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Torfaen County Borough Council

2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Gaps Analysis report

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Introduction

Section 26 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on all Welsh local authorities to – in partnership with other local (statutory, community and private sector) stakeholders, professionals and providers – ensure sufficient, accessible and high-quality childcare for children aged 0-14 years in their local area, so far as is reasonably practicable for working parents, parents/carers who are studying or training for employment.

Additionally, regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under section 26 of the Act 2, require local authorities to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) for their area. These regulations prescribe the process and planning cycle, the consultation and publication requirements, including details of the information which must be captured in a cyclical (as of 2017, five yearly) assessment.

Therefore, Torfaen County Borough Council has a statutory duty to work with early years and childcare providers and the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors to create sustainable, accessible, affordable and high-quality childcare sufficient to meet the needs of all parents and carers. **Essentially, the Local Authority will compare this 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment of parents' demand for childcare with information about the current and planned availability of such childcare places.**

The 2016 Statutory CSA Guidance outlines that Welsh local authorities are required to complete and submit a copy of three documents to Welsh Ministers (for this cycle, in June 2022), i.e.:

- i. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment document;
- ii. Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan, which must *'detail the actions, priorities and milestones to maintain strengths and address shortcomings identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment'* and;
- iii. a (subsequent in 2023) annual progress report.

In order to inform an Action Plan the Local Authority needs to undertake a Gaps Analysis which evolves after an analysis of the research which has informed a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. That Gaps Analysis, which is the subject of this report, has therefore evolved via a structured analysis of elements of work undertaken by Torfaen County Borough Council in 2021-2022 including:

- Analysis of demographic and socio-economic data from the Office of National Statistics, HM Revenue and Customs, Stats Wales, Welsh Government and various Torfaen County Borough Council departments, to give an indication of the profile of factors affecting demand and the ability to access childcare in Torfaen
- Consultation with 501 local parent/carers via an online questionnaire survey undertaken in October 2021 via the Welsh Government
- Consultation with *an additional* 65 local parents/carers from specific backgrounds and circumstances via a series of 7 virtual focus/consultation group e-sessions in February and March 2022
- Consultation with Torfaen's: (a) full day care providers; (b) sessional providers;

- (c) registered childminders and; (d) out of school childcare providers
- Analysis of Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) data completed online by 89% of local registered childcare providers for CIW in June 2021
- Consultation with 478 children and young people via a face-to-face consultation delivered via the Torfaen Play Service, which had a dual role of informing a 2022 Torfaen Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Consultation with 20 children at registered childcare settings
- Consultation with Schools
- Consultation with local employers
- Consultation with local relevant partners, stakeholders and professionals, including WESP partners, employability partners and Cwlwm partners
- Analysis of Family Information Service data.

The Gaps Analysis and this associated report has been undertaken by Place Group Consulting Ltd. Since the advent of the Childcare Act in 2006 and the sufficiency duty, Place Group Ltd's team has worked with 35 Welsh and English local authorities to research and produce Childcare Sufficiency Assessment's. That team have significant experience of producing a comprehensive Gaps Analysis for a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment including aligned to key themes – which in the case of Welsh CSAs are:

Gaps aligned to:

1. **Times** at which childcare is available, including the need for flexible childcare that caters for irregular patterns of usage across the day, the week and the year
2. the **Types** of childcare available
3. the specific needs for children with **Additional Learning Needs**
4. the **Age** of children for whom childcare is available
5. the specific needs for **Welsh Medium** childcare provision
6. the **Affordability** of childcare
7. **Geographical location** of childcare in relation to population, ward and school catchment
8. **Information** about childcare availability and facets of provision

Methodology

The following gaps analysis was produced as an outcome of thematic desk research - essentially reading and reviewing the content of the draft Torfaen 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and drawing conclusions on what represent: (a) evident gaps and (b) potential emerging gaps, aligned to the subjects highlighted in bold above.

The following Gaps Analysis was then produced with content aligned to specific themes.

