

# GAPS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## Gap Analysis & Areas for Improvement

Overall, the quality and availability of childcare in Newport is good and sufficient to meet the needs of most families. Whilst COVID-19 did cause extreme challenge for the sector, there has been only one full day care close as a direct result of the pandemic and that resulted in a loss of However, there are some gaps in the provision that have been identified and will be addressed in the action plan.

### Welsh medium childcare provision

There is a limited number of Welsh Language provisions within Newport, with all settings being sessional and none offering full day care for working parents. There are no Welsh medium childminders or full day nursery's available within the city. According to the SASS data there is one Welsh medium sessional provision in each of the Shaftesbury and St Julians Wards. There has since been a Cylch Meithrin open in Caerleon. The SASS data showed no Welsh medium out of hours provision although information from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid's Club showed there is one setting based within a Welsh medium school.

Information from Flying Start showed there is 1 Welsh Medium setting in Ringland that have spaces available.

Information from Open Access Play shows that there is one welsh medium provision that is in Pillgwenlly offering registered childcare through holidays.

Childcare provision for different language categories

According to the SASS data for childminders, full day nursery, out of hours and sessional provision only 2% is of Welsh Medium. The majority of settings, 91% identify themselves as English medium with 5% as English with some bilingual elements. A further 1% identified themselves as using other languages, namely Chinese, Dutch, Polish and Spanish.

### Areas for improvement

- ✓ Promote the benefits of choosing Welsh Medium Childcare and Education
- ✓ Develop childcare and play services through the medium of Welsh
- ✓ Promote childcare and play as career options within Welsh Medium schools and colleges

### Childcare provision for children of parents who work atypical hours

Settings offer a good range of operating hours and according to the SASS data some childminders work extended hours and weekends. However, there is very limited choice across the city. Feedback from consultations with PaCE and local parents stated that lack of childcare at weekends is a barrier to accessing work. The vast majority of childcare in Newport occurs between the hours of 8am and 6pm. There are varying patterns of open and close times between service types with the most variation appearing in childminding services as quite often they accommodate those parents with more fluctuating work patterns.

Based on the SASS data there is a good variety of services available, however provisions are limited for parents who work atypical hours. Childminders tend to offer more flexible opening hours and accommodate the majority of atypical workers. The average start time of childminding services is between 06:30am and 07:00am. There are some childminders that work longer hours and show flexibility for parents with a small percentage (16%) of childminders starting at 6am and finishing as late as 6.30pm. Anecdotally, some childminders have told the Local Authority that they will consider closing later for those parents who need it but this is on a case by case basis. We currently have 3 childminders offering weekend care in the city, but weekend care isn't shown to be in high demand currently. There are no childcare providers who offer overnight care in Newport. The parental survey did not show high demand for weekend and overnight care.

Day nursery settings opened at various times across the city with 9% offering childcare from 7am with the majority closing at 6pm. Sessional day care is less flexible with only 1 setting offering wrap around care and a total of 2 offering lunch sessions. There are no nanny's on the approval scheme in Newport which may offer parents more flexibility when working atypical hours.

From the parental survey, responses linked to time and availability centred around 'The childcare available is not flexible enough for my needs' (13.82%)

And 'Childcare times are unsuitable' (10.14%) which is a relatively low rate of response. However, when asked about parental satisfaction, 'Extended Opening hours' in the morning (24.24%) and evening (24.24%), and 'more flexibility (ad hoc care)' (24.24%) were indicated as the second most common reason for being unsatisfied with their childcare. Whilst we can see that there may be a disparity between current atypical hours and demand, the response rate for the parental survey is not representative of the whole population, therefore caution should be used when interpreting the demand for extended hours.

Local Authority officers who regularly engage with the sector have worked with providers to become more flexible with their opening times. Flexibility of service times largely depends on planning permission, premises overheads, insurance cover and staffing costs versus demand to make it viable for the business to accommodate. The main reason for childcare services provided to the Local Authority anecdotally through network meetings has been that there is not enough consistent demand for services before 8am or after 6pm to cover the costs of running the extended hours.

