offer
* The Local Authority will support the Welsh Language Awards within English language childcare settings to progress through the continuum towards an increase in category 2 Welsh language childcare provision.
* All partners will collaborate and support private childcare settings to ensure an increase in Welsh medium provision with the emphasis of promoting the advantages of bilingualism.

### Outcome 2: more reception class children / five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

This outcome is based around an aspiration to increase the number of Year 1 children receiving WM education by 208 pupils by 2032. The delivery of this outcome includes an action to work with work closely with childcare and play providers including Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith, and Tŷ’r Gwrhyd, as well as parents for Welsh Medium Education RhAG to inform parents/ carers of the benefits of Welsh medium education and bilingualism in order to ensure retention of pupils from Nursery to full time education. Specific emphasis will be given to reducing surplus places in the North of the Local Authority.

### Outcome 6: an increase in provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN)

The WESP acknowledges the impact of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (Wales 2018) and the significant changes which are underway to meet the needs of all learners with ALN. The aspiration is to ensure all children with ALN within the Local Authority will have access to provision at all levels through the medium of Welsh. The outcomes include the following actions in relation to childcare:

* Continue to develop a comprehensive professional development training menu and support for teachers within our Welsh medium mainstream schools and for our Early Years and Childcare Sector. This will enhance the Inclusive Learning Provision (ILP) and Additional learning Needs Provision (ALP) offer within our Welsh Medium schools and Early Years settings, as set out in the new ALN Code for Wales 2021.  This training and support offer, including a review of resources and appropriate assessment material, will be reviewed annually and will be informed by any changing need within our WM mainstream schools and Early Years and Childcare Sector.
* Invest in bilingual specialist playgroup and childcare provision to support the early identification of emerging needs for our youngest children, where Welsh is first language or there is a parental preference for Welsh medium provision.

# supply of childcare

## understanding current provision

### Introduction

This section is based on the Summer 2021 Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) data, alongside data from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Data Tool as well as engagement with providers undertaken in the process of developing this assessment.

### Number of Childcare Providers and Places

The CIW data tool[[3]](#footnote-4) uses registration data to outline the availability of childcare. At the time of this assessment, the data tool reported that there were 118 registered active childcare services providing 2,347 places. This assessment is primarily based on the Summer 2021 Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) data, which was provided by 100 settings from across Neath Port Talbot. This equates to a 93% response rate and is therefore a robust source on which to make an informed assessment of childcare provision in Neath Port Talbot.

Table 1 uses the SASS data to provide an overview of provision in Neath Port Talbot in March 2022. In total, 100 registered childcare providers complete and returned the questionnaire. They provide a maximum of 2,021 childcare places.

#### Table 1. Summary of Provision and Places

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Number of Registered Places |
| **Children’s Day Care** | | |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 1,246 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 179 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 124 |
| **Childminders** | | |
| Childminder | 51 | 472 |
| **TOTAL** | **100** | **2,021** |

The number of registered places represents the maximum number of children who can be on the settings premises at any one time. Settings may choose to operate at a level below their number of registered places. It should also be noted that children can attend childcare on a full or part time basis. As a result, there are occasions on which two children attending part time, attend using the equivalent of one full time place.

#### Table 2. Availability of Full Day and Half Day Provision

This table is based on summer 2021 SASS data, which was provided by 100 settings from across Neath Port Talbot.

| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Number of Registered Places |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Full Day Care** | | |
| Full Day Care | 29 | 1,058 |
| Childminder | 47 | 432 |
| **Half Day Care (AM)** | | |
| Full Day Care | 26 | 1,004 |
| Childminder | 29 | 262 |
| **Half Day Care (PM)** | | |
| Full Day Care | 27 | 1,020 |
| Childminder | 32 | 292 |

### Childcare Vacancies and Waiting Lists

It is important to acknowledge that the information in this assessment is a snapshot in time. Vacancy rates and waiting lists can change rapidly. In addition, some vacancies may only be for a specific age group, timeslot, or type of childcare session. The data below is taken from the SASS and shows the unfilled spaces according to the providers across different types of provision. The number of spaces can exceed the number of registered places because they are counted across a range of types of childcare within one setting.

#### Table 3. Unfilled Spaces

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Morning | Afternoon | Before School | After School | Lunch | Creche | Evenings After 6pm | Weekends |
| Full Day Care | 0 | 0 | 370 | 364 | 728 | 16 | 39 | 0 |
| Sessional Day Care | 41 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Out of School Care | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 0 |
| Childminder | 0 | 0 | 167 | 174 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 14 |
| **TOTAL** | **41** | **2** | **537** | **570** | **728** | **16** | **83** | **14** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Full Day Care | Half Day Nursey (AM) | Half Day Nursery (PM) | Playgroup or Clych (AM) | Playgroup or Clych (PM) | Play Scheme Sessions |
| Full Day Care | 264 | 674 | 985 | 35 | 23 | 0 |
| Sessional Day Care | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Out of School Care | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| Childminder | 115 | 67 | 74 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **379** | **741** | **1,059** | **35** | **23** | **32** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total |
| Full Day Care | 3498 |
| Sessional Day Care | 43 |
| Out of School Care | 96 |
| Childminder | 623 |
| **TOTAL** | **4260** |

#### Table 4. Waiting Lists

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Waiting Lists |
| **Children’s Day Care** | | |
| Full Day Care | 12 | 152 |
| Sessional Day Care | 2 | 10 |
| Out of School Care | 1 | 10 |
| **Childminders** | | |
| Childminder | 13 | 49 |
| **TOTAL** | **28** | **221** |

At the time of the SASS, the 100 settings that participate in the process had a total of 221 children on lists waiting for a childcare place. 69% of the children on the waiting list are waiting for a space at a Full Day Care provider. The data suggests that their sufficient places for these children, however childcare is a highly personal choice and parents / carers usually have a preferred settings for which they are willing to wait.

### Times When Childcare is Available

There is a clear relationship between the typical working day (9am and 6pm, Monday to Friday) and the availability of childcare. However, working patterns are changing and parents and carers may require childcare outside of these hours to participate in work and training.

The number of providers offering childcare during atypical hours in Neath Port Talbot are show in table 5.

#### Table 5. When Childcare is Available

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total Number of Providers | Available Before 8am weekdays | Available after 6pm weekdays | Available Overnight | Available at Weekends |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 21 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Childminders | 51 | 34 | 4 | 0 | 3 |

### Childcare and School

Based on the SASS data in total, there are 19 providers of childcare for school age children during term time only, and 81 providers of childcare for school age children who are open during both school holidays and term time. There are also 61 childminders who may provide care for school age children.

#### Table 6. Out of School Care

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Number of Registered Places |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 124 |

#### Table 7. Before School Childcare

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Number of Registered Places |
| Full Day Care | 24 | 879 |
| Sessional Day Care | 0 | 0 |
| Out of School Care | 0 | 0 |
| Childminders | 46 | 430 |

#### Table 8. After School Childcare

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Number of Registered Places |
| Full Day Care | 27 | 1059 |
| Sessional Day Care | 0 | 0 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 124 |
| Childminders | 50 | 462 |

Clubs and sessions that run for less than 2 hours, such as breakfast clubs in schools are not required to be registered with CIW. Almost all primary schools in Neath Port Talbot (48 out of 50) provide a breakfast club for pupils.

#### Table 9. Breakfast Clubs in Schools

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers |
| Breakfast Club – Primary | 48 |
| Breakfast Club – Junior | 1 |
| Breakfast Club – Infant | 1 |
| Breakfast Club – SEN | 1 |

Schools across Neath Port Talbot provide a wide range of extracurricular activity after school. However, only 4 schools currently provide an after-school club childcare offer. Schools stopped their afterschool offer as a result of the COVID lockdown and have not re-opened this provision. Several schools have a wrap-around relationship with a local provider for example Cilffriw Primary has a collaboration with Once Upon A Time nursery.

#### Table 10. After School Clubs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers |
| Breakfast Club – Primary | 3 |
| Breakfast Club – Junior | 0 |
| Breakfast Club – Infant | 0 |
| Breakfast Club – SEN | 1 |

### Support for Families to Access to Childcare

Engagement with parents and carers showed that families continue to think childcare is expensive, and as a result must consider the financial relationship between the cost of childcare and their income. There are a range of programmes designed to help families access affordable childcare. In this section we explore how providers are enabling families to access the support they are entitled to. Later in this assessment (Support to Access Childcare) we explore take up of the support in relation to eligibility.

#### Table 11. Use of Tax-Free Childcare or Vouchers

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Number of Providers | Number with Parents or Carers Who are receiving tax free childcare or using childcare vouchers |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 31 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 2 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 3 |
| Childminders | 51 | 38 |

The Childcare Offer for Wales provides up to 30 hours a week of government funded childcare and early education for eligible working parents of 3- to 4-year-olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year.

#### Table 12. Settings Delivering the 30 Hour Offer

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total Number of Providers | Number registered to deliver the Childcare Offer | Number currently receiving funding from the Childcare Offer |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 36 | 35 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Childminders | 51 | 48 | 40 |

Table 12 shows that 91% of settings are registered to deliver the childcare offer, with 79% currently receiving funding.

### Flying Start

Flying Start families are entitled to a funded childcare place for 2 ½ hours a day, 5 days a week. In Neath Port Talbot this element of the Flying Start is delivered through the childcare sector in a range of settings.

#### Table 13. Settings In Receipt of Flying Start Funding

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total Number of Providers | Number of Settings that Receive Flying Start Funding | Flying Start Only Settings |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 16 | 3 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Childminders | 51 | 3 | 1 |

### Foundation Phase

In Neath Port Talbot all 3-year-olds can access the foundation phase in school-based settings[[4]](#footnote-5).

#### Table 14. Foundation Phase in Childcare Settings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total Number of Providers | Number of Settings that Use the Foundation Phase a Service Delivery Model |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 35 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 7 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 1 |
| Childminders | 51 | 33 |

### Childcare for Children with Additional Learning Needs and / or Disabilities

Children and families may need additional support to access childcare. This section of the assessment explores which settings are able to provide for children with additional learning needs and / or disabilities.

#### Table 15. ALN/SEN Provision

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Full Day Care | Sessional Day Care | Out of School Care | Childminders |
| Total no. of children (of all ages) formally identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities | 37 | 8 | 5 | 10 |
| Number of services that have a designated person who makes arrangements for ALN/SEN provision for children | 33 | 8 | 2 | 16 |
| Number of services where staff have additional/specialist training in supporting children with ALN/SEN | 32 | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| Number of services aware of the aware of the Additional Learning Needs Code | 35 | 6 | 4 | 35 |
| Number of services that make referrals to and/or liaise with the LA in relation to provision/support for children with ALN/SEN | 37 | 7 | 3 | 7 |

#### Table 16. Types of Support Delivered by Settings

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Full Day Care | Sessional Day Care | Out of School Care | Childminders |
| Cognition and Learning | 31 | 5 | 1 | 12 |
| Behaviour, emotional and social development | 31 | 6 | 2 | 15 |
| Communication and Interaction | 34 | 6 | 2 | 15 |
| Sensory and/or physical | 32 | 5 | 21 | 10 |

### Welsh Medium Childcare

As previously discussed, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan illustrates how childcare has the potential to introduce children to the Welsh Language, helping create and sustain demand for Welsh-medium education and in so doing increasing the number of Welsh Language speakers.

#### Table 17. Main Language of Settings (Number of Providers)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Welsh | English | Both |
| Full Day Care | 4 | 29 | 4 |
| Sessional Day Care | 2 | 6 | 0 |
| Out of School Care | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Childminders | 0 | 50 | 1 |

#### Table 18. Main Language of Settings (Number of Registered Places)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Welsh | English | Both |
| Full Day Care | 72 | 1,002 | 172 |
| Sessional Day Care | 40 | 139 | - |
| Out of School Care | - | 80 | 44 |
| Childminders | - | 462 | 10 |

83% of registered childcare places are delivered in settings where English is the main language. Settings that provide the “active offer” essentially provide a service in the Welsh language without someone having to ask for it.

#### Table 19. The Active Offer in Childcare Settings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Provided | Working Towards |
| Full Day Care | 10 | 6 |
| Sessional Day Care | 0 | 4 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 1 |
| Childminders | 2 | 1 |

Welsh language childcare requires Welsh speakers to be working in the sector. At the time of the SASS (June 2021) 65% of staff had little or no Welsh language ability.