Gaps Analysis

In terms of the thematic gaps (or potential gaps, that could evolve), in the narrative below, it can be noted that they are particularly derived from: (a) a response to the Welsh Government parental demand survey of 501 parents/carers and: (b) a 89% response rate to the July 2021 SASS process

Theme 1 - Times at which childcare is available

- 1.1 21% of the parents/carers who responded to the October 2021 Welsh Government parental survey about whether childcare acted as a barrier to them taking up employment or training denoted: *Tend to Agree*. Additionally, 20% of the responding parents/carers also stated: *Strongly Agree*. Further detail can be viewed on Figure 244 of the main Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

This indicates that 41% of responding parents/carers believed that - to an extent - childcare had, at some recent point, been acting as a barrier to them accessing employment or training.

Supplementing this feedback (a): 45% of responding parents/carers stated that in the last year (2020-2021), issues surrounding childcare had prevented them from continuing to work, stopped them from working or stopped them from getting a job; (b) 57% of employability teams who responded to a specific survey aimed at such professionals were *unsure* if there is sufficient childcare in the Torfaen locality, particularly (in their opinion) from the perspective of childminding.

Also supplementing and informing this evident gaps is the fact that employability teams working in the locality were asked what they consider to be *the main barriers in accessing childcare in Torfaen?* A repeated response was that there were: limitations of childcare providers in local areas, childcare providers and *not enough flexibility*.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, to an extent, in the Torfaen locality suitable childcare continues to represent a challenge for certain parents when it comes to supporting their employability and employment.

The Local Authority should be particularly mindful of this theme for the Cwmbran locality, where the highest incidence of working families are statistically likely to be resident.

- 1.2 (As highlighted in 1.1 above), a repeated trend experienced in the past two years, reported by setting-based providers and childminders was parents wanting (and needing) **more flexibility**, particularly with regard to extended opening times ¹.

Aligned to this evident evolving feature of demand, the research undertaken for the

¹ Two notable localities where responding parents stated that they would appreciate more flexibility were, as might have been expected: 1. Cwmbran and Pontypool.

2022 Torfaen Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has indicated a number of relevant issues including that **indicate a ‘flexibility gap’**:

- 12% of all (501) respondents to the Welsh Government October 2021 parental survey stated that a barrier to them accessing childcare (of their choice) was a: *lack of flexibility*
- As reported via the June 2021 SASS responses, 0 out of school childcare providers evidently offered places/support during a weekend, or remained accessible/open after 18:00pm hours
- (Only) 14% of registered childminders stated that they could provide childcare after 18:00pm and...
- A minimal number of childminders are evidently providing childcare during the school holidays
- Additionally, 0 full day care providers and registered childminders offered places/support during a weekend

Further feedback about flexibility can be viewed in section 18.4 of the main CSA.

- 1.3 The theme of responsive opening times of breakfast clubs, particularly for parents with pronounced travel to work times, or a need to start work before 8am or at that exact time, was repeatedly highlighted during the virtual e-sessions facilitated with parents and carers in February 2022. Additionally a number of parents who responded to the Welsh Government parental demand online survey outlined their wish for accessibility to formal childcare to (continue to) “*get back to normal/how it was*” - in particular aligned to the (earlier, i.e. circa 7.30am – 7.45am) opening times of breakfast clubs.

This indicated an ‘**opening times’ gap for some families.**

The Local Authority therefore should continue its ongoing policy of monitoring the extent to which this ‘getting back to normal’ is happening in 2022-2023 - and whether this continue to *still* represent a potential sufficiency gap for certain working families, including those that cannot rely on informal childcare - now that the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be progressively alleviated.

In terms of this evident issue of breakfast clubs not opening at times that best/better suited certain parents that responded to the Welsh Government parental demand survey – specific feedback is outlined below. It should be noted that this feedback tended to focus on opening times at school-based breakfast clubs, which childcare planners at the Local Authority will tend to have less ability to influence:

“Our breakfast club’s opening time makes my partner late for work”.

Our breakfast club does not begin early enough. This continues to be tricky, even though the school have started an earlier paid club from 8.00am. This has helped, however it is still tricky with commute times to work and there isn’t any other available provision before this time, despite searching several times.”

“The school offer a free breakfast club funded by the Local Authority, however they don't open the doors until 8.15am which is far too late for parents who have to commute or start work by 8am. Due to this I have to pay for a childminder every morning. This should be rectified and breakfast clubs should start by 7.30am latest 7.45am”.

