

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014-2015**

**CABINET**

**23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014**

**REPORT OF: Group Director Children and Community Services**

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**Childcare Sufficiency Audit 2014 - 2017**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. To agree the Childcare Sufficiency Audit 2014-2017 (the 'CSA') for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the proposed Childcare Development Delivery Plan for implementation.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- 2.1. Note the contents of this report;
- 2.2. Agree the Childcare Sufficiency Audit 2014-2017, as attached at Appendix 1 to this report; and
- 2.3. Agree the implementation of the Childcare Development Delivery Plan attached at Appendix 2 to this report, within available resources.

**3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. Local Authorities have a lead role in facilitating the childcare market, to ensure it meets the needs of working parents, especially those on low incomes, those with disabled children and those requiring childcare through the medium of Welsh.
- 3.2. Section 22(1) of the Childcare Act 2006 sets out the Council's duty to secure as far as is reasonably practicable that the provision of childcare (whether or not by it) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in its area who require childcare in order to enable them to work, remain in work or enter training.

- 3.3. When considering the sufficiency of childcare, Cabinet must have specific regard to the matters set out in section 22(2)(a) of the 2006 Act (i.e. childcare in respect of which the childcare element of working tax credit is payable; the provision of childcare in respect of which an amount in respect of childcare costs may be included under section 12 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 in the calculation of Universal Credit; the provision of childcare which is suitable for disabled children and the provision of childcare involving the use of the Welsh language).
- 3.4. This Council is also required by regulations made under the 2006 Act to prepare assessments of the sufficiency of the provision of childcare in its area and to review any such assessments prepared by it. The current regulations are The Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- 3.5. The Council is also under a duty to have regard to Welsh Government guidance on how it discharges the duties set out above. The current applicable guidance is the 2008 guidance (WAGC 013/2008, Guidance to Local Authorities – Childcare Act 2006). That guidance stipulates that the intention of the duties is to ensure parents are able to access childcare locally which meets their needs and enables them to make a choice about work.
- 3.6. Paragraph 2.7 of that guidance states that:-
- “To fulfil its Childcare Act duty, the Local Authority will need to assess the local childcare market to develop a realistic and robust picture of parents’ current and future need for childcare. The Local Authority will compare this assessment of parents’ demand for childcare with information about the current and planned availability of childcare places.”
- 3.7. Childcare for an area cannot be judged as sufficient unless it meets the needs of the community in general, and the three groups set out in section 22(1) in particular. Paragraph 2.14 of the guidance goes on to state that: -
- “Local Authorities are required to secure childcare of sufficient duration and reliability to enable parents to make a real choice about work. Local Authorities are required to act to secure sufficient childcare that is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.”
- 3.8. As part of these duties a Childcare Sufficiency Audit must be completed on a triennial basis, complemented by an annual refresh. The CSA, attached at Appendix 1 to this report, is the third full childcare sufficiency audit produced by Rhondda Cynon Taf and the outcomes are critical for the forward planning of childcare, workforce development and Flying Start Services. It is the triennial plan applicable for the period 2014-2017.
- 3.9. Welsh Government provide, an annual Out of School Childcare Grant to support the work required for the CSA and to support the development and sustainability of local childcare. The annual grant is worth £165K per annum and is used for training, commissioned support, assisted places and grants to providers. Over the past few years, the grant has been used

to develop play care services during school holiday periods, which provides very affordable childcare for working parents as well as open access play for children.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF THE 2014-2017 CSA**

