



Executive Summary

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council carried out its full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in March 2011, this report is the Annual Refresh 2012 of the Sufficiency Assessment."

Under the Childcare Act 2006, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare for the needs of working parents/carers in their area for children up to 14 years of age or 18 in the case of children with disabilities.

A core element of this duty is to complete a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years, with an Annual Refresh, which assesses the supply of, and demand for, childcare in the local authority and identifies any gaps in provision. The statutory guidance on undertaking a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment also recommends that an action plan is also developed to help address the identified sufficiency gaps.

The childcare market in Blaenau Gwent is still relatively new. Until 10 years ago there were only 114 childcare places within the Authority and no quality assurance procedures, workforce development and other schemes relating to the childcare non-maintained early years sector. The Authority now has 1491 registered childcare places and a record 83 childcare providers.

Despite this success, according to the Blaenau Gwent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011, there is still room for growth in the sector within the Authority, as many parents stated in our consultation 2010, that they were not yet using childcare because they were unaware of early years opportunities, funding and the benefits of using childcare and therefore used parents and extended family as the predominant child carers. Awareness Raising is Priority 1 in the 3 year Action Plan.

The Blaenau Gwent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) 2011 provides a detailed analysis of supply of childcare in Blaenau Gwent. Although the childcare market is a rapidly growing sector in Blaenau Gwent, it is a sector that faces many challenges in relation to sustainability. The settings are non-maintained and have a reliance on parents fees with some receive minimal grant funding to supplement these fees. Blaenau Gwent also has one of the highest employment rates of all Authorities in Wales which also in turn impacts of demand for childcare.

The above factors all contribute towards the level and intensity of support that is required for the childcare sector in Blaenau Gwent to ensure its success.

As part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Refresh 2012/2013, key statistics have been identified and reviewed in light of their potential impact on the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent.

The demand side of the CSA 2011 predicted a slight increase in the birth rate for 2012, this was a correct prediction with the number of births from 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2011 standing at 794 (Aneurin Bevan Health Board data). An increase of 29 births on 2010 data. This implies the latest data demonstrates that birth rates in Blaenau Gwent are slowly beginning to go up again.

In terms of live births by sub Local Authority area no new data is available and this will not be available until the census figures are available for 2011. No new data is available for live births for teenage parents by sub Local Authority area, although the overall number of births within Blaenau Gwent are decreasing for this group.

Supply data shows that there is an increase once again in the number of registered childcare settings in Blaenau Gwent which went up in 2011/12 by 129 places. The growing number of childcare places shows that awareness of childcare in Blaenau Gwent is raising and the culture is shifting, beyond that of using family and friends as primary childcarers.

The previous Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011 reported that in March 2011 there were 218 places with day nurseries and now there are 260. There were 213 places at holiday clubs and there are now 241 and there were 516 places with playgroups and meithrins and there are now 564. This shows that there has been an increase in the total number of registered settings and also vacancy rates overall have dropped. This shows that the economic downturn and recession has not yet had a detrimental effect on the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent. The childcare market in Blaenau Gwent has risen year on year for 10 years and still continues to do so.

The childcare roadshows and marketing programme in 2011 were designed to raise awareness of childcare and the associated benefits with parents, may have had an effect on the number of parents requiring childcare and/or the amount of childcare; meaning that more childcare is needed overall.

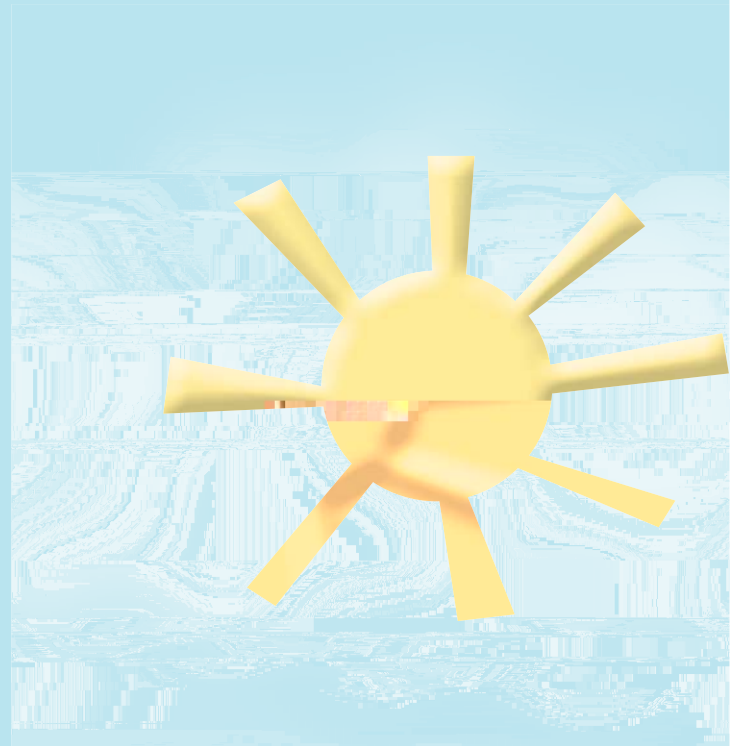
In terms of the spread of childcare, it is useful to consider the location of registrations and resignations across the Authority. Although a few settings have resigned childcare registration there has been an increase overall. This data shows that the current distribution of childminders and settings is fairly similar to that reported previously. However, some further consideration may need to be given to the low numbers of childminders in Blaina and Cwm/Waunlwyd, although this is covered in the 3 year Action Plan.