#### Chart 1. Welsh Language Ability of Childcare Staff



#### Table 20. Ability of Staff to Speak Welsh by Type of Setting

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total Number of Staff | Fluent in Welsh | Fair amount of Welsh | Little or no Welsh |
| Full Day Care | 374 | 16.58% | 20.05% | 63.37% |
| Sessional Day Care | 37 | 8.11% | 21.62% | 70.27% |
| Out of School Care | 39 | 28.21% | 23.08% | 48.72% |
| Childminders\* | 39 | 5.13% | 7.69% | 87.18% |

\*Only 39 of 51 childminders provided a response to this question.

58 members of staff have attended Welsh in Early Years training in the period since 2018. In addition to this, two settings (approximately 15 members of staff) attended a 6 week introductory Welsh course.

### The Cost of Childcare

Consistently parents and carers tell us childcare is too expensive. In this section of the assessment, we use SASS data to explore the average cost of childcare. Later in the assessment we explore these costs in relation to salaries and the cost of living.

#### Table 21. Average Daily Cost of Full Day Care and Childminder Settings by Age of Child

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Under 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5-7 | 8-11 |
| Full Day Care | £40.78 | £41.02 | £36.12 | £32.80 | £33.44 | £32.67 | £33.13 |
| Childminders | £33.14 | £34.00 | £34.22 | £33.83 | £33.05 | £29.55 | £31.30 |

Please note the above table does not include charges for children aged 12 and over because none of the settings had children on the books of this age at the time of the SASS.

#### Table 22. Average Session Cost of Sessional and Out of School Care Settings by Age of Child

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Under 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5-7 | 8-11 | 12-14 | 15-17 |
| Sessional Day Care | - | £21.00 | £9.38 | £11.00 | £11.25 | £5.00 | - | - | - |
| Out of School Care | - | - | - | £8.00 | £8.00 | £8.75 | £8.57 | £7.00 | £6.00 |

A quarter of parents who completed the childcare survey pay between £100 - £199 pounds per week for their childcare. On average the parents who responded to the survey used 23 hours of childcare a week.

75% of parents and carers who responded to our survey use free childcare provided by family and friends for all or part of their childcare needs. In focus group discussions mitigating for the cost of childcare was the primary reason for doing this. Parents told us “I would be lost if my mum couldn’t have them three days a week, I could not afford that time in nursery”, “my mother retired a year earlier than she planned to look after Jack because financially that made more sense than childcare” and “we struggle because by mum and dad live so far away from us that we can’t use them for childcare and my partner’s mother still works. I wondered if we’d have been better off waiting to start a family. I have to be honest we did not do the maths about the cost of childcare when family planning.”

# demand for childcare

## the needs of parents and carers

### Introduction

This section is based on 446 responses to the parent and carers childcare survey. This information has been supplemented by a programme of focus groups and activities in which we spoke to 197 parents and carers about their need for childcare. It also uses data from the June 2021 childcare settings Self-Assessment of Service (SASS).

### Age of Children in Childcare

At the time of the SASS 100 settings provided 2,021 registered childcare places, according to these settings SASS submissions 2,925 children were on settings books at this time.

#### Table 23. Number of Children Attending Registered Childcare by

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Under 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5-7 | 8-11 | 12-14 | 15-17 | TOTAL |
| Full Day Care | 74 | 246 | 576 | 476 | 301 | 279 | 127 | 2 | 0 | 2157 |
| Sessional Day Care | 0 | 4 | 175 | 52 | 39 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 196 |
| Out of School Care | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 66 | 70 | 6 | 14 | 162 |
| Childminders | 10 | 45 | 57 | 57 | 65 | 104 | 70 | 2 | 0 | 410 |

This data shows that 2 and 3 year olds account for 48% of children in childcare. Chart 2 shows how demand for childcare changes with age.

#### Chart 2. Demand for Childcare by Age



### Demand for Full and Part Time Places

Most families use childcare to enable parents and carers to work, therefore settings provide both full and part time provision.

#### Table 24. Take Up of Full and Part Time Childcare by Number of Children on the Books

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Full Time | Part Time | Ad-Hoc |
| Full Day Care | 495 | 1471 | 209 |
| Sessional Day Care | 39 | 157 | 9 |
| Out of School Care | 8 | 116 | 38 |
| Childminders | 70 | 311 | 29 |

69% of childcare in Neath Port Talbot is used on a part time basis, compared to 21% of childcare being full time.

### Support to Access Childcare

People who claim Universal Credit, can receive an additional entitlement if they have 1 or 2 children. Those families with 3 or more children, will get an additional amount for at least 2 of those children. This entitlement is outlined in table 25 below. In addition, help is available for families to use registered childcare providers.

#### Table 25. Universal Child and Childcare Entitlement[[5]](#footnote-6)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Family Make Up | Extra Monthly Amount |
| For Your First Child | £290.00 (born before 6 April 2017)  £244.58 (bore on or after 6 April 2017) |
| For your second child and any other | £244.58 per child |
| If you have a disabled or severely disabled child | £132.89 or £414.88 |
| Help with childcare costs | Up to 85% of your costs (up to £636.35 for one child and £1,108.04 for 2 or more children) |

#### Table 26. Child and Childcare Entitlement Claimants (November 2021)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tax Credit | Number of Claimants in Neath Port Talbot |
| Universal Credit | 12,022 |
| Child Entitlement | 4,929 |
| Childcare Entitlement | 210 |

Table 26 suggests that in November 2021 1.7% of universal credit claimants in Neath Port Talbot were in receipt of the childcare entitlement.

#### Table 27. Number of Children Living in Universal Credit Households[[6]](#footnote-7)

Table 27 shows that 5,235 children (aged under 20) are living in a household on universal credit. For example, 1,901 children are living in a 2 children household in receipt of universal credit.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of Children in Household | Children or young people declared as living in a household on Universal Credit who are under 20 |
| 1 child | 2,373 |
| 2 children | 1,901 |
| 3 children | 688 |
| 4 children | 194 |
| 5 or more children | 79 |
| **TOTAL** | **5,235** |

In November 2021 there were 10,522 households[[7]](#footnote-8) in Neath Port Talbot in receipt of Universal Credit, this equates to 17% of households. Across Wales 37% of people in receipt of Universal Credit are in work[[8]](#footnote-9). Tables 26 and 27 suggest that only a small proportion of families with children who are claiming universal credit are also in receipt of the childcare entitlement.

Childcare costs can be a barrier to work and training. The PaCE (parents, childcare and employment) programme provides support to help parents / carers who are out of work into training and employment. Support can include funding for childcare and guidance around benefits to help make childcare more affordable. In addition, the Childcare Offer for Wales is being expanded, in September 2022, to “enable parents who are in education and training to also benefit from the additional hours of funded childcare it provides.[[9]](#footnote-10)”

#### Chart 3. Annual Number of Families and Children with Used Tax-Free Childcare Accounts in Neath Port Talbot



Chart 3 shows the number of families using tax free childcare has increased by 1112.5% in the period from 2017-18 to 2020-21. This is a significant increase; at the time of the SASS 2925 children were using childcare. Based on the chart above 18.6% of children in childcare were benefitting from tax free childcare.

### Childcare Places for Children with Additional Learning Needs and / or a Disability

SASS data reported that in June 2021, 60 children who were attending registered childcare settings had been formally identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities. This equates to 2% of children in childcare settings.

#### Table 28. PLASC Data – Children with Additional Learning Needs (2022)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of Pupils | % of Pupils |
| School Action or Early Years Action | 1,802 | 8.5% |
| School Maintained Individual Development Plan | 100 | 0.5% |
| Local Authority Maintained Individual Development Plan | 1 | 0% |
| No special educational need or additional learning need | 16,928 | 79.8% |
| School Action Plus or Early Years Action Plus | 1,307 | 6.2% |
| Statemented | 1,080 | 5.1% |

The 2022 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) records the number of children in school with additional learning needs, Table 29 below shows that 20% of school age children have an identified support need, compared to 2% in childcare.

#### Table 29. Families Receiving Support through O Gam I Gam

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Support | 2018 – 2019 | 2019 - 2020 | 2020 - 2021 | 2021 - 2022 |
| 1 to 1 | 38 | 32 | 28 | 23 |
| Financial Support to Access Childcare | 16 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| Both | 9 | 6 | 5 | 4 |

O Gam I Gam provides funding to enable children in Neath Port Talbot, with additional learning needs to access and participate in good quality childcare settings. In addition, O Gam I Gam funding can also be used to enable families in receipt of certain benefits to access childcare at a reduced fee.

As part of the Families First programme the Wellbeing4Me programme provides support for children and young people with disabilities. The programme includes W4Me clubs which offer group sessions for children (4-10 years) and young people (11-17 years) to socialise together, make new friends, share new experiences, and learn basic independence skills. This provision is not childcare but offers invaluable support for families.

### Childcare Offer

Population estimates for 3 and 4 year olds by ward in 2020 (from NOMIS November 2021) show that there are an estimated 3066 3 and 4 year olds in Neath Port Talbot. This represents a steady state since the last Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2018. Within the overall total there has been a slight shift, 3 year olds are down by 4% to 1504 and 4 year olds have increased by 4% to 1562. The most and least dense populations of 3 – 4 year olds are to be found in the following wards:

#### Table 30. Population of 3 and 4 year Olds

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Greatest nos. of 3 and 4 year olds | | Lowest nos. of 3 and 4 year olds | |
| Neath South | 109 | Pelenna | 12 |
| Tai-bach | 110 | Cwmllynfell | 16 |
| Pontardawe | 126 | Cadoxton | 17 |
| Port Talbot | 129 | Lower Brynamman | 20 |
| Bryn-coch South | 130 | Bryn-coch North | 26 |
| Baglan | 131 | Glyncorrwg | 28 |
| Bryn and Cwmavon | 134 | Trebanos | 33 |
| Sandfields East | 134 | Rhos | 35 |
| Neath East | 146 | Gwynfi | 38 |
| Aberavon | 149 | Onllwyn | 40 |
| Coedffranc West | 155 | Dyffryn | 41 |
| Sandfields West | 160 | Tonna | 41 |
| Neath South | 109 | Pelenna | 12 |
| Tai-bach | 110 | Cwmllynfell | 16 |

Please note the data in table 30 uses the former wards which were updated in 2022, currently population data is not available for the amended ward map.

Eligibility for childcare is based on working parents. On average, 62.9% of parents with dependent children work (Census data 2011). Within Neath Port Talbot the employment rate varies from highs of 78% in Margam and 76% in Rhos and Baglan contrasting with lows of Gwynfi (39%), Cymmer (45%) and Sandfields West (45%).

#### Table 31. Potential Demand for the 30 Hour Offer in Neath Port Talbot

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total Number of Childcare (aged 3-4) | Family status by number of parents working | Couple family: Both parents working | Lone parent family: Parent working | Nº of Eligible Children |
| 3,066 | 28,422 | 14,990 | 2,895 | 1,917 |

The data in table 31 suggests 1,917 children were eligible for the 30-hour offer, in 2022 597 children benefitted from the 30 hours offer. On this basis just under a third of families took up the support they were entitled too. 43% of respondents to the childcare survey stated that they were currently accessing the 30 hour offer.

### Foundation Phase

All children aged three and four are entitled to a minimum of 10 hours of Foundation Phase nursery per week, starting the term after their third birthday. In Neath Port Talbot all the foundation phase is delivered in school-based settings.

### Welsh Medium and Other Languages

The SASS data which forms the basis of the assessment found that 79% of children in childcare are in a setting where the main language is English.

#### Chart 4. Percentage of Children in Childcare by Main Language

#### 

#### Table 32. First Language Welsh Speaking Children (PLASC 2022)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of Children | Percentage of Children |
| Attending Welsh Language Education | 3,499 | 16% |
| Attending English Language Education | 17,719 | 84% |

5% of children in childcare attend a Welsh language setting, compared to 16% of pupils in Welsh language education. This suggests a potential unmet demand for Welsh Language childcare in Neath Port Talbot.

### When Childcare is Needed

The table below compares the proportion of parents and carers who completed the childcare survey stated that the time at which childcare was available was a barrier to use, with current availability at those times.

#### Table 33. When Childcare is Available and When It Is Needed

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Available Before 8am weekdays | Available after 6pm weekdays | Available Overnight | Available at Weekends |
| Number of Registered Places Available | 1184 | 130 | 0 | 61 |
| Percentage of Registered Places Available | 24% | 6% | 0% | 3% |
| Percentage of Parents Who Want Childcare During this Time | 5% | 3% | 2% | 3% |
| Equivalent Proportion of Places | 102 | 61 | 41 | 61 |

There is an unmet demand for overnight care, but the table above suggests that childcare is available when parents and carers need it. However, there are several factors that impact on how families choose childcare and barriers may be a result of a first choice setting not providing childcare when a family would like to use it.

