



Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Interim Summary
Conwy County Borough Council

Background

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) is a statutory requirement under the Childcare Act 2006. Section 22 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a statutory responsibility on local authorities to secure, where possible, sufficient childcare to meet demand. The CSA is the tool by which Local authorities can review the supply and need for childcare in the area and thereby highlight gaps in provision and address them where possible.

Context

Conwy County Borough Council recognises the importance of quality childcare by working in partnership through the multi-agency Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). The mission statement of the Conwy EYDCP is that *'All children in Conwy have the best possible start in life'*. The aim of the EYDCP is to ensure that children in Conwy have access to high quality childcare and valuable play opportunities.

Therefore the objective of the Assessment for 2016 - 17 is to identify gaps in the provision of childcare, including:

- Geographical Gaps: lack of childcare by Wellbeing area;
- Income Gaps: shortage of affordable childcare;
- Specific Needs Gaps: shortage of childcare for disabled children or other specific needs;
- Time Gaps: shortage of flexible childcare when it is required, particularly by working parents;
- Age Gaps: shortage of care suited to children of a certain age group;
- Language Gaps: shortage of Welsh language provision;
- Type Gaps: shortage in the type of childcare provision;
- Families seeking work gaps: lack of childcare suited to the needs of parents seeking work.

Conwy County Borough is centrally located in North Wales. The County Borough has an area of 113,000 hectares and a population of 116,250 residents. As part of the Local Well Being Needs Assessment recently undertaken by Conwy and Denbighshire Public Service Board, Conwy County Borough has been divided into five areas; Area 1 – Coastal West, Area 2 – Creuddyn, Area 3 – Coastal Central, Area 4 – Coastal East, Area 5 – Rural. These areas have been used to inform the CSA

Consultation regarding childcare took place across the county. Views were obtained from the following stakeholders, parents, childcare providers, play providers, schools, children, employers, voluntary organisations and partners from health services and local authority. The full report will be available in May 2017 following a consultation period on the draft action plan.

The current position regarding the affordability, accessibility and sustainability of childcare in Conwy County Borough has been analysed and as a result the following draft action plan has been produced for further consideration. Key findings are listed below;

Childminders

- There is little or no choice of childminder care particularly when either language, holiday, unsociable or weekend care is considered.
- The supply appears to have reduced across the county since the previous CSA review but also since the SASS itself was completed.
- The range of Welsh language provision is weak in most areas. 15% of providers categorised themselves as Welsh or Welsh & English. The number of parents who choose Welsh medium or schools who provide significant schooling through the medium of Welsh totals 45.5% of the school population. Holiday childminder care is limited in the Welsh medium.
- Geographically there is a shortage of childminders in Area 1 Coastal West. Since the SASS returns were received FIS report a further reduction of provision in this area particularly in the towns of Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr. Area 2 Creuddyn has 10 childminders, with only three in the town of Llandudno which has a large population.
- Only one provider across the county offered weekend care, none offer overnight care.
- Very few appeared to offer care for children with additional needs although this could be due to lone working where 1:1 provision may be required. This would not be sustainable for a childminder.

Full Daycare

- Geographically the least number of providers and therefore the least range of services was in Area 1 Coastal West
- Areas 4 Coastal East and Area 5 Rural also seem to have limited choice particularly in the Welsh medium category.
- There is also very little provision in Area 5 Rural. Demographically the sustainability of full day care provision in rural areas can be challenging.
- Some parents experience difficulty in securing Holiday Care
- Supply for the older age group appears limited but few of the older age group wish to attend this type of provision post age 12 years.
- Unsociable hours care is limited. Only one provider was open on a Saturday and none on Sundays.
- The average half day costs (£28.29 and £28.27) appeared to be little cheaper than the average full day cost of £37.18. Few discounts appeared to be on offer.

Sessional Daycare

- 39% of the services are run in Welsh and Welsh and English, compared to 61% in English and English and Welsh.
- Likewise with the number of Childcare places, 37% of them are provided by Welsh and Welsh and English providers compared to 63% provided by English and English and Welsh providers
- In Coastal East none of the providers provide their service entirely through the medium of Welsh or Welsh and English.
- Coastal West has less Sessional Day care places than other areas. This is in line with the lack of services in Coastal West in general.
- There is very little provision during the school holidays. Anecdotal evidence from a Playgroup leader suggests that some children benefit from the Playgroup / Cylch being open throughout the holidays as this gives them the continuity and routine that they require.
- No sessional Childcare operates outside of normal working hours
- Generally there is a lack of wrap around care for 2 – 3 year olds

Out of School Clubs

- Less Out of School care in Area 1, Coastal West and Area 4, Coastal East than in any other areas.
- No Before school care in Coastal West or Creuddyn.
- Only Creuddyn and Rural have childcare places that are provided by Welsh only settings. Coastal West and Coastal Central don't have any childcare places that are provided by Welsh only settings.
- Shortage of childcare places during school holidays
- During holiday time nearly 80% of services operate through the medium of English / English and some bilingual elements.
- Lack of care for older age ranges – this was a view that many parents commented on in the Parent Survey.
- There is no Out of School childcare outside of normal working hours.
- Some rural villages have difficulty sustaining Out of School childcare
- Lack of Out of school Clubs in Conwy and Llandudno Junction

Open Access Play

- Only available in some areas.
- Only available during summer holidays.
- Not open all day.

Nannies

- Generally nannies are only able to work for one family at a time as the children are cared for in their own home.
- The unsociable hours and the low ratio of nanny to children may mean that this type of childcare is comparatively expensive, but the terms and conditions are entirely between the parents, as the employer, and the nanny as the employee.
- Nanny Information is difficult to keep up to date

Feedback from Parents/Carers

- Childcare isn't available at the time that parents need it.
- Little choice in the types of childcare available and the services offered
- Problems of childcare only being available if there is enough demand
- Childcare is too expensive.
- Some parents don't know where to find information about financial assistance for Childcare.
- Lack of Welsh language provision
- Very little Welsh spoken in settings that would describe themselves as Bilingual and the Welsh that is spoken is of a poor standard
- Lack of holiday care for older children

- Lack of Out of School Clubs. Concerns with transport to Out of School Clubs
- Children may not be able to attend activity clubs at local schools as they attend an Out of School Club in a different village
- No Secondary schools have Out of School Clubs
- Care for children with disabilities
- Lack of wrap around care for 2 – 3 year olds
- Not able to access Early Years Education due to cost of wrap around care
- Need for Kids Kamps for younger children
- Cost of After school care – may have to pay for the full session whereas they may only use an hour of the session
- Lack of childcare in rural areas and sustainability of schools and Childcare services
- Criticism of the Tax Credit system
- Little financial assistance for parents who work full time

Foundation Phase

- Parents did not fully understand or know about the scheme
- Additional costs to parents
- Additional demands on settings
- No increase in funding to settings since the scheme began

Flying Start

- It is not a universal service open to all families throughout Conwy and to children of all ages. FIS reports many enquiries from families who would benefit from the Flying Start initiative but unfortunately do not live in the appropriate postcode area

Working Tax Credits

- Employer supported childcare vouchers are offered by very few employers.
- People do not know about the childcare element of the working tax credit, unsure if they are eligible, and some may find the process complicated.

The way forward

Conwy County Borough Council will continue to work with the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership to address the issues highlighted in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and continue to deliver on the action plan.