The economic downturn and recession may have had an effect on the number of parents requiring childcare overall in the UK but seems to have little effect on BG with the market still growing. However, the current recession is clearly having a short term impact in terms of the affect locally on jobs and business profitability. The lonb in term Theh9smpacmic downtv anthis wransfe m may fect irll mrequiwort



Acknowledgements

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council would like to thank colleagues in partner organisations and agencies for their contributions to the Annual Refresh 2011/12.



Compiled by Childcare Strategy Team, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Education and Leisure Services Directorate
If you have any comments concerning this report please contact Ceri.Bird@Blaenau-Gwent.gov.uk

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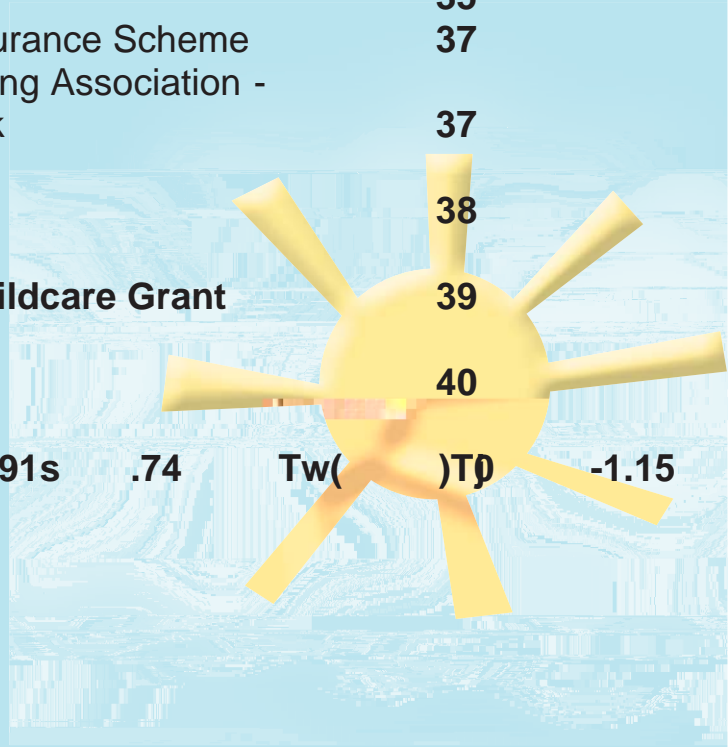


Contents Page

1.	Introduction	9
2.	Review of the Local Childcare Market	10
2.1	Demand: - Factors affecting demand for childcare	10
2.2	Background	10
2.3	Birth Data	11
2.4	Employment Data	12
2.5	Housing Developments	15
2.6	Child Poverty Initiatives	16
2.7	Demand Conclusion	19
3	Review of Supply of Childcare	20
3.1	Wards within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – Map of Wards	21
3.2	Analysis of Supply Summary	22
3.3	Number of registered providers	22
3.4	Total free provision	23
4	Number of places	23
4.1	Number of registered places by setting type	23
5.	Vacancies Places by age range	24
5.1	Total number of vacancies 0-17 years	24
5.2	Comparison figures 2010-2011	26
5.3	Breakdown by ward places vacancies 0-7 Years	27
5.4	Breakdown by ward places vacancies 8-17 Years	28
5.5	Breakdown of ward vacancies places by Age Category and Languages Spoken	29
6	Funded Places	32
6.1	Nursery Places for 3 and 4 Year provision	32

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"
"
"
"
"
"
"
"

7	Quality				34
7.1	Quality Assurance				34
7.2	Pre-School Playgroup and Day Nursery Quality Assurance				35
7.3	Out of School Club Quality Assurance Scheme				37
7.4	National Association Childminding Association - Blaenau Gwent Quality Network				37
8.	Workforce Development				38
9.	Community Focus School Childcare Grant				39
10.	Welsh Medium Childcare				40
11.	BME/Ethnic Minorit37	Tc91s	.74	Tw()T0	-1.15



1. Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 requires every Local Authority in Wales to conduct a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The aim of this assessment is to provide Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council with the information it needs to identify gaps in the childcare market and plan the steps to secure sufficient childcare places. In this context, 'sufficient' means having the right type and the right volume of childcare places to meet the needs of all parents/carers in the local community, but with a particular focus on meeting the needs of families with children with disabilities, Welsh speaking households and those who are in work or who are seeking work.

The Welsh Government requires each Local Authority to provide a full

2.2 Birth Data

The following table shows the difference between births predicted in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011 and actual births throughout 2011.

AREA	Increase Births	Decrease Births
Abertillery		2 children down



particular benefits; most extensive impacts are likely to be experienced in those areas with highest levels of existing benefit claiming.

There is potential for increase in demand for childcare particularly, as a result of changes to welfare benefits for lone parents. According to the ONS Annual Population Survey, the rate of unemployment in Blaenau Gwent remained reasonably steady over a two year period from July 09 to June 2011 – falling slightly from 13.8% to 13.6% of the economically active population. However, this is considerably higher than the all-Wales figure, which rose slightly from 8.1% to 8.5% over the same period.