# geographical DISTRIBUTION

## where are there gaps in provision?

### Introduction

This section uses the Self-Assessment of Service (SASS) data, alongside GIS mapping and feedback from parents and carers to explore and understand the geographical distribution of childcare in Neath Port Talbot. It should be noted that data protection means that we do not have full addresses for childminders, the data used is therefore at LSOA (lower super output) and ward level.

Please note some providers do offer a range of provision, the mapping in this section is based on the childcare providers’ primary service type.

### Distribution of Childcare Places

Figure 1 overleaf shows the distribution of registered childcare places at ward level, based on June 2020. The map shows the number of places available by ward. There are 6 wards with no registered childcare provision: Aberdulais, Coedffranc Central, Dyffryn, Godre’r graig, Gwynfi and Croeserw and Trebanos.

#### Figure 1. Registered Childcare Places by Ward (June 2021)

Map

Description automatically generated

### Childminders

Figure 2 shows the distribution of registered childminder places at ward level. 15 of Neath Port Talbot’s 34 wards do not have a registered childminder.

#### Figure 2. Registered Childminder Places by Ward (June 2021)

Map

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### Full Day Care

Figure 3 shows the distribution of registered full childcare places at ward level. 15 of Neath Port Talbot’s 34 wards do not have a registered full day care provider.

#### Figure 3. Registered Full Day Care Places by Ward (June 2021)

Map

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### Sessional Day Care

Figure 4 shows the distribution of registered sessional day care places at ward level. 27 of Neath Port Talbot’s 34 wards do not have any registered sessional day care places.

#### Figure 4. Registered Sessional Day Care Places by Ward (June 2021)

Map

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### Crèches

There are no registered creches in Neath Port Talbot. Two Full Day Care settings, located in Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen and Baglan offer this provision.

### Out of School Care

Figure 5 shows the distribution of registered sessional day care places at ward level. 30 of Neath Port Talbot’s 34 wards do not have a registered out of school provider.

#### Figure 5. Registered Out of School Care Places by Ward (June 2021)

Map

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In addition, as shown in figure 6, 51 schools across Neath Port Talbot offer breakfast clubs for their pupils.

#### Figure 6. Schools with Breakfast Club Provision

Map

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Only 4 schools in Neath Port Talbot provide after school childcare. Schools offer a wide range of extra curricula activities, but after school clubs (childcare) available on a consistent basis are limited having closed due to covid 19 and not re-opened.

#### Figure 7. Schools with After School Club Provision

Map

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### Open Access Play Provision

Figure 8 is taken from the work to support the Play Sufficiency Assessment and shows the availability of open access play provision in Neath Port Talbot. Provision is focused in urban areas with larger populations.

#### Figure 8. Play Provision

Map

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### Voluntary Approved Childcare

There are no voluntary approved childcare (nannies) operating in Neath Port Talbot.

### What Do Parents and Carers Think About Geographical Distribution of Childcare?

On a geographical basis there are arguably significant gaps in provision, There are 6 wards with no registered childcare provision: Aberdulais, Coedffranc Central, Dyffryn, Godre’r graig, Gwynfi and Croeserw and Trebanos. As part of the childcare sufficiency assessment parents were asked how their childcare arrangements could be improved, none of the respondents to the survey selected “a different location.” This suggests childcare in Neath Port Talbot is geographically distributed in a way that works for families, 20% of childcare settings are located in schools. Other provision is in populated urban areas that reflect where local parents and carers work.

However, in focus groups parents and carers, particularly those in rural areas, explained that access to a car was seen as crucial to being able to access childcare. For example, one parent explained “without a car I couldn’t get my little girl to childcare and then myself to work, without setting off stupidly early. It’s not walkable and I can’t remember the last time I saw a bus where we live.”

Not every family in Neath Port Talbot has access to a car “the average for non-car ownership in Neath Port Talbot is 25.5% across the County Borough, with the greatest percentage of non-car ownership being in the Afan Valley with 33.6%, which is significantly higher than the Amman Valley which has 19.4% of households with no car.[[10]](#footnote-11)” The reliance on car also connects to the current cost of living crisis and the rising price of fuel, which is making childcare more expensive. As one parent explained “childcare is expensive, petrol is getting more expensive, I’m worried it will get to the point that when I think about all the costs childcare won’t be worth it for me.”

# SUSTAINABILITY

## HOW CHILDCARE IS FUNDED

### Introduction

This section explores how childcare is funded and the challenges settings are facing in terms of their financial viability and sustainability.

### What Do Childcare Providers Think?

The Care Inspectorate for Wales Self-Assessment of Service (SASS) asked registered providers “based on the current situation, are you fairly confident that it would be financially sustainable to continue to run your childcare provision?”

#### Table 34. Sustainability of Childcare Settings

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Sustainable for Another Year or Longer | | Sustainable for 6 months | | Don’t Know | |
| Number of Settings | Number of Places | Number of Settings | Number of Places | Number of Settings | Number of Places |
| Full Day Care | 30 | 956 | 1 | 19 | 6 | 271 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 124 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sessional Day Care | 7 | 159 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 |
| Childminder | 34 | 319 | 2 | 20 | 15 | 133 |

Table 34 suggests relative confidence in sustainability across the sector, with 75% of settings (77% of registered places) believing they are sustainable for a minimum of another year. However, it must be acknowledged that 22% of settings don’t know about their financial future, which potentially puts 424 registered childcare places at risk.

As part of the assessment process, we interviewed 22 providers from across Neath Port Talbot, 18 of those we interviewed (82%) stated they were confident that their business would continue for 5 years or more. It should be noted that the Self-Assessment of Service (SASS) took place in June 2021, during the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions which may have impacted on business confidence.

### Grants and Funding to Childcare Providers

The sector is supported by funding through a range of programmes, table 35 shows the significant investment in the sector over the past 5 years. In engagement with the settings, they have explained a reliance on this funding, specifically in relation to development and improving quality of provision as well as the sustainability of the sector and the settings within it.

Table 35 shows that £15,887,294.00 has been invested in childcare Neath Port Talbot in the period 2017 – 2022.

#### Table 35. Funding for Childcare

| Fund | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CCAS – Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme |  |  |  | £1,140,230 |  |
| Child Development Fund |  |  |  |  | £53,893 |
| Childcare & Play (CCG) | £37,855 | £37,392 | £32,883 | £72,938 | £34,412 |
| Pandemic Uplift |  |  |  | £138,412 |  |
| Sustainability Grant to Childcare Settings |  |  |  |  | £158,850 |
| Foundation Phase |  |  |  |  | £130,000 |
| O Gam I Gam | £108,118 | £101,225 | £117,475 | £9,145 | £36,128 |
| NPTCBC Early Years & Childcare |  |  |  |  | £17,500 |
| Childcare Provider Grant / School Hub & Childcare Provision |  |  |  | £7,878 |  |
| Flying Start Places (0-3) | £1,496,986 | £1,501,160 | £1,453,026 | £1,336,406 | £1,412,011 |
| Childcare Offer Places (3-4) |  | £500,926 | £1,926,452 | £1,537,646 | £2,263,516 |
| Childcare Offer ASG |  | £3,139 | £64,668 | £42,438 | £114,586 |
| **TOTAL** | **£1,642,959.00** | **£2,143,842.00** | **£3,594,504.00** | **£4,285,093.00** | **£4,220,896.00** |

### CIW Registrations and De-Registrations

At the time of previous assessment (2017) there were 2,254 childcare places across Neath Port Talbot, this has decreased by 10% in the five years between the two assessments. Table 35 shows that the availability of spaces in Full Day Care settings has increased considerably in this time, with significant reductions in sessional day care and childminder provision. It is important to acknowledge that Full Day Care settings provide a range of services including sessional and out of school care.

#### Table 36. Registered Childcare Places 2017 and 2021 Comparison

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | 2017 SASS | 2021 SASS | Percentage Change |
| Full Day Care | 875 | 1,246 | +42% |
| Sessional Day Care | 314 | 179 | -43% |
| Out of School Care | 264 | 124 | -9% |
| Childminder | 801 | 472 | -41% |
| **TOTAL** | **2,254** | **2,021** | **-10%** |

However, whilst the number of settings and spaces has reduced the number of children using childcare has increased. In 2017 providers reported 2,424 children on their books (in term time) compared to 2,925 in 2021 an increase of 20%.

The sustainability of childcare is ultimately related to the use of childcare by parents and carers. The cost of living crisis has the potential to impact on the sector. Among parents who completed our survey but do not use childcare the biggest barrier was that “childcare is too expensive”. 85% of parents and carers who completed the childcare sufficiency assessment survey thought that childcare was too expensive. However, only 8% of those using childcare, said more affordable childcare would be an improvement.

Research from Pregnant Then Screwed and Mumsnet[[11]](#footnote-12) (of parents and guardians from across the UK) found that two thirds of respondents were paying as much or more for their childcare than for their rent or mortgage. As a result, almost half (43%) of working mothers are considering leaving their jobs and 40% were working fewer hours than they wanted because childcare is unaffordable.

A survey 1,970 childcare providers across the UK by the Early Alliance found that 86% said that funding for 3 to 4 year olds is insufficient to cover their costs, this was reflected in our discussions with childcare providers in Neath Port Talbot, as one provider explained “I think the 30 hours is great, I think it does help get parents bask to work but it does not help my business. The money we get simply does not cover our costs.” The Welsh Government increased the hourly rate for childcare providers from £4.50 to £5 per hour in April 2022 and committed to reviewing the rate at least every 3 years. However, the providers we spoke to were concerned this would be insufficient “I’m not complaining about the rate increasing, but I have to be honest with bills and the minimum wage increasing I still don’t think it’s enough.” Another survey respondent explained “Flying Start funding has not increased in line with inflation and with rising NMW (national minimum wage) it is making it difficult to sustain with current funding levels.”

# cross border

## using childcare outside of neath port talbot

### Introduction

Families who live in Neath Port Talbot do not have to use childcare settings in Neath Port Talbot. Factors such as where parents / carers work can impact on where they choose to access childcare. This section of the assessment reviews the evidence of cross-border childcare usage.

### Families Who Use Childcare Outside of Neath Port Talbot

446 parents and carers complete the childcare survey. In addition, we spoke to 197 parents and carers through a programme of 6 focus groups and attending events and activities such as Stay and Play Sessions. Only 2 parents were using childcare outside of Neath Port Talbot, because they preferred to access childcare closer to work.

### Families Living in Other Areas who use Childcare in Neath Port Talbot

None of the childcare providers we spoke to are currently providing childcare for children / families living outside of Neath Port Talbot.

# the impact of the pandemic

## how covid-19 has impacted on childcare

### Introduction

During the pandemic lockdowns access to childcare was one of the main things that changed about people’s lives. Some of those changes, such as working from home, for some people have become the norm. This has and will inevitably change the use of childcare in Neath Port Talbot.

### Research

To help us understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on childcare in Neath Port Talbot we undertook a research review, please note this research includes studies undertaken across the UK and specifically in England. This process highlighted a range of factors that should be taken into consideration in the context of the Neath Port Talbot Childcare sector. Our research is summarised below:

**Impact of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Education and Care[[12]](#footnote-13)**

* “The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in a number of ways, including temporary and permanent **setting closures**, **reduced demand** for ECEC places and **workforce challenges**.”
  + “The latest Ofsted data show a net reduction of 3,847 providers registered with Ofsted across all categories from 1 April 2020 to 31 July 2021, a decrease of approximately 5%.”
* “The finances of childcare providers were already weak in several parts of the sector before the pandemic […] **closures and reduced demand have increased financial pressures** and stakeholders have raised **concerns about the pandemic’s long-term impact on financial sustainability**.”
* Pandemic has exacerbated the long-term issues of recruitment and retention of qualified staff – concerns surrounding how this will impact quality of ECEC long term
  + “EPI and NDNA study reported that lack of demand in 2020 had resulted in staff being made redundant, having their pay reduced, or voluntarily leaving settings.”
  + Many did not return to their old jobs as they found alternative employment during furlough.
  + Risks of such trends creating long-term staffing shortfall.
  + “A survey of 3,800 early years workers carried out by the Early Years Alliance (EYA) between December 2020 and January 2021 found that **one in five were considering leaving the sector due to difficulties relating to the impact of the pandemic on the sector**. Nearly nine in ten of those who responded **felt that the government had not adequately valued the role of the ECEC sector** during the pandemic.”
* “Available evidence suggests that changes in access to ECEC has impacted pre-school children in a number of ways, including **social, emotional and behavioural development** and **mental health, physical development and school readiness**.”
  + However, different experiences of the pandemic across children and families – which has shaped these impacts
  + Negative impacts on development and mental health are more likely for disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEND children

**Early Education and Care (ECEC) During COVID-19 Boosts Growth in Language and Executive Function[[13]](#footnote-14)**

* “A [UK study](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8236989/pdf/ICD-9999-e2241.pdf) involving 189 families explored the association between time spent in ECEC during the pandemic, socio-economic status and children’s cognitive development. More time spent in ECEC during the 2020 pandemic was associated with greater gains in receptive vocabulary.”