From FIS enquiries, parents tell us that whilst they require childcare atypical hours of childcare, often they are not prepared to pay the additional costs that this would generate and so find alternative ways to have their children looked after (Friends and Family 45% term time 52% holiday time)

## Areas for improvement

- ✓ Work closely with the public to understand the actual demand for extended hours in the context of having to pay for the service should it be provided.
- ✓ Work with the sector to understand the challenges in providing extended opening hours.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will also need to outline childcare needs which are not being met in the Local Authority area, including those which relate to the:

### **Types of childcare available**

From the data received through the SASS in relation to waiting list and vacancies it appears that there is sufficient provision of childminders, full day nursery, sessional and out of hours across the city. However, as stated previously the data is not consistent and therefore any assessment made on this data alone, must be tempered by the results of consultation and local knowledge. An analysis of queries received by the Family Information Service shows that there are some pockets where childcare choices are limited. For example, in Lliswerry, Pillgwenlly and Bettws there are very limited provision in all service types. There are no childminders in Pillgwenlly or Bettws. There is also limited full day nursery care and sessional care in these areas. Furthermore, maintained education places for rising 3's reduces in the second and third terms due to the September intake. Non maintained settings, in the main are able to accommodate any shortfall in maintained places; however, in the areas mentioned above, non-maintained education places are in limited supply. This, in part, is due to the financial challenge private sector childcare would face if developed in these areas. The areas identified are largely flying start (high population of ethnic minority families, high economic inactivity and low-income families) therefore; eligible families receive free childcare through Flying Start, private sector community playgroups have subsequently closed leaving little to no 'paid for' childcare places servicing the area. If investment was made in supporting private childcare in these areas, the long term sustainability of childcare would not be practicable. This is an area for monitoring as we move towards the 30 hours childcare offer. The childcare offer could give us an opportunity for developing private childcare provision in these areas of deprivation but should still be approached with caution.

According to data there is a sufficient out of hour's provision across the City with the exception of after-school care for children with a special need. As an authority we are aware that there is a need for an after school provision for children with special needs in the Gaer area of the city.

Open access provision is available during the school holidays with only 5 registered settings (subject to staff availability). Other settings are limited to 2 hours which is not considered as childcare and is not suitable for working parents. Feedback from parents showed that suitable childcare during holidays was limited and the operation hours of some holiday clubs did not always suit working parents.

According to the Play Sufficiency Assessment, while the consultation carried out gave an overall positive perception of Play opportunities in Newport, there are areas that have been identified as needing improvement, such as staffed provision. Furthermore, there is a strong indication that parents are wary about their children accessing play opportunities other than those close to home or with adult supervision. In addition, it would be beneficial to carry out a similar consultation with children and young people, in order to establish whether their interpretations of Play opportunities mirror or contradict those of the adults consulted with.

When considering where the children go to play, the overwhelming majority indicated either their own, or a friend's, house garden or a fixed play area, with the response rate being 75.2% and 70% and 58.1% respectively. Afterschool and youth clubs were indicated as the least likely place for children to Play, which would suggest that an increase in quality staffed provision would be an area that needs to improve. However, this could be down to interpretation of afterschool clubs/youth clubs as childcare not Play space, in which case, the emphasis should be on informed promotion of staffed Play provision.

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There are currently 2 nannies that are registered on the CIW approval scheme within Newport and have no other information on other nannies that may be working but **are** not registered on the approval list. The Nannies who are registered with the approval scheme indicated that they would permit FIS to contact them, but they declined to answer the information requested. Traditionally, Nannies support one or two families at a time and do not provide a significant amount of care that could be classified as statistically applicable to the rest of the sector.

Childminders are key to offering essential wrap around services in areas that are lacking in Out of School provision. Grants provided by Newport City Council are available to support the development, sustainability and quality of childminders. PACEY Cymru acknowledge the support also offered to Disabled Children.

Newport City Council

Newport LA also offer a Disabled Children Grant up to the value of £300 which childminders can access to:

- support childcare providers in enhancing their environment by offering equipment for routine care that enables them to meet the needs of disabled children
- support childcare providers who may need specific training for an additional need in their setting
- support childcare providers in enhancing their environment and promoting full participation of children with disabilities by offering equipment for play and learning that is accessible to all
- support childcare settings in enhancing their sensory equipment or rooms

The parental demand survey showed that over half of the respondents (56%) said that they know where to find out information about childcare. This an improvement on previous CSA's however, we will continue to raise the profile of Newport Family Information Service by working closely with Data Unit Wales on the promotion of the DEWIS Cymru, the FIS Wales website and the National FIS network who work alongside Welsh Government colleagues.

### Areas for improvement

- ✓ Improve the preschool provision available through the medium of Welsh.
  - ✓ Increase provisions during school holidays to help working parents to access full day care.
  - ✓ Promote the nanny approval scheme to allow parents to access flexible childcare and be able to access the childcare part of working tax credits. This could help support parents working non typical hours.
  - ✓ Marketing strategy for digital inclusion and promoting the Family Information Service within communities.
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- **Age of children for whom childcare is available**

Data shows that childcare is available for children of all ages. Childminders can care for children from 0-17 years. Data shows that very few settings care for children aged 12-14 years and there appears to be no demand for childcare for children over the age of 15 years.