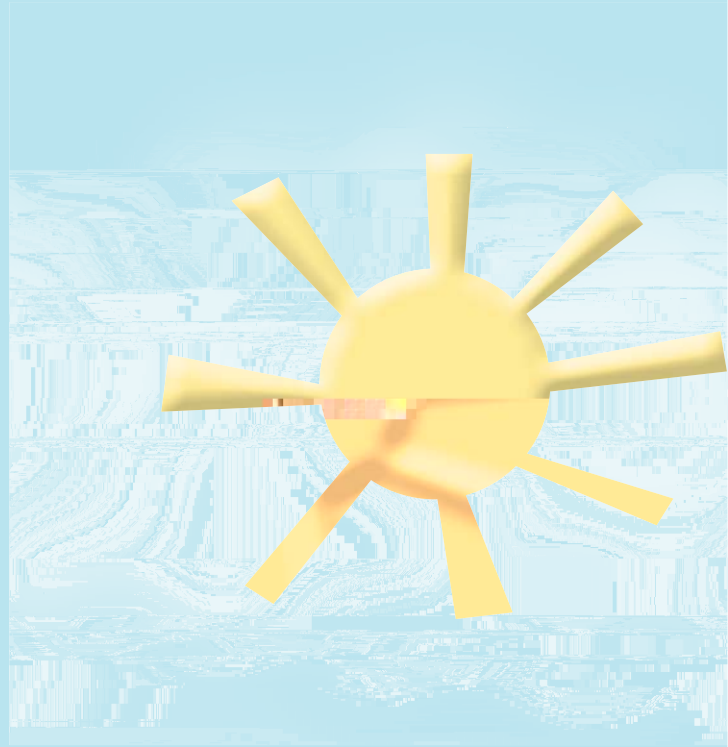
Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service reports that calls from parents asking for advice because of changes in welfare reform have remained reasonably static over the last two/three years. Data collected from Genesis and School gates employment initiatives for parents in Blaenau Gwent confirm this. It is estimated changes are to come, with the lowering to 5 years for transition from IS to JSA, and more work focused interviews from when the child is 1 year, will have more of an impact on demand for childcare.

The local economy is not providing enough employment opportunities for all age groups across the economy as a whole. In Blaenau Gwent and the vacancy rate is 1 to every 13 JSA claimants. Across all areas, locally and nationally numbers of notified vacancies have fallen considerably with levels in 2010 and 2011 being the lowest since 2007.

Quarterly JSA figures released by the Department of Work and Pensions reveal that the proportion of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance rose slightly from 6.5% of the working age population in May 2010 to 6.8% in 2011. In comparison, the Welsh average rose from 3.6% to 3.7% over the same period.

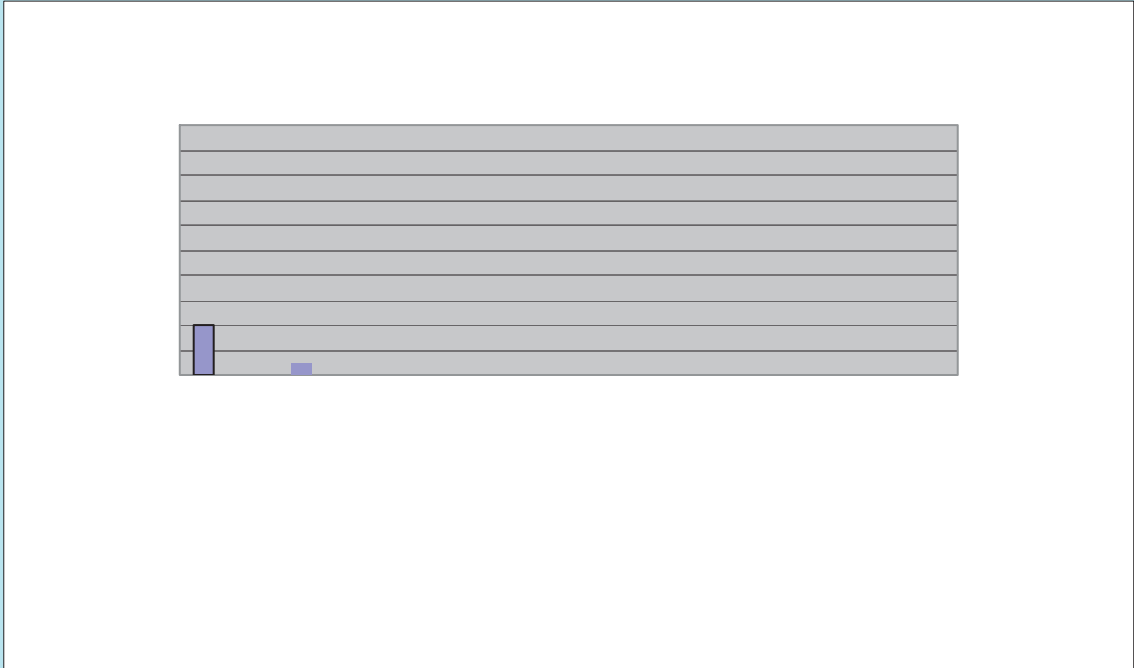
**Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Count by Local Authority.
(Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and RCT)**