**The Impact of COVID-19 Crisis on Childcare and Implications for Participation in the Labour Market[[14]](#footnote-15)**

* “The closures of childcare providers to most families during COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of access to childcare providers not only as **means of shaping young children’s environment** and **affecting their mental wellbeing** but also to **support paid work for these families**.”
* [ONS data](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/parentinginlockdowncoronavirusandtheeffectsonworklifebalance/2020-07-22) in July 2020 shows that more women have carried out more childcare duties overall
* The consequences of having to care for children in this early years’ stage hit women’s employment disproportionately as a [report by Working Families charity](https://workingfamilies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Weathering-the-Storm-the-COVID-19-pandemic-working-parents.pdf) indicates
* “In a report, by the Working Families’ charity ([See the report here](https://workingfamilies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/June-2020-FlextheUK-survey-briefing-Covid-19-and-flexible-working.pdf)), 1,063 working parents and carers were surveyed many of whom experienced flexible working during the lockdown. The survey shows that **89% of working parents and carers did not want their employers to revert to business as usual after lockdown is lifted**. For some parents, their hours may have been reduced because their employer has less work for them to do. Whilst this may be welcome for some families because schools and childcare settings have closed, it will affect their earnings.”

### Listening to Childcare Providers

The Care Inspectorate for Wales Self-Assessment of Service (SASS) asked registered providers about the impact of COVID-19 on their services, this information is summarised in table 37.

#### Table 37. Temporary Closures Resulting from COVID-19

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | Total Number of Services | Number of Services That Closed | Currently Still Closed | Total Calendar Days Closed |
| Full Day Care | 37 | 29 | 0 | 3,133 |
| Out of School Care | 4 | 3 | 0 | 828 |
| Sessional Day Care | 8 | 7 | 0 | 999 |
| Childminder | 51 | 23 | 0 | 2980 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 62 | 0 | 7,940 |

Table 37 shows that the equivalent of just under 22 years of childcare days were lost as a result of the pandemic lockdown related childcare closures.

The 22 provider interviews we undertook were based around a questionnaire structured to enable us to obtain quantitative data to understand the challenges they are facing. We found that:

* 68% of providers saw a decline in the number of children attending as a result of the pandemic.
* 72% reported that the pandemic has had an impact on the financial sustainability of the business.
* 45% were concerned about the impact on the wellbeing of their staff.
* 68% of the providers we spoke to received funding during the pandemic, which was used to improve the safety, quality, and sustainability of the provision.
* 64% felt the biggest challenge they would face over the next 18 months would be financial and tackling the ongoing costs of COVID.

### Listening to Parents and Carers

446 parents and carers complete the childcare survey. We also spoke to 197 parents and carers through a programme of 6 focus groups and attending events and activities such as Stay and Play Sessions. They told us:

* Half of parents and carers who completed the survey said they planned to use more childcare in the next couple of years.
* Of those who said they would use less childcare, 91% said it was because their child would be older.

The above suggests the demand for childcare is relatively stable post the pandemic. In focus groups parents explained that flexible working and working from home had in some cases resulted in changes to childcare use, but as one parent explained “you soon realise that working from home is still working and that you cannot do that with a young child.” Others explained that types of childcare they would have used have not come back post the pandemic so they’re using informal childcare as a substitute “her afterschool club stopped in covid, so she started going to my parents, I’m not even sure if after school club has started again but the new arrangements suit us.”

Parents and carers also expressed concern about the impact of lockdown on the children’s ability to make friends and socialising, as well as concerns about their mental health – “my first child settled into nursery straight away. My second had spent so much time with just us in lockdown that it was like they couldn’t handle being away from us or being with so many other people. They took so much longer to settle into the setting and to build up to full days seemed to take forever. Another parents explained “in lockdown they were just with us, they would see other people but only on walks or socially distanced. For me getting them into childcare was important to get them back to being with other people and without me.”

### Listening to Children and Young People

We spoke to 117 children and young people about their experience of childcare and the impact of COVID. Of those who had been in childcare settings pre-pandemic most had returned. Among those who had not gone back to childcare the reasons including “I grew out of needing to go during the pandemic”, “Mum works from home now so she can pick me up when school finishes” and “after school club isn’t on anymore so I go to a friend unless there is football club.” Children spoke of missing playing with friends and the social aspect of childcare during the lockdowns and expressed concern that some things had not yet comeback “they keep saying afterschool club is coming back but it hasn’t. I’m moving to big school in the summer so it might never come back for me.”

Among those children who had returned to childcare there was some concern that it wasn’t the same as pre pandemic for example “breakfast club is boring now we’re not allowed to play Lego because of COVID” and “my best friend does not go to nursery with me anymore after school because of COVID, so I need to make new friends.”

### Listening to Employers

Using a survey template, we interviewed 17 employers from across Neath Port Talbot in a range of sectors, pre-pandemic 41% of the employers said childcare slightly affected their ability to recruit and retain staff. During the pandemic childcare became a significant issue for 44% of employers with regard to recruiting and retaining staff. One employer explained that “during the pandemic, childcare was not an option for most of my employees as it was not affordable to them. Especially due to the fact they would have had to stay in childcare all day while schools were closed. The impact on the business was negative as we struggled to obtain cover in departments as some employees could not come into work.”

During the pandemic 41% of employers offered additional childcare support including working from home and enabling team members to work on different tasks.

### Supply and Demand

There are more children on the books of childcare settings than at the time of the previous assessment (2017), support such as the 30 Hour Childcare Offer is encouraging and enabling more families to use childcare. There are concerns in the settings about the last impact of the pandemic on childcare, but the sector seems to have returned to pre-pandemic levels of participation. The pandemic has not become a barrier to childcare and while employment is the main driving force to use childcare, flexible hours and working from home do not appear to have reduced childcare usage. However, the cost of living crisis does have the potential to impact on the sector and its sustainability in the future.

Whilst usage remains strong, the impact of COVID-19 on the sector may be more significant in relation to the workforce. Based on the Care Inspectorate for Wales Self-Assessment of Service (SASS) data for June 2021, 68 members of staff left settings in the previous 12 months this equates to 14% of the workforce. These members of staff may have remained in the childcare sector or left it altogether.

#### Table 38. Childcare Staff

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Provision | No of individual staff currently work in the service | No of staff that have left the service in last 12 months | No of childcare or play posts currently vacant | No of childcare or play hours per week these vacancies equate to |
| Full Day Care | 374 | 56 | 27 | 873 |
| Out of School Care | 39 | 9 | 2 | 22 |
| Sessional Day Care | 37 | 3 | 1 | 37 |
| **TOTAL** | **489** | **68** | **30** | **932** |

*Please note some providers stated they did not have vacant provision but did have vacant childcare of play hours.*

Just under a third of providers told us that the pandemic had resulted in problems with recruitment, with 18% facing challenges in retaining staff. Table 37 suggests that in June 2021 there were 30 vacant childcare posts across Neath Port Talbot, equating to 932 of childcare per week. If demand does continue to increase, there is a potential point at which staff levels could result in that demand not being met.

# the population

## understanding the DEMOGRAPHICS

### Introduction

In theory any family could want to access childcare, it is therefore important that we understand our local population. This section uses demographic information from a range of sources to explore the current and projected population for Neath Port Talbot.

### Children

Fundamentally the childcare sufficiency assessment is about supply and demand; what childcare provision is available (supply) and what is the need for childcare in Neath Port Talbot (demand). As part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment process, we are required to understand how many children and young people are living in Neath Port Talbot. Chart 5 below use mid-year population estimates to illustrate the current and projected population.

#### Chart 5: Population



Based on mid-year population estimates Neath Port Talbot has a population 28,090 children aged 17 years of age and under. This population is projected to decrease by 0.53% by 2027 suggesting that the number of children in Neath Port Talbot will remain relatively consistent.

### Under 5’s

Children aged 5 and under are the age group most likely to be in childcare, the number of children in this age group is projected to decrease by 1.6% between 2022 and 2027, this equates to decrease of 436 children in this age group.

#### Chart 6: Population Projections Children Aged 5 and Under



Whilst overall the population in this age groups is projected to remain relatively stable, the number of children aged 2 is projected to decline by 3.3% which will impact on the expansion of the childcare offer.

### Lone Parents

The 2011 census reported that 4,590 households in Neath Port Talbot were lone parent households with dependent children.

#### Table 39. Lone Parents in Neath Port Talbot (2016-2018)[[15]](#footnote-16)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percentage of Lone Parent Families | Employment Rates for Lone Parents | Number of Lone Parent Families |
| Neath Port Talbot | 9.8 | 55.8 | 4,800 |
| Wales | 7.9 | 66.7 | 85,100 |
| UK | 7.8 | 66.6 | 1,857,500 |

Table 39 is based on a three year average across the period 2016-2018, Neath Port Talbot has the fourth highest percentage of lone parent households in Wales. In addition, it has the second lowest employment rate for lone parents. Parents who do not use childcare tell us that cost is the biggest barrier there is limited awareness of programmes such as PaCE to help lone parents access employment and affordable childcare. In addition, consideration should be given to the capacity of these support programmes is awareness and participation is increased.

### Child Poverty

The Welsh Government analysis of Annual Population Survey (Jan to Dec 2018)[[16]](#footnote-17) reported that 21% of households in Neath Port Talbot were workless, compared to 17% across Wales.

#### Table 40. Percentage of Children in Workless Households

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage of Children in Workless Households |
| Neath Port Talbot | 13.3% |
| Wales | 12.6% |

Child poverty data at a constituency level found that[[17]](#footnote-18)

* 29% of children were living in poverty in Neath in 2019-20. That is 3,643 children. Since 2015, child poverty has increased by 1.7%. That is 194 more children living in poverty.
* 31% of children were living in poverty in Aberavon in 2019-20. That is 3,866 children.  
  Since 2015, child poverty increased by 1.9%. That is 439 more children.

There is limited data on a localised level to understand poverty and its impact on childcare. The Bevan report[[18]](#footnote-19) published in December 2021 reported that across Wales:

* Nearly four in ten Welsh households (39 per cent) do not have enough money to buy anything beyond everyday items.
* Falling incomes continue to be an issue exacerbated by rising living costs.
* More than one in five families had to cut back on items for children including books, toys, nappies and clothing.

### Ethnicity

In 2022 the Annual Population Survey[[19]](#footnote-20) reported 1.31% of the local population were from a non-white background, compared to the Welsh average of 4%.

#### Table 41. Ethnicity of Neath Port Talbot Population

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number |
| White: All People | 113,000 |
| Other Ethnic Group: All People | 1,110 |
| Unknown | 400 |
| All People | 114,500 |

The 2022 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) reported that 4% of pupils had a first language other than Welsh or English. This dataset also reported that 7% of children in education are from non-Welsh / non-British backgrounds.

### Birth Rates

In the period 2013 to 2020, there was a decline in the birth rate in Neath Port Talbot. In this period there was an average of 1,427 births per year.

#### Chart 7: Birth Rate in Neath Port Talbot



# childcare and the well-being plan

## the neath port talbot we want

### Introduction

This section of the assessment explores information in relation to Neath Port Talbot’s existing and potential labour market. As well as aspirations for the future of the County which could affect demand for childcare including planned and proposed property development.

### The Labour Market in Neath Port Talbot

This section of the assessment presents a summary of the current labour profile for Neath Port Talbot, using data from a range of sources, with a particular focus on aspects that impact on childcare.

#### Table 42. Labour Supply (Jan 2021-Dec 2021)[[20]](#footnote-21)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neath Port Talbot (Numbers) | Neath Port Talbot (%) | Wales  (%) |
| Economically Active | 66,900 | 75.6 | 76.4 |
| In Employment | 64,400 | 72.8 | 73.1 |
| Employees | 60,100 | 68.2 | 64.0 |
| Self Employed | 4,300 | 4.5 | 8.7 |
| Unemployed (model based) \* | 2,500 | 3.8 | 4.2 |

\*  Numbers and % are for those aged 16 and over. % is a proportion of economically active

People who are economically inactive, are people aged 16-64 who are not involved in the labour market e.g. they are neither working or actively seeking employment. This group includes students, early retirees and the long-term sick as well as those looking after family.