There are no significant areas for improvement.

- **Affordability of childcare**

Affordability of childcare is highlighted as a barrier by parents, employers and stake holders. 61.5% of parents who completed the survey agreed with the comment that childcare was too expensive.

The Data received from the parent's questionnaires indicated that just over 66% of parents claimed tax free childcare and 21% claimed Universal credits / tax credits. According to the consultation with employers the take-up of tax free voucher schemes amongst parents is high.

The concept of affordability is often subjective which makes meeting demand for affordable childcare challenging. Sustainability if childcare businesses need to be factored in when considering affordability, as the more "affordable" you make childcare, the more financial pressure you place on the financial health of a business a business. The result of putting pressure upon sustainability within the childcare market can lead to failing businesses, increased financial intervention from the local authority and/or 3rd sector partners which will inevitably end in loss of childcare places.

Whilst quality is a major factor for choosing childcare, price, understandably, remains a high causal factor which could lead to use of unregulated, cheaper alternative sources of childcare. In Newport we don't have a high number of unregulated childcare, but sports camps and unregistered out of school clubs are available after school and during school holidays. Whilst running unregistered may reduce the running costs, quality and wellbeing of children, including safeguarding procedures, is left unregulated. It also doesn't allow parents and carers to use their childcare benefits to help with the costs of childcare.

### Areas for improvement

- ✓ Improve the information available from employers to parents relating to financial assistance and flexibility of childcare
- ✓ Manage public and corporate expectations surrounding childcare affordability, flexibility and accessibility and attempt to balance affordability with sustainability.

- **Location of childcare**

The geographical distribution of childcare in Newport is overall good with pockets of limited choices in some services as noted earlier.

## Areas for improvement

Further work needs to be undertaken with Planning and Housing specifically when large housing developments accommodating 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings are being planned. Any community buildings included in plans for future sites need to consider that childcare could be an intended use for such buildings, therefore accommodating CIW regulations when drawing up building designs is desirable.

- **Childcare and Play workforce**

Arguably, development of future workforce is the key headline finding to be included in the action plan for the next five year period. Workforce challenges have faced the childcare and play sector for several years. Additionally, the pressure that COVID-19 has placed upon the sector has been complex, making recruitment and managing staffing levels very difficult. Whilst this data has been extracted from the SASS for the period 7th June-4th July 2021, workforce issues are ongoing with a critical factor being staff sickness due to COVID isolation and lack of suitably qualified staff within the sector to fill vacancies.

The response to the SASS represents 90.3% of the total childcare and play sector for CIW registered services. There are currently 837 members of staff within those services, with the majority of workforce currently working within the Full Day Care sector.

The number of staff that left the service in the last 12 months totals 131, the number of vacant posts totals 74. It can be assumed that there is a vacancy rate within the childcare and play sector of 56.48%. The data also shows that the number of current vacancies does not always meet the additional staff actually required over the next 24 months (difference of 43% more than the current number of vacancies).

Vacant post rates by provider type are as follows:

Full Day Care	32.3%
Sessional Day Care	14.2%
Out of School	61.9%
Open Access Play	75%

The number of staff within the sector who have Welsh Language skills is generally low. Staff who are fluent Welsh speakers in English Medium settings total 15.43%, whilst staff in Welsh Medium settings total 80%. Whilst the figure as a % looks good, local knowledge shows that there are more than 4 staff working over the 2 Cylch Meithrin that were open and eligible to take part in the SASS at the time of the data collection. Work needs to be done to increase the level of Welsh Speakers in the sector to ensure that we can increase the amount of Welsh that children are exposed to, but importantly to ensure that those in



Early Years Welsh medium settings are fully emersed in the language. Recruitment of Welsh Speakers within the sector has historically been complex. There are multiple factors that need to be considered when analysing the Welsh Workforce and specifically recruitment of Welsh Speaking childcare and play staff. This has been raised with the Welsh Education Forum and actions within the Welsh Education Strategic Plan have been included.

### **Area for improvement**

Whilst the data shows that there is further capacity within childcare places available for children on the waiting list, and even future demand, the challenges around recruitment and retention are preventing those places from being utilised.

- ✓ More work needs to be done locally and nationally to encourage more people into the sector, and more needs to be done to recognise the childcare and play workforce in terms of pay and professionalism of qualifications. This issue has been elevated up to Welsh Government level and Newport is represented on the relevant workforce strategy groups.
- ✓ Develop a workforce strategy for Early Years to be running alongside the CSA action plan
- ✓ Work with Careers and Colleges to encourage more students to take Childcare and Play qualifications
- ✓ Work with employability programmes to promote childcare and play as a viable option for a career path