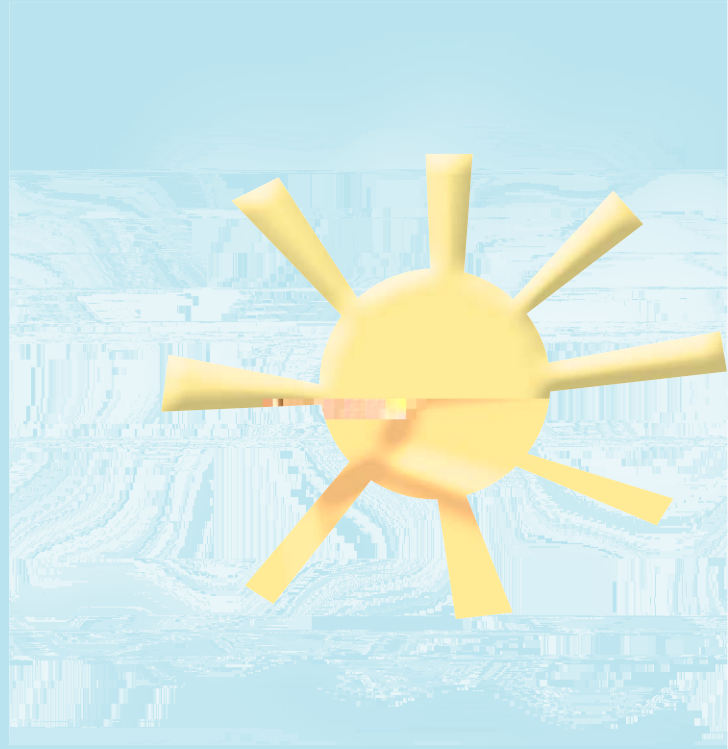
LA	JSA Dec 07	JSA Feb 11	JSA July 11	JSA Aug 11	JSA Sept 11	JSA Oct 11	JSA Nov 11	JSA Dec 11	JSA Jan 12	JSA Feb 12	JSA % W age pop Jan JSA %
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2.5 New Housing Developments since CSA 2011

There has been no major housing developments put forward in the past year that would affect the demand for childcare within Blaenau Gwent please see below.





1. reduce the number of families living in workless households;
2. improve the skills of parents and young people living in low income households so they can secure well-paid employment; and
3. reduce inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

The strategy aims to give a clear account of what the Welsh Government can achieve in helping to reduce poverty during the next three years (2011 to 2014). The strategy also responds to the changing UK fiscal climate, and sets out a distinctive Welsh approach to the provision of public services that can address the long-term root causes of poverty, and alleviate some of the more damaging impacts of poverty in the short term.

Quality childcare has an important role in tackling child poverty and it is important that Government is aware of the work of childminders and how this work is helping children and families across Wales.

Yes there are no new gaps to date and this annual refresh enforces the current 3 year action plan.

In general are gaps widening or getting smaller?

Gaps are getting smaller year on year because of the intense amount of work being carried out in the childcare sector by the EYDCP, and the rate that registered childcare places are increasing.

New gaps emerging?

No, the development of “The Works” which will see major parts of its work completed in 2012/13 was already planned for in the 3 year Strategic Plan.

Work does need to be carried out to encourage new childminders to the Blaina/Cwm/Waunlwyd area but sustainability must also be looked at as there are so many other childcare options available.

3.0 Review of Supply of Childcare

This analysis of the supply of childcare is based on data collected from providers and held at Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service as at 31st December 2011 unless otherwise stated.

In order to carry out this refresh, all registered childcare providers have been given the opportunity in reviewing the information we currently hold on them, allowing them to provide comments on the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent for this analysis.

It shows data relating to both provision registered with CSSIW and unregistered provision.

Data is presented for Blaenau Gwent Borough as a whole as well as localities. Further details are available on request.



4 Number of places

4.1 Total number of registered places by setting type within the borough

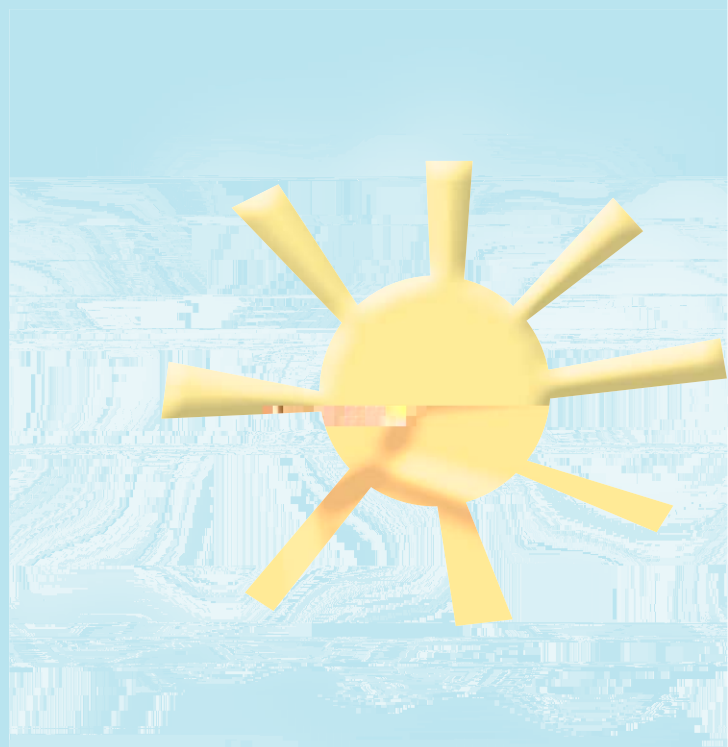
Chart 2

Provider Type	Registered Places 2010	Registered Places 2011
After School Club		
Breakfast Club		
Childminder		
Creche		
Day Nursery		