#### Table 43. Economic Inactivity (Jan 2021-Dec 2021)[[21]](#footnote-22)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neath Port Talbot (Numbers) | Neath Port Talbot (%) | Wales  (%) |
| Total | 20,900 | 24.4 | 23.6 |
| Student | 4,700 | 22.6 | 27.2 |
| Looking After Family / Home | 3,400 | 16.5 | 17.3 |
| Long-Term Sick | 8,700 | 41.8 | 30.2 |
| Retired | 2,400 | 11.5 | 13.6 |
| Other | 1,300 | 6.2 | 9.5 |
| Wants a Job | 2,900 | 14.1 | 17.6 |
| Does Not Want a Job | 17,900 | 85.9 | 82.4 |

\*  Numbers and % are for those aged 16 and over. % is a proportion of economically active

Job density is the number of jobs in an area divided by the resident population aged 16-64, a job density of 1.0 would equate to one job for every resident aged 16 – 64. Table 43 shows that Neath Port Talbot has a lower job density than across Wales as a whole, which means it can be harder for people in Neath Port Talbot to find local employment.

#### Table 44. Job Density (Jan 2021-Dec 2021)[[22]](#footnote-23)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neath Port Talbot  (Jobs) | Neath Port Talbot (Density) | Wales  (Density) |
| Job Density | 56,000 | 0.63 | 0.76 |

Employees in Neath Port Talbot work across a range of roles and sectors, 16% of the workforce works in human health and social work activities which would include childcare.

#### Table 45. Employee Jobs By Industry (2020)[[23]](#footnote-24)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neath Port Talbot  (Employee Jobs) | Neath Port Talbot (%) | Wales  (%) |
| B : Mining And Quarrying | 350 | 0.7 | 0.2 |
| C : Manufacturing | 9,000 | 18.0 | 11.2 |
| D : Electricity, Gas, Steam And Air Conditioning Supply | 175 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| E : Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management And Remediation Activities | 1,750 | 3.5 | 1.0 |
| F : Construction | 2,250 | 4.5 | 5.5 |
| G : Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles | 5,000 | 10.0 | 13.4 |
| H : Transportation And Storage | 3,000 | 6.0 | 3.7 |
| I : Accommodation And Food Service Activities | 3,000 | 6.0 | 8.5 |
| J : Information And Communication | 700 | 1.4 | 2.2 |
| K : Financial And Insurance Activities | 250 | 0.5 | 2.3 |
| L : Real Estate Activities | 800 | 1.6 | 1.5 |
| M : Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities | 1,500 | 3.0 | 5.5 |
| N : Administrative And Support Service Activities | 2,500 | 5.0 | 7.3 |
| O : Public Administration And Defence; Compulsory Social Security | 5,000 | 10.0 | 8.1 |
| P : Education | 4,500 | 9.0 | 9.2 |
| Q : Human Health And Social Work Activities | 8,000 | 16.0 | 15.9 |
| R : Arts, Entertainment And Recreation | 1,250 | 2.5 | 2.3 |
| S : Other Service Activities | 500 | 1.0 | 1.6 |

As previously discussed, parents and carers use childcare to enable them to work, therefore an understanding of working patterns is important to considering sufficiency and availability of childcare. 61% of women in NPT work part time (vs 8% of men) as women seek to balance work with childcare responsibilities. This allows them to only use childcare on a part time basis to fit in with their working hours/ cover hours outside the school day. In talking to parents and carers, this is usually because childcare is wrapped around the school day and / or a family member is available to provide childcare.

#### Table 46. Types of Jobs (2020)[[24]](#footnote-25)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neath Port Talbot  (Jobs) | Neath Port Talbot (%) | Childcare Places in Neath Port Talbot (%)\* | Wales  (%) |
| Total Employee Jobs | 50,000 | - | - | - |
| Full-Time | 33,000 | 66.0 | 21.0 | 66.3 |
| Part-Time | 17,000 | 34.0 | 69.0 | 33.7 |

\*  Take up of childcare places by time

From September 2022 parents and guardians in education and training, became eligible for up to 30 hours for government funded early education and childcare for children aged 3 and 4. There is not a readily available data set to understand the number of parents / guardians in education or training. Tables 47 and 48 summarise data around participation in education and training that could be useful.

#### Table 47. Learners in Work Based Learning (2020/21)[[25]](#footnote-26)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All apprenticeship programmes | Steps to Employment | Traineeships | Work Ready | Other |
| Neath Port Talbot | 2,610 | 0 | 445 | 0 | 0 |

#### Table 48. Learner Numbers by Age for Wales (February 2022)[[26]](#footnote-27)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Neath Port Talbot |
| Under 16 | 15 |
| 16 | 1070 |
| 17 | 955 |
| 18 | 475 |
| 19 | 260 |
| 20 - 24 | 740 |
| 25 - 39 | 1515 |
| 40 - 49 | 640 |
| 50 - 59 | 415 |
| 60 - 64 | 95 |
| 65 and over | 55 |

### Employer Survey

Using a survey template, we interviewed 17 employers from across Neath Port Talbot in a range of sectors, this helped us to understand the relationship between employment and childcare. They told us:

* They support their staff through flexible working arrangements including part time working (82%), flexi-time and phased return to work (41%).
* 88% said more affordable childcare would help them to recruit and retain staff.
* 50% think that childcare being available at different times would benefit their business, 44% would like to see more flexible provision.
* Only 1 employer we interviewed provided childcare vouchers, with 2 considering it for the future.
* Only 2 employers help their employees to access the Childcare Offer for Wales.
* Employers want to provide advice and support, but do not know where to find good, concise and easy to understand information.

### Planned and Proposed Development

The Neath Port Talbot Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) is currently being prepared and will be adopted in 2025. The current Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026) Policy SP7 includes the following housing requirement: “In order to deliver the 7,800 new dwellings required to meet the economic-led growth strategy, provision will be made for the development of 8,760 additional dwellings between 2011-2026 including a 12.31% flexibility allowance.[[27]](#footnote-28)”

#### Table 49. Total Housing Requirement

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Assumptions | Number of Units |
| Basic Housing Need (including Vacancy provision) | Preferred Economic Growth Scenario to meet the projected need of 3,850 jobs | 7,800 |
| Flexibility Allowance | An allowance for sites not coming forward as anticipated | 960 |
| **Total Housing Requirement** | | 8,760 |

Among the key issues identified in the local plan is “a need for additional homes to: (i) accommodate the population needed to meet the projected number of jobs; and (ii) address the reduction in average household size.” In the ten years from 2018 to 2028 the population of Neath Port Talbot is projected to increase by 2.8%, increasing to 146,800 people. Neath Port Talbot is one of only 5 local authorities who are not projected to see a decrease in children and young people (0-15 years of age) in this time[[28]](#footnote-29).

### The Neath Port Talbot Well-Being Plan

At the time of this assessment Neath Port Talbot Council is currently in the process of undertaking an Assessment of Local Well-Being. The current Well-being Plan (2018-2023): The Neath Port Talbot We Want includes an objective “to support children in their early years, especially children at risk of adverse childhood experiences.[[29]](#footnote-30)” The Well-Being Plan does not reference childcare directly. However, quality childcare has an important part to play in the delivery of this objective for example Flying Start is an enhanced preventative services that blend of health visiting, parenting support, childcare and speech, language, and communication support. Not being included in key policies such as the Well-Being Plan puts the sector at a disadvantage and highlights the need for the benefits of childcare to be embedded in a wide range of strategies and plans.

# gap analysis

## unmet needs

### Introduction

This section of the assessment identifies gaps in provision based on the community engagement, discussions with providers and stakeholders and the data summarised in this assessment to identify gaps in provision.

### Types of Provision

**After School Clubs**

In the period since the last assessment there has been a 9% reduction in the number of out of school childcare places. In 2022 there are 4 registered out of school care providers, compared to 12 in 2011. All the employers we spoke to suggested there was an unmet demand for after school clubs and most of them thought there should be more breakfast club provision.

While most primary schools provide unregistered breakfast clubs, as a result of the pandemic there has been a significant decline in after school provision in schools, although it should be acknowledged that 27 full day care settings and 50 childminders provide after school care. There are 570 spaces available in registered settings but qualitative engagement with parents and carers suggests there is an unmet demand for after school clubs provided in schools, primarily because this is seen to be an affordable and convenient childcare option. As one parent explained “we used to be able to pay a few pounds for our daughter to stay a couple of hours after school till I finished work, but the club shut because of COVID. I looked at sending her to nursery instead, but it was much more expensive, so she goes to grans now.” The Childcare Survey 2019 reported that five days a week in an after-school club, in Wales, cost an average of £49 per week[[30]](#footnote-31). Based on the SASS data the equivalent 15 hours of provision from a childcare setting (full day care or childminder) would cost £75.45.

**Holiday Provision**

Engagement with parents and carers suggests there is an unmet demand for - as one parent described it -“affordable holiday provision, affordable being the key word.” Only 5 settings (1 full day care centre, 3 out of school clubs and 1 childminder) change their hours during the school holidays. There is provision available, but parents and carers have a perception that there should be “low cost affordable holiday play schemes like there was when I was at school” and “it would be great to be able to reduce our childcare bill for at least part of the year.” There is also an unmet need for holiday provision specifically for children with additional learning needs, a number of parents raised this in survey responses and focus groups for example “more free childcare is needed for holiday time for SEN children.”

There is a range of provision in Neath Port Talbot that is not childcare for example. In 2021, 300 school children from Melin Primary School, Awel Y Mor Primary School, Upper Afan Valley Federation of Schools, Ysgol Cwm Brombil and Ysgol Bae Baglan participated in the ‘Food and Fun’ school holiday enrichment programme. Delivered by Youth Services the programme lasted for 3 weeks and everyone who attended had the opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of physical and fun activities as well as learning about the importance of healthy eating. Plus, each day everyone got a healthy breakfast and lunch. The Summer of Fun provided a wealth of activities for children young people and families across Neath Port Talbot in summer 2021. In addition, the  council’s Physical Activity & Sport Service (NPT Pass) provided holiday activities including the Pass in the Parks series, summer camps and sessions.

### When Childcare is Available

**Before 8am and After 6pm**

Based on the findings of our engagement with parents and carers the time at which childcare is available meets the need of families. Survey responses showed that some respondents had struggled to find provision before 8am and after 6pm. The majority of employers we spoke to feel the childcare sector does not provide enough provision before 9am and after 6pm. However, based on analysis of available places there is sufficient provision available to meet this unmet need.

**Overnights and Weekends**

There is a very small amount of unmet demand for overnight and weekend childcare. However, the level of this demand is so low it would be challenging to make a sustainable business case for developing this provision. The solution to this unmet demand could potentially come from working with childminders in Neath Port Talbot.

### Welsh Medium

22% of primary school pupils are in Welsh Medium education, in comparison 5% are in Welsh Language childcare settings. 79% of parents and carers who completed our survey currently use English medium childcare, of those almost a third were open to the possibility of using Welsh medium childcare.

Currently there are 112 registered places in Welsh language childcare settings, these settings have 161 children on their books and there are 17 children on waiting lists for Welsh Language provision. If all the parents who completed the survey who said they wanted Welsh medium childcare decided to switch that would require an additional 45 places which cannot be met by existing provision.

Among parents who would like to access Welsh Medium childcare 73% said availability of provision was the biggest barrier, which reflects the data outlined above. 23% felt that Welsh Medium provision was not available at the times they needed it. Currently over half (55%) of Welsh Medium registered places are in sessional day care settings.

27% of parents who wanted but did not currently have Welsh Medium childcare said that “staff language capability” prevented them from accessing the childcare they wanted. 65% of childcare staff do not speak Welsh and this is potentially the biggest barrier to expanding Welsh Medium Childcare. There are currently 5 vacant staff position in Welsh Medium settings, which equates to almost a quarter of the existing workforce. Discussions with childcare providers and stakeholders have highlighted the difficulties in recruiting Welsh speakers, as one provider explained “there aren’t many Welsh speakers in Neath Port Talbot, never mind Welsh speakers with childcare qualifications. It’s not like the salary can tempt Welsh speakers from other areas, it wouldn’t be worth the travel costs.” The Early Years and Childcare Unit have developed a Welsh in Childcare Award with 3 levels, which will be piloted from September 2022 and then rolled out to all settings in 2023.

The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (NPT LDP) identifies area within the Council which are language sensitive areas. Policy SP 22 Welsh Language sets out that “the Welsh language will be safeguarded and promoted in the following language sensitive areas:

1. Amman Valley
2. Swansea Valley
3. Pontardawe and
4. The Community of Crynant in Dulais Valley.

Table 50 shows the provision of childcare available in these language sensitive areas, the table highlights a gap in Welsh Language and Bilingual provision in Pontardawe and Crynant.