- 4.1. The number of childcare vacancies in Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to grow, with more and more families using part time childcare augmented with family support.
- 4.2. Although two day nurseries (including a Welsh medium nursery) have closed since the last childcare sufficiency audit, two new nurseries have opened in recent weeks, within close proximity of existing nurseries. Officers of the Early Years department are looking to work as consultees with the Council's Planning Department on applications for new nurseries to ensure the appropriate development of childcare facilities in response to fluctuating demand within the County Borough.
- 4.3. Council funded services for holiday care and play provision for disabled children are in high demand throughout the authority. Although demand is great we can usually meet the needs of most children/families albeit on a restricted basis but it is difficult to determine whether this support is required to enable parents to work, to provide respite during school holiday periods or in many cases, to prevent family breakdown. Irrespective of the purpose these are popular services with families, children and social workers.
- 4.4. Holiday care for all children is in demand and we strive to develop more play care services, which is open access play wrapped in childcare. As the open access play is free to all children over the age of five, and those parents wanting full childcare pay for the wrap around element only, this provides an affordable form of holiday childcare for working parents.
- 4.5. Wherever possible third sector organisations are encouraged to tender for Flying Start ('FS') childcare contracts and in the main this is how we deliver the children's entitlement to free FS childcare. FS has therefore made a significant contribution to the sustainability of childcare providers although some have struggled to meet the exacting standards required for FS. In some areas – especially in deprived areas - no tenders were submitted, so existing local authority nurseries are being maximised to meet the FS needs on a full cost recovery basis.
- 4.6. In some areas particularly in the south of the authority, the demand for nursery education places exceeds the places available in local schools. To meet this need, Welsh Government funding is used to fund part time nursery education places with registered education providers who have been approved by the RCT Registered Education Provider Approval Panel (REPAP). This service provides approximately 400 additional nursery education places per annum from the term following the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Currently there are 19 registered education providers with a further 5 currently going through the registration process. This service helps the sustainability of third sector providers but requires a lot more

from providers especially as once registered, the setting is subject to ESTYN Inspection at the same level as provision in schools.

- 4.7. Overall, the favoured providers of childcare locally continue to be friends and family with many parents choosing to return to work on reduced hours rather than full time. This restricts the demand for full time childcare and the CSA supports our assertion that in most areas there is a surplus of day care places but more holiday care is required. There are a few electoral divisions mainly in the South of the authority where additional childcare services are required but several providers are currently going through the registration process with CSSIW in order to deliver FS childcare. This will be delivered via a mixed economy and therefore additional fee paying childcare will be available for working parents who may not be entitled to FS.
- 4.8. The 2014-15 CSA Childcare Development Delivery Plan, attached at Appendix 2 to this report, identifies eleven key priorities that will drive our partnership work over the next three years to ensure that there is even more childcare available in areas of identified need and the sustainability of existing childcare businesses is supported more effectively:
- Childcare Sufficiency Audit 3 year full audit to be carried out and submitted to WG.
  - To ensure there is sufficient, affordable childcare available to meet the needs of working / training parents and those wishing to return to work including those in minority and ethnic groups.
  - Ensure there is sufficient Welsh medium childcare in areas where there is an evidenced unmet need.
  - To liaise with the Planning Department as consultees in respect of planning applications for provision of childcare facilities where supply and demand in any particular area of the County Borough may be at issue.
  - Work collaboratively with Job Centre Plus to ensure lack of childcare is not a barrier to employment.
  - Increase the number of childcare settings registered with CSSIW
  - Improve the quality of information held on the FIS database about available childcare
  - Ensure there is sufficient integrated childcare for disabled children, or those with additional emotional / learning needs.
  - Children have their needs met within high quality childcare provision
  - Children entitled to Flying Start are able to access the childcare component within their local community

- Pre-school childcare providers are engaged in and delivering the Healthy Pre-Schools Initiative

4.9 In addition to these priorities, the Early Years and Family Support Service is in the process of carrying out a detailed study and analysis of the childcare needs of families who could be affected by any future change to nursery school admissions and/or the duration of the nursery class day. This will include a comprehensive mapping exercise on a school by school basis.

## 5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1. Currently Rhondda Cynon Taf is well placed with its existing childcare provision to meet the needs of most working parents but there are several challenges to be considered and if practicable to be addressed:

- Increase in holiday care places required.
- Identify means of further supporting working parents of disabled children with affordable childcare.
- Communicate with potential Childcare providers who may wish to establish day nurseries in a particular area of the County Borough where there may be issues of supply and demand.
- How do we encourage and support more providers to deliver services which are delivered across atypical hours?
- How can we best support providers who are facing serious sustainability issues?

5.2 It is considered that these challenges could be most appropriately addressed through implementation of the Childcare Development Delivery Plan, within available resources.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

as amended by

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**CABINET**

**23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 2014**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**REPORT**

**Childcare Sufficiency Audit (CSA) 2014 - 2017**

Background Papers

Legislative Framework

Childcare Act 2006

Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment) (Wales)  
Regulations 2013

WAGC 013/2008, Guidance to Local Authorities – Childcare  
Act 2006

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