Chart 4 Number of vacancies for children aged 0-17

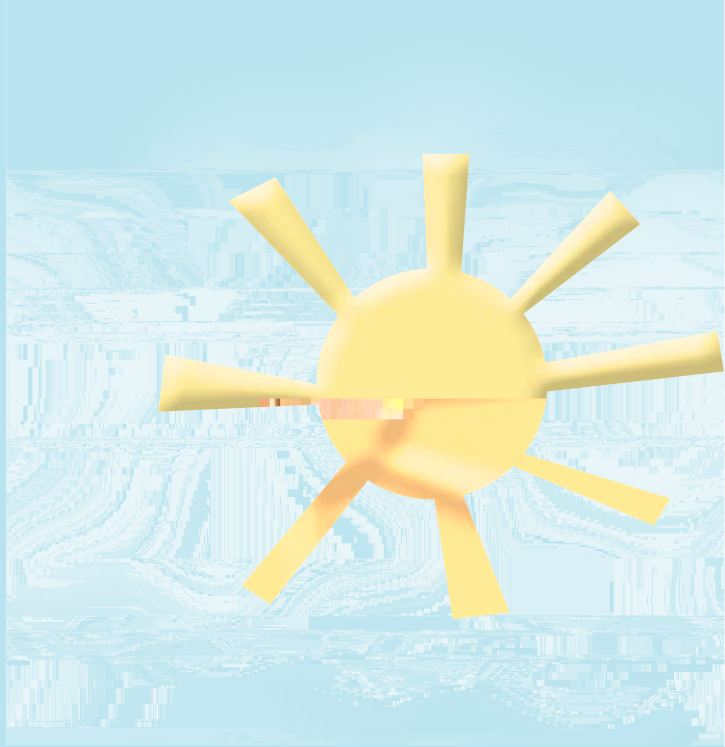
Political Ward Description	Provider Type Description	Over 18 Months To 5 Years
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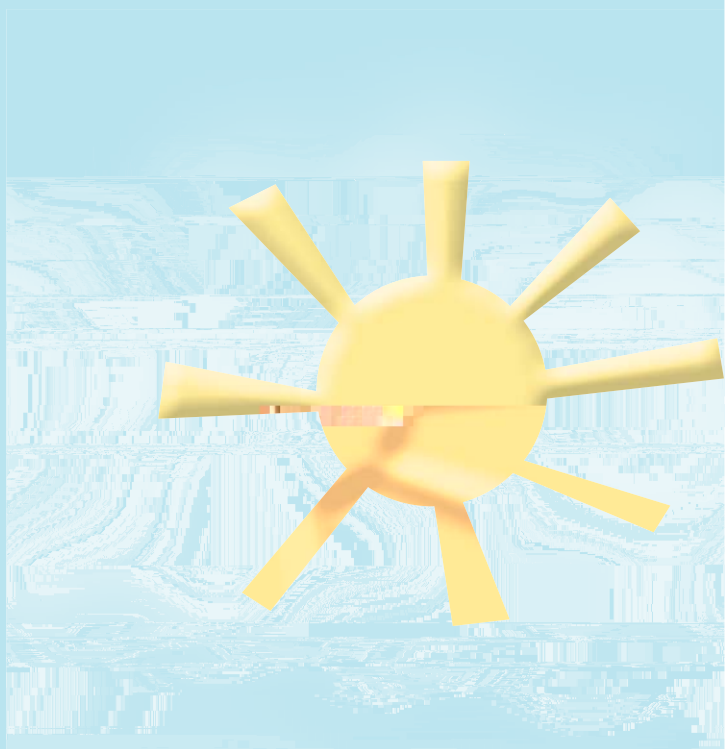


5.2 Comparison Figures 2010 – 2011

Chart 5 Changes in Childcare since 2011







7 Quality

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7.1 Quality Assurance

High quality childcare improves the life chances of all children – especially disadvantaged children and children from poorer homes with fewer life opportunities. High quality childcare gives children a great start in life, both educationally and socially. Research shows good preschool education between the ages of 2-5 years helps children achieve more in school, at primary level and even beyond. Findings published by the Institute of Education (2008) show that children's achievements in language, reading and numeracy increased in proportion to the number of months they spent in preschool.

Research also shows that for some children, long hours spent in poor quality childcare may not be beneficial. For this reason Blaenau Gwent EYDCP feel childcare is intrinsically linked to quality and one should not be without the other. It is felt that childcare and quality should be developed alongside each other and not separately.