#### Table 50. Childcare Provision in Language Sensitive Areas

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Language Sensitive Area | Number of Childcare Places | Percentage of Welsh Language Places | Percentage of Bilingual Places | Percentage of English Language Places |
| Amman Valley Spatial Area | 71 | 27% | 73% | 0 |
| Swansea Valley Spatial Area | 75 | 0 | 100% | 0 |
| Pontardawe Spatial Area | 194 | 7% | 0 | 93% |
| The Community of Crynant in Dulais Valley\* | 16 | 0 | 0 | 100% |

*\* based on provision in the Crynant ward*

### Children with Additional Learning Needs and / or Disabilities

4% of children in childcare have been formally identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities, compared to 20% of children in schools who are receiving some form of additional support. 9% of families that do not use childcare say it is because there is no childcare for my child’s specific needs. On the surface this suggest an unmet gap in provision and / or a need to improve training and support around additional learning needs and disabilities.

### Children with Disabilities and / or Long-Term Illness

Of those who participated in the survey 77% of those who told us their child had a disability or long-term illness were using some form of childcare, the majority of which was family and friends (unpaid) as well as some form of paid for childcare. The survey and focus groups found that families were happy with the childcare they receive and all those who wanted childcare had been able to find it. They had concerns around the cost of childcare and the potential it could increase.

However, there is evidence to suggest families are frustrated by the lack of choice for example 59% of parents and guardians said they strongly disagreed with the statement “there is good choice of childcare in my area” compared to 22% of all respondents to the survey.

### Additional Learning Needs

Parents and carers of children with additional learning needs told us they were able to access the childcare they need and want. However, they also have concerns about limited choice and options. When listening to parents of children with ALN there is a proportion for whom there prefer option is to look after their children themselves or to use family or friends. This is because they feel better placed to meet their children’s needs. Both parents and providers felt that while integration is beneficial there is a need for specific provision for example “there is a need to provide holiday care for Children/ Young people with ALN . There are limited activities available other than activities in Sport. Children/ Young people with ALN and their Parents/Carers have expressed those mainstream activities are not always suitable due to crowded and noisy venues which prove to be over stimulating and scary especially for children/young people with a diagnosis of ASD.”

There is also concern among providers about the increasing demand for support as one provider explained “It is concerning the number of children coming in with additional needs at the moment and I feel this need has increased over the years.”

In Wales nearly a quarter of learners have some form of special education need (SEN), in response to this the Welsh Government’s Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act sets out the new statutory support system in Wales for children and young people with special needs. As a result, “individual development plans (IDPs) will replace the existing variety of statutory and non-statutory plans for learners of compulsory school age and below, as well as for those learners over compulsory school age in school or further education.[[31]](#footnote-32)” Under National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare in Wales providers are already required to plan and provide for individual children’s needs and to observe, record and plan for children’s next steps in their learning and development.

Under ALN reform it will be the role of the “local authority to determine whether young children that are not yet attending school have ALN, and to maintain the IDP until the child attends mainstream school[[32]](#footnote-33)”, childcare providers will have a role to play in the delivery and monitoring of the plan.

### Age of Children

Chart 8 shows the relationship between childcare usage and age of child, with usage at its peak pre-school.

#### Chart 8. Childcare Usage by Age



Among those parents who said they would be using childcare less in the next couple of years, 82% said it was because their child would be older. 13% of families who do not use childcare say it is because there is no childcare available for their child’s age.

The age at which a child does not require childcare is a personal family decision and the reduction in the availability of after school clubs is having an impact on provision for older children. As one parent explained in their survey response “yes, children that are too old for childcare facilities. When my daughter is 11 in 3 years’ time, she won’t be able to attend childcare with her brother as she will be too old. I’m not sure what we will do for her to be looked after when she comes home from School. 11 is too young to be left alone and the school holidays will be very difficult.”

28% of parents with children aged 5 – 8 and 30% of parents with children aged 9 to 11 would like their children to attend more registered childcare. In focus group sessions the preferred options for this group were after school clubs and holiday provision.

If just those survey respondents, with children aged 5 to 8, wanted to use childcare it would require an additional 130 childcare places. The number of unfilled places could accommodate this demand, for example there are 570 unfilled after school childcare places.

### Location of Childcare

As previously discussed, there are 6 wards with no registered childcare provision: Aberdulais, Coedffranc Central, Dyffryn, Godre’r graig, Gwynfi and Croeserw and Trebanos. In addition, there are geographical gaps in distribution across all types of childcare. Two thirds of parents and carers agree or strongly agree that childcare is well located. Provision is in or near community infrastructure such as schools and community centres. However, among those who do not use childcare 16% stated “there is no childcare where I need it to be”. This suggests a need to explore further the location of childcare with local communities, with a focus on those who do not have access to a car and would need public transport or to walk to access provision.

### Childcare Staff

The provision of childcare is limited by a range of factors including staff numbers and the physical capacity of a setting. Perhaps the most significant legacy of the pandemic on childcare settings will be in terms of recruitment and retention. As previously discussed just under a third of providers told us that the pandemic had resulted in problems with recruitment, with 18% facing challenges in retaining staff. Table 37 suggests that in June 2021 there were 30 vacant childcare posts across Neath Port Talbot, equating to 932 of childcare per week.

Research by the Social Mobility Commission[[33]](#footnote-34) found that “early-years childcare workers are quitting jobs blighted by low pay, long hours and poor prospects” as a result “1/6 early years workers leave their employment within a year, and many take second jobs to make ends meet.” On average an early year’s worker earns £7.42 per hour compared to £11.37 for female workers a whole.

#### Chart 9. When Factors Lead to Staff Leaving the Early Years Sector



In engagement with childcare staff concerns about low salaries and the increased cost of living, they also felt undervalued in their roles for example “we looked after doctors and teachers’ children so they could go to work, and no-one clapped for us.” There is a risk that the childcare workforce could become insufficient to meet the needs of families in Neath Port Talbot.

# barriers to childcare provision

## why families don’t use childcare

### Introduction

This section of the assessment is based on quantitative and qualitative data to explore why some families do not use childcare, or what prevents them from using more. It is important to acknowledge that the fundamental barrier to all families is the cost of childcare and a perception that the cost is too high a proportion of the family budget.

### The Benefits of Childcare

In focus groups with parents and carers mums and dads talked about the positive impact that childcare has on their children and families. They valued the educational, social and well-being aspects and could see positive results from childcare. For example, “she had really come out of herself since she started nursery. She talks more. She’s started to learn about sharing and making friends. After covid it was really important she spent time with other children before she started school and going to nursery has helped with that.” Another parent explained “they need to spend time with other kids, it’s great that they’re having fun with children of their own age and learning new things. I could do some of that at home, but it wouldn’t be as much or as good.”

However, while parents and carers see and value the benefits of childcare there are a number of barriers which prevent them from taking it up.

### Families Who Don’t Use Childcare

Among those families who told us they do not use childcare the key barriers are:

* The cost of childcare 53% of those who do not use childcare say it is too expensive.
* 39% prefer to use family or friends – in focus group discussions with non-childcare users, this was primarily related to costs (e.g. it is free childcare) or trust (“I trust my mum much more than I trust a nursery.”)
* 21% say childcare is not flexible enough to meet my needs – when this was explored in focus groups people with flexible hours and zero-hour contracts felt that childcare did not work for them because it does not allow ad hoc/as and when we need it usage.

### Working Parents

The National Living Wage Foundation estimates the number of jobs that are below the National Living Wage (NLW) of £9.50 per hour (2021). The National Living Wage is an estimate of what is needed to live on and is higher than the minimum wage which was £8.36 per hour at that time. Provisional data for 2021 shows that an estimated **1 in 5 jobs** in NPT pay below the National Living Wage, equivalent to 10,000 people in the county. At 20% this rate is above the Welsh average of 17.9% and is a mid-range position compared with other authorities in Wales. Amongst women the rate of pay below the NLW in NPT rises to **29.9%**, the greatest proportion in Wales after Monmouthshire (32.8%) and Powys (30.7%).

“I’m going to be honest I would not use childcare if I was not working, why would I need to” – variations of this talking point were used throughout focus groups sessions with parents who use childcare. There is a perception that use of childcare is primarily related to working.

87% of parents and carers tend to agree or strongly agree that childcare is too expensive.

#### Table 51. Per Hour Average in Neath Port Talbot

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Per Hour |
| Full Day Care | £5.44 |
| Sessional Day Care | £4.67 |
| Out of School Care | £5.15 |
| Childminder | £5.27 |
| TOTAL | £5.33 |
| Male Full-Time Worker (excluding overtime) | £15.48 |
| Female Full-Time Worker (excluding overtime) | £13.73 |

Table 51 suggests that for a woman working full time, with a child in childcare she is working 23 minutes per hour to cover the cost of childcare. In focus groups it was clear that the 30 hour offer was welcomed and had made childcare more affordable but that the affordability was limited “it will be great when she is 3 and she has free childcare, but it does not help me when she is one and I have to be honest it’s almost not working going back to work.” Another parent explained “you have to do the sums; how much will we bring in? Take away how much do we need for the mortgage, bills, food, petrol and all that? What’s left? How much of that will go on childcare? For me – if I’m honest. It’s almost not worth going back to work.” There is also a perception among women / mothers that their salary is brought home purely to pay for childcare, as one parent explained “my partner took paternity leave, then went back to work. I took almost a year off and now it feels I’ve gone back to work just to pay for her childcare. I love being at home with her, so while I know working is the right thing for my career I sometimes find myself wondering why I’m doing it.”

All the parents we spoke to valued and appreciated what childcare does for their children and the benefits it brings the family. However, fundamentally the decision is related to cost and the finances of the family.

68% of respondents to the family childcare survey said in the last year childcare had caused problems at work. This would have been during the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the parents and carers we spoke to had returned to some childcare usage post childcare. However, there was concern about the ongoing impact of COVID on the reliability of their settings “it’s a lot better now but there were points when you would get a call to say we won’t be open tomorrow and I’d have to try and find a way to go to work. For a while its manageable but there is only so many times you can ask your boss to be flexible about your hours.”

Across Neath Port Talbot barriers to better paid work include childcare and other care responsibilities, health, rurality, housing costs and poor or expensive public transport which mean that some workers – typically women – have few alternatives if they want flexible work close to home especially in an area like NPT with its limited public transport offer. The rise of home working can help to alleviate this issue, but for those with low qualification levels this is less of an opportunity.

### Parents Seeking Working or Training Opportunities

Over a quarter of parents and carers told us that childcare issues have prevented them from participating in training. Slightly more (27%) say childcare has prevented them from working / getting a job or prevented them from continuing work.

Almost half of survey respondents agree or tend to agree that “childcare is a barrier to me accessing employment or training.”

In conversations with parents seeking working or training opportunities there was a perception that the cost of childcare would be a significant barrier. Participants had some awareness of the 30 hour offer, but limited understanding of other support that may help them include PaCE and the childcare entitlement of universal credit. 53% of survey respondents said they disagree with the statement “I know where to find out info on financial assistance for childcare.”

### Unemployed Households

The Welsh Government analysis of Annual Population Survey (Jan to Dec 2018)[[34]](#footnote-35) reported that 21% of households in Neath Port Talbot were workless, 13.3% of children are living in a workless household. Support is available to help families return to work, specifically the Childcare Offer for Wales that has the stated objective of “helping parents, particularly mothers, to return to work or increase the hours they work”. However, analysis in 2016 by the Wales Centre for Public Policy and Frontier Economics **predicted** that it would **lead to a less than one percentage point change in maternal employment rates among target families**.[[35]](#footnote-36)”

Speaking to families from unemployed households shows that some of them remain unconvinced that childcare is affordable for them as one parent explained: “I know I can get money for childcare through UC, but I still don’t believe I can afford it. It won’t make our life any better me having a job.”

### Low Income Families

The number of children living in relative low income families has increased by 51% from 4,329 in 2015 to 6,566 in 2021. Chart 10 shows the change in the percentage of children living in low income families in Neath Port Talbot and Wales. At the time of this assessment 2.6 in every 10 children is living in a low income family.

#### Chart 10: Percentage of Children (aged under 16) living in Relative low income families



In focus groups low-income families also saw childcare costs as a barrier, for example one participant explained “it prevented me going for promotion which would have required committing to more working hours per week. Impossible to do as not enough childcare in the week and the extra money from the promotion would have just gone towards childcare costs.” Another participant explained “it’s not worth me even thinking about work until she starts school. She goes to Flying Start childcare but that’s not enough for a job and I can’t afford the childcare for even a part time job.”

The cost of living crisis has the potential to significantly impact on low income families, for example research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests “low-income families could spend on average 18% of their income after housing costs on energy bills after April.[[36]](#footnote-37)” As inflation and other factors continue to increase the cost of energy, food, fuel and childcare and wages remain salaries remain stagnant, effectively a pay cut, this group is likely to re-evaluate their use of childcare.