The development of high quality early years and childcare services is one of the key aims of Blaenau Gwent Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

Blaenau Gwent EYDCP underpins its commity aim Twl1g(one s)TjT*vnt m;ne 3n sceomen – one for each res ofc hildcare

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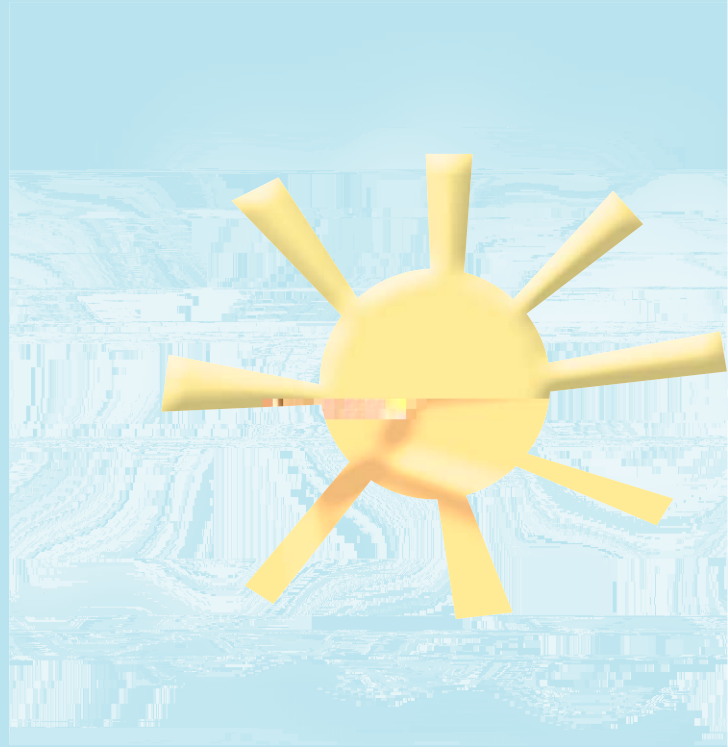
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Blaenau Gwent EYDCP tie in many incentives to promote quality and encourage settings to achieve quality assurance e.g. we market, promote and



Provider Type Description	FIS Provider Name	Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance	Date Achieved	National Quality Assurance	Date Achieved	3 Year Educational Provider
	Butterflies Day Nursery	Working towards				

Chart 10 - Quality Assurance Table indicating Quality Assurance within Registered Settings

7.3 Out of School Club Quality Assurance Scheme

There is only 1 registered Holiday Club out of 9 (9%) that has achieved the Blaenau Gwent Out of School Quality Assurance Scheme achieving levels Basic, Advanced and Elite Levels and 1 Holiday Club out of 9 (9%) that has achieved the Basic and Advanced. There is 1 registered After School Club out of 10 (10%) that has also achieved the Blaenau Gwent Out of School Quality Assurance Scheme achieving levels Basic, Advanced and Elite Level and 1 After School Club out of 10 (10%) that has achieved levels Basic and Advanced Level. There are 1 out of 2 (50%) registered breakfast club that has achieved the Blaenau Gwent OOSC Quality Assurance Scheme Basic and Advanced Levels.

2 Registered holiday clubs out of 9 (22.2%) and 1 out of 10 (10%) After School are very close to completing both Basic and Advanced level of Blaenau Gwent OOSC Quality Assurance Scheme.

2 Holiday Clubs out of 9 (22.2%) and 1 After School Club out of 10 (10%) are also working towards their OOSC Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance Scheme.

Out of School Club	Basic	Advanced	Elite
The Loft ASC & HC	Completed	Completed	Completed
Daisy Dell ASC & HC	Completed	Completed	
Festival Dragons HC	Almost Completed	Almost Completed	Working Towards
Puddleducks ASC & HC	Almost Completed	Almost Completed	
Hip Hop ASC & HC	Working Towards	Working Towards	

8. Workforce Development

There is a rolling programme within the EYDCP for workforce development and we are constantly underpinning the movement in, out and upwards within the sector with new students and planning for increased supply and demand.

Workforce Development

As childcare is such a rapidly developing market in Blaenau Gwent, robust professional support for the sector must be of the highest quality. The workforce development and recruitment strategy is responsive and robust. Because of the continuous growth the early years and childcare sector in Blaenau Gwent is a sector that provides continuous employment opportunities.

We have invested substantially in our Early Years and Childcare workforce over the past 8 years and also provide funded continuous professional development for our entire workforce.

Blaenau Gwent EYDCP has a continuous programme of workforce promotion, as we know this is a sector in Blaenau Gwent, which is constantly growing and can provide employment to the Local Community. The EYDCP works closely in partnership with the Genesis Wales Project and Blaenau Gwent School Gates Employment Initiative to attract new students into the workforce with additional support from these projects. Blaenau Gwent EYDCP funds Introduction To Children's Play (OCN) - a taster course for those who maybe interested in a career in Early Years and Childcare. After completion of this 12 week course students can choose to go onto CCLD Level 2 with a work placement in one of our settings, and then most progress onto CCLD 3 and upward to levels 4 or now 5.

As well as providing information and support to those wishing to acquire National Qualifications in childcare, we provide fully funded training courses for childcare workers in Blaenau Gwent covering CSSIW regulations and supporting Continuous Professional Development.

The annual Training Needs Analysis (TNA) carried out at the beginning of each academic year – September, helps us to better understand the need of all childcare providers and forms the basis of deciding what training courses there is need for in the forthcoming year.