### Lone Parent Families

Just under 10% of homes in Neath Port Talbot are lone parent households. 56% of lone parents are in employment. In discussions with lone parents, they explained that the cost of childcare is not the only barrier for them. A single parent they have less flexibility around factors such as pick up times, transport, school holidays. As a result, they feel their options are limited and that decision making around childcare is more complex.

### Families from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds

There is no evidence that families from ethnic minority backgrounds have specific barriers that prevent them using childcare. It should be acknowledged that participation in this assessment from ethnic minority families has been low and this has been addressed in the action plan.

### Families with Children Who Have Special Education Needs or a Disability

As discussed, in the gap analysis parent of children with special education needs or disability who want to are using childcare. The barriers that they identified related to cost and the lack of choice of provision.

# support to ACCESS childcare

## helping families

### Introduction

This section of the report considers the childcare places filled, needed and available in respect the support available for families to access childcare.

### Foundation Phase Education

In Neath Port Talbot the foundation phase is delivered in schools, table 51 below shows the number of children participating by years since the last childcare sufficiency assessment in 2017.

#### Table 52. Children in Foundation Phase Education by Year

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | N2 | R | Y1 | Y2 |
| 2017 | 1,425 | 1,532 | 1,602 | 1,547 |
| 2018 | 1,420 | 1,457 | 1,545 | 1,550 |
| 2019 | 1,447 | 1,461 | 1,471 | 1,557 |
| 2020 | 1,472 | 1,487 | 1,486 | 1,483 |
| 2021 | 1,382 | 1,511 | 1,503 | 1,482 |
| 2022 | 1,363 | 1,428 | 1,510 | 1,507 |

Table 52 shows a strong take up of nursery education in the early years, but there is scope for increasing take up for nursery education.

#### Table 53. Take Up of Foundation Phase Education (2022)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number in Education | Age | Age by Single Year | Percentage |
| Nursery 2 | 1,363 | 3 | 1,495 | 91.17% |
| Reception | 1,428 | 4 | 1,517 | 94.13% |
| Year 1 | 1,510 | 5 | 1,536 | 98.31% |
| Year 2 | 1,507 | 6 | 1,533 | 98.30% |

### Flying Start

Table 54 shows 350 children are in receipt of a Flying Start funded childcare place, with 459 places being available in total. There are 518 children waiting to access Flying Start provision, the majority of these would be children who have not yet turned 2. In addition, there is a waiting list which has resulted from is due to increased ALN referrals for EYMAP (Early Years Multi-Agency Panel).

#### Table 54. Flying Start Funded Childcare Places

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Active | Outreach | Waiting | Offered | Total Places |
| Welsh | 36 | 0 | 62 | 8 | 56 |
| English | 275 | 29 | 441 | 51 | 391 |
| Bilingual | 8 | 2 | 15 | 2 | 12 |

In the year April 2021 – March 2022, 1077, children were eligible for the Flying Start Childcare Offer, of which 24% did not take up their full allocation. Of those 76 (30%) declined a place either on registration or after being offered a place at childcare. The most significant reason for not taking up a place (42%) was the family moving out of the area. 2 children from this period remain on a waiting list, which suggests sufficient provision is available.

In September 2022 “the Flying Start programme will be expanded to reach up to 2,500 more children aged 0 to 4 by increasing the Flying Start target areas in every local authority in Wales. All children under 4 living in these areas will be able to access Flying Start services, including childcare for those aged 2 to 3.[[37]](#footnote-38)” This will result in an expansion of the programme to accommodate 127 more children aged 0-4 initially from Sept – March in Neath Port Talbot.

### Childcare Offer

At the time of the assessment the Childcare Offer for Wales is available to families that:

* Have a child that is 3 or 4 years old
* Earn on average a weekly minimum equivalent to, or more than, 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW) but less than £100,000 per year.

In the period since the offer started 2,508 families have applied of which, at registration, 33% said the affordability was very difficult and 44% said somewhat difficult. Of those who found the cost of childcare very difficult 45% had a least one family member earning over £31,200 per year. The average salary in Neath Port Talbot is £29,694 per annum[[38]](#footnote-39).

#### Chart 11: Childcare Offer For Wales Take Up

#### 

Data from the DWP and the 2011 census suggests around 1917 children are eligible for the Childcare Offer for Wales. In 2021 the take up off the offer was 584, which equates to a take up rate of 31%. Increasing take up of the offer to 40% would bring an additional 183 children into the childcare sector, which could be accommodate by the current unfilled places. The authority will need to balance the need to encourage families to take up their entitlements to reduce the cost of childcare with the impact on availability of childcare places. From September 2022 parents and guardians in education and training, became eligible for up to 30 hours for government funded early education and childcare for children aged 3 and 4. This will also increase the demand for provision.

### Child and Childcare Entitlement Claimants

10% of survey respondents told us they were in receipt of the childcare element of working tax / universal credit.

Of 12,022 Universal Credit Claimants in Neath Port Talbot just 210 are in receipt of the childcare entitlement. There is not an exact data set that enables to understand how many people on universal credit are entitled to help with childcare but not taking it up. We can however make an informed assumption on the basis that 35% of universal credit claimants are in work and only 210 claimants are taking up the childcare element that more people should be taking up the entitlement.

### Tax Free Childcare

30% of family childcare survey respondents are benefiting from tax free childcare. The number of families using tax free childcare increased by 1112.5% in the period from 2017-18 to 2020-21 (please refer to chart 3 for year on year increase). This suggests that families are becoming more aware of the support they are entitled to. In 2020/21 485 families had a tax-free childcare account. Parents and carers that are in work, earning over the national minimum wage are entitled to tax free childcare.

Across Wales in the period July to September 2020[[39]](#footnote-40) 83% of parents with dependent children were in employment. Whilst rates of employment are lower in Neath Port Talbot, it could realistically be expected that more families in Neath Port Talbot could and should be claiming Tax Free Childcare.

### Helping Families Access the Support They Are Entitled Too

53% of survey respondents said they disagree with the statement “I know where to find out info on financial assistance for childcare.” As the cost of living crisis and inflation makes life for families in Neath Port Talbot more expensive there is a need to ensure that parents and carers can access the support to which they are entitled. This needs to balance with the potential need to create additional places within the sector. Employers have also told us they want more support and information to help them connect employees with their entitlements and keep them in employment.

# supporting the CHILDCARE workforce

## development and training

### Introduction

This section summaries the qualification profile of the childcare sector in Neath Port Talbot. It also summarises training and professional development needs.

### Qualifications

Table 55 summarises the childcare qualifications held by registered childcare settings in Neath Port Talbot.

#### Table 55. Childcare Practitioners: Number of Staff with Qualifications

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Full Day Care | Sessional Day Care | Out of School Care |
| Total Number of Staff | 374 | 37 | 39 |
| Children’s, Care, Learning and Development qualification at level 2 | 37 | 2 | 1 |
| Children’s, Care, Learning and Development qualification at level 3 | 190 | 16 | 15 |
| Children’s, Care, Learning and Development qualification at level 5 | 98 | 13 | 5 |
| Qualification relevant to childcare but not listed | 29 | 4 | 5 |
| No formal Childcare Practitioner qualifications | 26 | 2 | 1 |

An analysis of qualification data provided by settings found that:

* All full day care settings providing care for children below the age of 8 met the requirement at least 80 per cent of the non-supervisory staff holds a qualification at least at level 2.
* All full day care settings providing care for children below the age of 8 met the requirement at least 50 per cent of the non-supervisory staff holds a qualification at least at level 3.
* All full day care settings providing care for children below the age of 8 met the that the person in charge has a qualification at least at level 3.
* All sessional day care meets the requirement that at least 50% of these have a qualification at level 3. The thresholds for Sessional Manager, Advanced Sessional Practitioner/Deputy Sessional Manager and Sessional Practitioner have all been met.
* SASS data suggested there are 10 members of staff working in settings that receive Flying Start Funding that do not have a childcare practitioner qualification.

#### Table 56. Play Practitioners: Number of Staff with Qualifications

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Full Day Care | Sessional Day Care | Out of School Care |
| Total Number of Staff | 374 | 37 | 39 |
| Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Level 2 Diploma in Playwork | 15 | 0 | 3 |
| Level 2 Diploma Playwork; Principles into Practice | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Level 3 Award in Managing a Holiday Play Scheme | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Level 3 Award in Transition to Playwork from Early Years | 30 | 1 | 2 |
| Level 3 Diploma Playwork | 36 | 3 | 6 |
| Level 3 Diploma Playwork; Principles into Practice | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Level 5 Diploma in Playwork | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Qualification relevant to play, but not listed | 17 | 2 | 12 |
| Play Practitioners with no formal qualifications | 37 | 6 | 2 |
| Total number of staff who are play practitioners | 154 | 12 | 26 |

Table 56 shows that there are 192 staff in the childcare sector with a play qualification, who are play practitioners.

#### Table 57. Qualifications Held by Childminders

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | Have Qualification | | On-going Study | | Do Not Have Qualification | | Do Not Know |
| CYPOP 5 unit or IHC & PCP | 17 | | - | | 29 | | 5 | |
| Children’s, Care, Learning and Development qualification at level 2 | 10 | | 1 | | 38 | | 2 | |
| Children’s, Care, Learning and Development qualification at level 3 | 27 | | 3 | | 30 | | 1 | |
| Children’s, Care, Learning and Development qualification at level 5 | 5 | | 2 | | 44 | | 0 | |
| Qualification relevant to childcare but not listed | 22 | | 5 | | 22 | | 2 | |

2 childminders who completed the SASS data said they did not have any of the qualifications detailed in the survey. In addition, 29 childminders said they do not have CYPOP 5 unit or IHC & PCP which is a requirement of registration. It should be noted that historically it had a different name and way back was likely to have been a different course altogether. Therefore, for those who have been childminding for many years (some have been practicing for around 30 years) the options given in the SASS questionnaire may not have been relevant.

### Training

The Early Years and Childcare Unit delivers a comprehensive programme of training for providers. This training is free of charge and is funded by Early Years and Flying Start. It includes both mandatory training and training to enhance the quality of the setting. Table 56 shows participation in training in the period since the previous childcare sufficiency assessment.

#### Table 58. Training Delivered by Early Years and Childcare Unit

|  | Number of Staff |
| --- | --- |
| April 2018 – September 2018 | 218 |
| October 2018 – March 2019 | 205 |
| April 2019 – September 2019 | 144 |
| October 2019 – March 2020 | 22 |
| April 2020 – September 2020 | 23\* |
| October 2020 – March 2021 | 186\*\* |
| April 2021 – September 2021 | 205 |
| October 2021 – March 2022 | 298 |

\* no training April - August due to Covid \*\*training delivered online

Additional training for settings in relation to ALN reform was also funded and delivered by the Local Authority’s ALN Team. The table overleaf shows the training programme for the period September 2018 to December 2021. The training programme responds to engagement with settings to understand and explore what they need and how they can improve the quality of their settings.

#### Table 59. Training Programme

|  | Sept – Dec 18 | Jan – March 19 | April – July 20 | Sept – Dec 20 | Jan – March 21 | April – July 21 | Sept – Dec 21 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Paediatric First Aid (Level 2) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Level 2 Food Safety |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Infection Control |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Safeguarding & Child Protection basic 3 hour |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| WCADA - Substance Misuse course |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learning to Behave - Behaviour Management & Challenging Behaviour |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signalong |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signalong (refresher) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Singalong – Christmas Themed Workshop |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Like Bees not Butterflies (Child Initiated Learning) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ELKLAN  Speech & Language Support for 0-3s (Level 3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Understanding Special Educational Needs Training |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Health Matters Training |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leadership & Management – NDNA |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Flying Start New Staff Induction Training |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Manual Handling for Working with Children |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Health & Safety including Writing Risk Assessments |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| General Data Protection Regulation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Brilliant Babies |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ALN Awareness Raising Session |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fun with Welsh |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Celebrating Multi-Cultural Diversity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Supporting Children with Development Co-ordination Disorder and Hyper Mobility |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Transition and How To Support Children |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tuff Spot Ideas Workshop |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Welsh in Childcare: Christmas Themed Workshop |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| An Introduction to Relationship Based Play in Early Years Settings |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Magical Mindfulness & Movement Workshop |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Magical Mindfulness & Meditative Breath Workshop |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Effective Provision: Water Play |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Developing Quality Outdoor Provision |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Everyday Welsh in Childcare |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Online NDNA Development Zone Courses |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| A Natural Childhood – Early Years in Outdoors Training |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Magic Train |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Quality

The Quality of Care Review is a tool that supports settings to “be part of a culture of quality improvement. This involves using tools and methods systematically to assess and improve the quality of care and outcomes for people using the service[[40]](#footnote-41).” The process is part of a continuous improvement cycle for settings. Table 60 summarises the quality care reviews of the settings at the time of the June 2021 SASS process.