Currently within Blaenau Gwent there are 53 holding Level 2, 72 holding Level 3, and 24 holding Level 4 in Early Years Care and Education, we feel it is a very highly qualified workforce. We have ongoing training courses with 26 students working toward the OCN - Introduction to Children's Play. Currently at Coleg Gwent Ebbw Vale campus we have 80 students working toward their Level 2 CCLD and 72 working towards Level 3 CCLD. We also have a further 15 students from identified potential FS areas working towards Level 5 with Aspirations Training, Cardiff in readiness for the Flying Start roll out.

In addition to funding additional childcare places and funding sustainability grants, the CFS childcare grant also supported;

- £ Inclusion Support Package
- £ Training and Workforce Development "
- "
- £ Quality Assurance Scheme for OOSC's
- £ Childcare Roadshow

10 Welsh medium/bilingual childcare provision

The south-east Wales region is predominantly English speaking and includes both urban and rural areas. In recent years, the number of families choosing

In the CSA 2011, out of a survey of over 1000 parents living in Blaenau Gwent, among those families not using childcare, Welsh language provision was one of the least important reasons parents gave for not accessing childcare and may only affect 0.1% of families in Blaenau Gwent. However, contrary feedback from employers and stakeholders (including feedback from the EYDCP and Family Support, Preventative Services, Social Services and Health) suggests that there could be more Welsh language/bilingual provision, and if there is a growing need the market may respond automatically. (N.B. Please refer to Appendix 3 for names of funded non-maintained Welsh-medium settings)

The CSA 2011 also said ;-

14% of employers, strongly agreed that there should be more Welsh language/ bilingual provision.

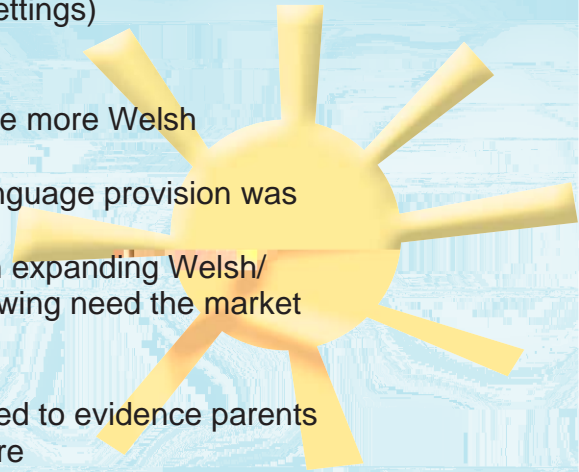
50% of providers consulted felt that bilingual/Welsh language provision was good/excellent

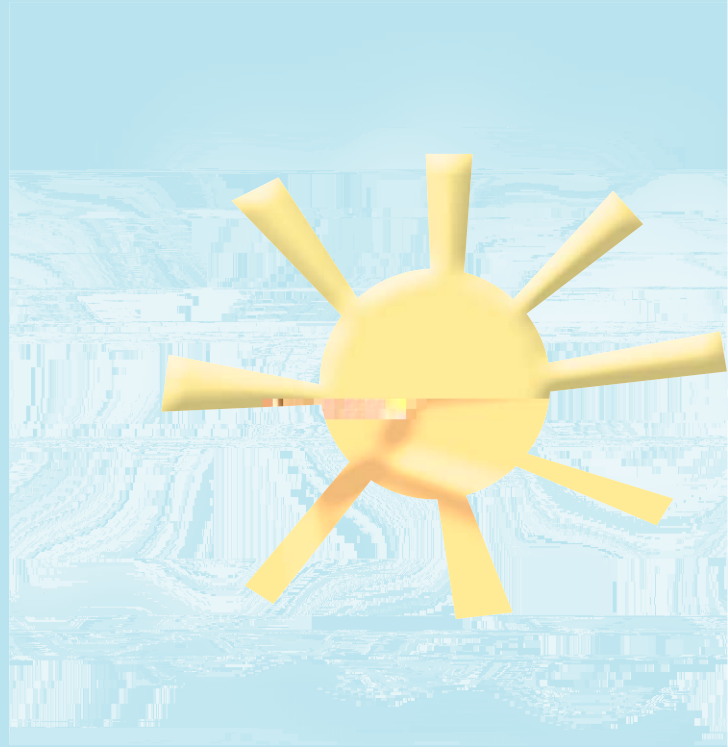
37% stated they had plans in place or are interested in expanding Welsh/ bilingual provision which suggests that if there is a growing need the market may respond automatically.

In the improvements section there was no data collected to evidence parents wanted more improvements in Welsh Medium Childcare

Blaenau Gwent Childcare Strategy Unit and Mudiad Meithrin intend to work more closely with parents in 2012 to investigate why Welsh language provisions was not seen as a priority for preschool childcare and develop a 3 year action plan to support the development of Welsh Medium childcare in Blaenau Gwent. In line with the opening of a new Welsh Medium after school and holiday club at the new Welsh Medium Primary in 2011, which again demand has been very slow for, we aim to identify and market to parents more Welsh Medium childcare options in order to increase demand for provision.

A new meithrin is planned to open in 2012 in the town of Abertillery which is approximately 3 miles away from the new welsh school Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg in Nantyglo. It is hoped that the facilities and opportunities at the new





settings are inclusive of children regardless of their disability and funding is available to support all groups and providers with additional staff through the Blaenau Gwent Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

13.2 Special Needs – Areas of Experience

Type of Provider	Qualified
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14 Flying Start

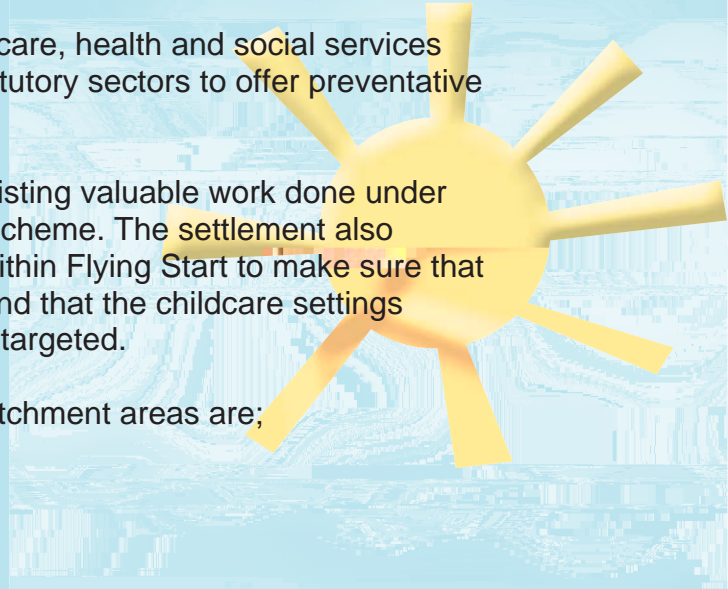
The Welsh Government is committed to doubling the number of children who benefit from Flying Start from 18,000 to 36,000 by the end of the Assembly term, and has made available an additional £55 million over the next three years to support this expansion. This is a significant uplift in the funding available for this programme, particularly in the current economic climate, and marks the Welsh Government's absolute commitment to the Flying Start programme which provides preventative services in the early years.

Flying Start brings together education, childcare, health and social services and combines the voluntary, private and statutory sectors to offer preventative interventions that influence child outcomes.

The scheme builds on and complements existing valuable work done under the Sure Start theme of the Cymorth grant scheme. The settlement also provides for continuing capital investment within Flying Start to make sure that facilities support the high quality required, and that the childcare settings needed are within the disadvantaged areas targeted.

Phase 1 Flying Start - the original school catchment areas are;

- Ø Sirhowy, Tredegar
- Ø Deighton, Tredegar
- Ø Garnlydan, Ebbw Vale
- Ø St Illtyd's, Llanhilleth
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15 Consultation

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15.1 Childcare Providers

All 84 childcare providers were given the opportunity to provide us with their views with regards to the amount or type of childcare within the Borough over the last 12 months. We received feedback from 10 registered providers out of the 84 providers (12%).

Full comments are detailed below:

- £ The Abertillery area is saturated with childcare options. Some groups are struggling with filling their vacancies fewer groups would result in increased sustainability with existing groups. Better Support is required to assist groups with this. (Abertillery Ward)
- £ Childcare providers are increasing more and more each year (Beaufort)
- £ I was once the only childcare provider in my area, now we have seen an increase in the type of provision which has result in me having very few enquiries (Llanhilleth)
- £ Funding cuts in Childcare Tax Credits have had a huge impact on my childcare business (Brynmawr)
- £ My childcare business has suffered due to the Free Breakfast Initiative and After School Club provision (Beaufort)
- £ There is a wide choice of childcare options available (Tredegar)
- £ Business is very quiet with very few enquiries (Brynmawr)
- £ More Private Day Nurseries opening resulting in less business for childminders (Brynmawr).
- £ Concerns for our After School Club with another After School club opening shortly within a short distance of ours (Blaina).
- £ Although there is definitely more competition at the moment. We are still at full capacity. This we feel is a reflection on the reputation we have built as a childcare provider. There is now a very good variety of childcare within the area that meets all the needs of working parents. However more flexible 12-hour service would be an excellent addition (Sirhowy).

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15.2 Professionals including Schools

All Headteachers and Professionals were given the opportunity to provide us with their views with regards to the amount or type of childcare within the Borough over the last 12 months. We only received a response from just five.

Full comments are detailed below:

EYDCP Reponses

Four members out of 26 partners (15%) of the partnership completed the self assessment and provided comments. Comments included:

- € Quality of Childcare has definitely improved due to continuous support, ongoing training to up skill the workforce, experienced staff and settings undertaking Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance and Wales PPA Quality for all schemes.
- € Quality is paramount.
- € Some areas have a lot of representation.
- € Some childcare providers are more flexible than others.
- € Improvements could be made in the type and quality of play opportunities.
- € Costs tend to be lower than average in Wales
- € More choice for parents/carers on the type of childcare to meet their individual needs.
- € Good Quality of childcare currently available.
- € Parents in Blaenau Gwent are supported well in regards to funded programmes for their children.
- € Family Information Service is the general source of obtaining up to date information regarding childcare provision. Providing good information on childcare in the area.

17 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Progress made on 3 year plan

Appendix 2 - Flying Start CSA