#### Table 60. Quality of Care Review

|  | Well Being | Care and Development | Environment | Leadership and Management |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No Rating | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Adequate | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Good | 52 | 56 | 63 | 61 |
| Excellent | 39 | 35 | 28 | 28 |

The table above suggests that settings offer good or excellent provision for the families and children they look after. There continues to be scope for continuing improvement and the Early Years and Childcare Unit will continue to work with settings to deliver quality childcare.

# addressing gaps in provision

## action plan

### Introduction

This action plan was developed through a collaborative process, using an Early Years and Childcare Group (EYCG) to co-design the actions below in response to the identified gaps in provision. The action plan is for the period June 2022 – May 2024 and will be delivered, monitored and evaluated by the Early Years and Childcare Group. This group will also develop action plans for each of the years between now and the next Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in response to changing need and factors including funding and resources.

| Gap | Actions | Priorities | Milestones | Responsibility | Funding |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Provision** | | | | | |
| After School Clubs | Engage with schools to explore and understand barriers to after school clubs returning post covid. | Increase in after school provision in schools. |  |  |  |
|  | Promote After School provision available in registered childcare settings. Explore potential for partnering schools with settings. | Increase in after school provision in schools. |  |  |  |
| Holiday Provision | Liaise with Play Sufficiency Implementation Group to collaborate on Summer of Fun and other programmes to explore opportunities for holiday provision. | Affordable childcare options for families who only need childcare during school holidays. |  |  |  |
|  | Raise awareness of holiday provision available in registered childcare centres – address the myth that childcare has to be used all year round. | Families are aware of all the options that area available to them. |  |  |  |
| **Times When Childcare Is Available** | | | | | |
| Before 8am and After 6pm and Weekends | Collaborate with the Employability Team, Job Centre Plus and other partners to promote Family Information Service to employers. | Employers have the information they need to help their staff find the right childcare. |  |  |  |
|  | Encourage providers to make information about their opening times clear and easy to find. | Parents and carers have the information they need to make informed decisions. |  |  |  |
| **Welsh Medium** | | | | | |
| Accessible Welsh Medium provision for all families that want it. | Welsh Language childcare provision will be included as part of the Welsh Medium 21st Century Primary School Builds. This will support the WESP aspiration that all pupils in all areas of the Local Authority will have easy access to Welsh medium education and Welsh pre-school education | Collaborative working with schools to address identified gap. Closer working relationship to support and enable transition. |  |  |  |
|  | Realistic expectations based on the level of Welsh Language speakers in Neath Port Talbot at the present time (22%[[41]](#footnote-42)). Be honest to parents about what this means in terms of the ability to provide Welsh Language provision. | Expectations are managed and there is a strategy for improving accessibility of provision. |  |  |  |
|  | Explore opportunities to address Welsh Language and Bilingual shortfall in areas of language sensitivity – specifically Pontardawe Spatial Area and the community of Crynant. | Work with existing childcare provision in these areas to understand barriers to Welsh language provision. Support them to develop their offer thorough training and collaboration. |  |  |  |
|  | We will work towards providing appropriate Welsh medium childcare for all 2 year olds in Neath Port Talbot. | A pathway for settings to transition from English to Bilingual. From bilingual to Welsh. |  |  |  |
|  | Pilot 3 level Welsh in Childcare Award. Pilot in September which will be rolled out to all settings in 2023. | More staff are able to speak Welsh in childcare settings. |  |  |  |
|  | Collaborative working with Mudiad Meithrin to achieve goals. | Use of resources and support that are already available. |  |  |  |
|  | Myth Busting: Ensure parents have access to clear information about accessing Welsh Medium Childcare. | Parents and carers understand that you do not need to speak Welsh to access Bilingual or Welsh medium childcare. |  |  |  |
|  | Encourage bi-lingualism from birth. | Information and support is provided to parents and carers from birth onwards. |  |  |  |
|  | Encourage parents and carers to learn Welsh in an accessible way. | Promote existing programmes and resources to help parents and carers learn Welsh.  Collaborative working with Mudiad Meithrin.  Raise awareness of Clwb Cwtch, Cymraeg I Plant, Cylch Tia F and other programmes. |  |  |  |
|  | Encourage and enable more Welsh language speakers to consider childminding as a career. | Partnership with partners to support a campaign to recruit Welsh speakers to consider childminding as a career. For example PACEY have a range of bilingual and Welsh resources to support a recruitment campaign and our pre-registration training is available through the medium of Welsh. |  |  |  |
|  | Increase take up of Welsh language training available to childcare practitioners. | Work in partnership with PACEY Cymru to promote the [Camau](https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/welsh-language-development/camau-welsh-language-learning/) Welsh language training and the support that is available for practitioners and settings that are looking to grow their language skills and use of the language with children in their setting. |  |  |  |
| **Supporting Children with Disability and Additional Needs** | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Families can choose the childcare provision they want. | Take a strategic approach to workforce development. | Pre-recorded training that staff can access at a convenient time.  Whole setting / cluster training programmes.  Links with colleges and other training providers. |  |  |  |
|  | Work with settings to audit their provision and support them to become inclusive. | Additional learning provisions to support accessibility.  Link this process to parental information and awareness raising. |  |  |  |
|  | Identify funding available to settings / the childcare sector to reform development within. | Settings are aware of the support and funding available to enable them to become inclusive. |  |  |  |
|  | Continue developing support systems available to settings to access advice from Local Authority / Health Specialists. | Resource packages to support training.  EYCG to review currents system and create a strategy to adopt / improve support for settings.  Increase the capacity of existing ALN childcare provision. |  |  |  |
|  | Ensure settings provide a “universal provision” that caters for ALL children’s needs and abilities. | ALN training programme.  Pool of staff to provide 1-2-1 and additional support for settings. |  |  |  |
|  | Make it easy for parents and carers to make informed decisions. | Promote O Gam I Gam.  Family Information Service / Dewis highlight inclusive provision. |  |  |  |
|  | Collaboration with partners. | Work with stakeholders to explore how the ALN system is progressing locally. Working together to ensure childcare provider understand the support, training and guidance available to them. |  |  |  |
|  |  | Develop toolkits, for example pre-recorded training that staff can access at anytime, in partnership with key stakeholders. |  |  |  |
| **Age of Children** | | | | | |
| Families with older children can find the childcare they want. | Encourage partnership working between schools and settings. | Parents / carers can find accessible childcare that works for their family.  Wraparound and pick up provision are available. |  |  |  |
|  | Promote provision available for older children. | Families can make informed decisions. |  |  |  |
|  | Also refer to actions related to After School Clubs. |  |  |  |  |
| **Location of Childcare** | | | | |  |
| Address geographical gaps in provision. | Feasibility study to explore options to address geographical gaps in provision. | Sustainable provision is established to address geographical gaps. |  |  |  |
| **Staffing the Childcare Sector** | | | | |  |
| Recruitment | Work with schools and colleges to promote childcare as a career to 16 and 18 year olds. | Young people with an interest in childcare understand the training and qualifications required |  |  |  |
|  | Encourage settings to participate in career fairs and opportunities to promote opportunities to work in the sector. Also collaborate with Job Centre Plus and other partners. | Raise awareness of careers in childcare and childcare as a profession. |  |  |  |
|  | Showcase the range of roles and types of childcare. | Raise awareness of careers in childcare and childcare as a profession.  Stop the ‘hair or care’ culture by promoting childcare as a profession. |  |  |  |
|  | Increase the number of men working in the sector. | Targeted promotion programme. |  |  |  |
|  | Apprenticeships promotion. | Promoting opportunities for apprenticeship pathways in Childcare and Play. |  |  |  |
|  | Increase the number of childminders in Neath Port Talbot. | Collaboration with PACEY Cymru on a targeted recruitment campaign across these areas of need. |  |  |  |
| Retention | Celebrate staff and why they are important. | Awards event.  Showcasing the sector to a wider audience.  Show staff they are important and valued. |  |  |  |
|  | Invest time, money and effort into childcare staff. | Mindfulness training programme.  Award Event. |  |  |  |
|  | Re-introduce face to face training. | Bringing the sector back together. |  |  |  |
|  | Lobby Welsh Government for increased funding and profile. | Pay is the biggest reason for the leaving the sector this needs to be addressed. |  |  |  |
|  | Focus on Well-being | Support staff and listening to their concerns.  Making the sector a great place to work. |  |  |  |
|  | Support childminders to continue working in the childcare sector. | Collaboration with partners to ensure quality childminders remain in the sector. Support could improve training, business development and marketing. |  |  |  |
| **Sharing Information with Families** | | | | | |
| More families taking up support they are entitled with. | Everyone who is eligible for an entitlement is aware of the initiative and knows how to apply. | Local Authority Lead to specifically promote tax free childcare, the childcare for Wales offer and other initiatives.  Accessible and easy to understand information on the Family Information Service (FIS). |  |  |  |
| Family Information Service | A strategic plan for promoting the Family Information Service. | A clear shared plan with targets and timescales.  Strategic use of outreach capacity. |  |  |  |
|  | Work with employability team to ensure employers understand the available support. | Employers can help with staff to access childcare. |  |  |  |
|  | The Local Authority to lead by example. | Promotion to Local Authority Staff to increase take up.  Training for all staff who work with / interactive with families on initiatives.  Job adverts to include information on childcare support. |  |  |  |
| Family engagement strategy | Develop a family engagement strategy to ensure continued dialogue with families between assessment periods. | Decision making is informed by local need.  There is an ongoing engagement with those who do or want to use childcare. |  |  |  |
| **Collaborative Working Access the Sector** | | | | | |
| Improving the Quality of Childcare in Neath Port Talbot | Explore the possibility of a Neath Port Talbot Quality Assurance scheme based on the Flying Start RAG approach. | Feasibility study – start with those settings in receipt of 30 hour offer and then look at the possibility of expanding to all. |  |  |  |
| Commissioning Childcare Services | Flying Start childcare delivered by childminders. | Explore with partners the feasibility of including registered childminders when planning the commissioning of Flying Start if they meet defined criteria. |  |  |  |
|  | Explore the feasibility of foundation phase being delivered by childminders. | Explore with partners the feasibility of including registered childminders when planning the commissioning of foundation phase provision. |  |  |  |
| Working with the Welsh Government | Sharing the findings of the process and lobby for increased pay for staff. | Staff are rewarded.  Retention rates are improved. |  |  |  |
| Improve communication across the sector | Make sure all settings and stakeholders have the information they need. | Communication strategy.  Childcare newsletter.  Build and continue positive relationships between childcare staff and the Local Authority. |  |  |  |
| Neath Port Talbot’s Local needs | Partners, including umbrella organisations, to move away from comparing Neath Port Talbot to other Local Authorities. Focusing instead on decision making based on local need and evidence. | Using the assessment to inform decision making.  Work closely with other teams to create shared pathways to change. |  |  |  |
| Early Years and Childcare Group | Monitor and evaluate delivery of the action plan. | Regular meetings.  Roles and responsibilities for all members for the group.  Participation by key stakeholders including umbrella organisations. |  |  |  |
| Collaborative Working | Reduced silo working, across the Local Authority, and focus on collaboration. | Improved multi-agency working.  Strategic investment of funding.  Play a role in shaping the integration of early years services.  Building links between childcare, Flying Start, Early Years, Family Support, Education and all key departments. |  |  |  |

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Acronym** | **Definition** |
| ALN | Additional Learning Needs |
| CCAS | Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme |
| CCG | Childcare Grant |
| CCO | Childcare Offer for Wales |
| CIW | Care Inspectorate for Wales |
| CSA | Childcare Sufficiency Assessment |
| ECEC | Early Childhood Education and Care |
| EY | Early Years |
| EYA | Early Years Alliance |
| FIS | Family Information Service |
| ILP | Inclusive Learning Provision |
| L2APP | Level 2 Award in Playwork |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LSOA | Lower Super Output Area |
| N2 | Nursery Year 2 |
| NDNA | National Day Nurseries Association |
| NLW | National Living Wage |
| NPT | Neath Port Talbot |
| NPT LDP | Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan |
| NPTCBC | Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council |
| PaCE | [Parents, Children and Employment](https://workingwales.gov.wales/how-we-can-help/help-for-childcare/parents-childcare-and-employment-pace) |
| PLASC | Pupil Level Annual School Census |
| PSB | Public Service Board |
| R | Reception |
| SASS | Self-Assessment of Service Statement |
| SEN | Special Educational Needs |
| SEND | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities |
| WCADA | Welsh Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction |
| WESP | Welsh in Education Strategic Plan |
| Y1 | Year 1 |
| Y2 | Year 2 |



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