“I start work at 8.00am and need to leave the house at 7.00am to catch the train. There is not any childcare provider open at this time” - and on a similar theme:

“Myself and my partner both have jobs that start at 7.00am or earlier. Finding childcare that ‘caters’ for these early starts as well as weekend working is nearly impossible. The breakfast club in school does not start until 8.40am...Myself and my husband are both teachers and need to be in work earlier than that”.

Further feedback about the availability of school-based and non-school based breakfast clubs can be viewed in section 11 of the main Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

- 1.4 Feedback, via the October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey, from families resident **in the Cwmbran locality** identified a noted (though not significant in frequency), incidence of a perceived lack of childcare during the holidays and a wish for longer hours. Page 209 of the main Childcare Sufficiency Assessment outlines an incidence of those LSOAs where there is a relatively low number of childcare places during the school holidays.

Theme 2 - Types of childcare that are available

The narratives outlined as part of Theme 2 (potential and considered gaps) below, can also be viewed align to evidence that 37% of parents who responded to the Welsh Government parental demand survey in October 2021 stated that they did not feel there was ‘enough choice’ when it came to them considering their childcare option(s).

On the subject of choice: it should also be noted that – as would have been expected at the outset of the research that was undertaken for the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – family and friends (aka informal childcare options), tend to be the most frequent/preferred choice of childcare for a relatively high proportion of parents and carers (of children with Additional Learning Needs), in terms of both the 0-4 years cohort and the 5-14 years cohort.

- 2.1 Three-quarters of all childcare providers - the majority - stated, as part of the research to inform the 2022 Torfaen Childcare Sufficiency Assessment - that they had 0 plans to (extend their accessibility) to better meet the needs of shift workers. One responding childcare provider stated *“I know of no one who provides this”*. Encouragingly c20% of responding childcare providers stated that they had no firm plans to ‘better meet the needs of shift workers’ *but were interested in doing so*. **However, a sufficiency gap could be emergent as the 2022 CSA has**

highlighted that the incidence of shift working may be increasing ².

For example: (a) a number of respondents to the October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey highlighted that a reason they were not accessing formal childcare was that there was 0 childcare available for weekend shift work; (b) for the same survey, 5% of parent/carers who stated that they do not intend to use the Childcare Offer reported that this was because they were not eligible due to shift patterns or they were in education, and; (c) there was a recurrence of qualitative feedback on this theme, via that survey, for example:

“I struggle to find flexible childcare to fit around shifts before 8.00am and after school...”

“I have 0 difficulty finding childcare for standard hours, but there is no provision of childcare for shift workers... you have to fit with standard 8.00am-6.00pm provision. As a single parent and a shift worker, it means I am not able to work full time as I do not have support around standard hours”.

“I am an NHS worker... Only recently have I been able to find a childminder to cater for the hours I work which are shift based”.

(From a resident of Pontypool) *“Finding childcare that adapts to a shift pattern has been extremely difficult, with only one nursery in the ‘borough’ providing this... leaving me with no choice but to choose this nursery regardless of cost or quality³”*.

2.2 Although it should be considered (within the context of the fact that) that a relatively low number of respondents to the Welsh Government parental demand survey stated that a type of childcare they believed that they would wish to access ‘more of’ during forthcoming years was a registered childminder: (a) enquiries about childminders tend to feature recurrently when the metrics for the FIS enquiries are considered (see Figure 259 of the main CSA) and; (b) the availability of a childminder was a theme that was consistently fed back during the virtual e-sessions with parents from a range of backgrounds, particularly in terms of having this type of registered childcare as an option aligned to a need for flexibility.

The number of childminding professionals operating in the Torfaen locality has decreased since the 2017 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. This is aligned to a general decline in the profession across Wales over the past five years. (Following the raising of issues and views by PACEY Cymru in relation to the decline of childminding in Wales and the factors impacting on this Welsh Government has

Throughout Wales there has been a growing trend with regard to the incidence of shift working. For example the Wales TUC Cymru published a report in late 2019 that highlighted how:

- There were 17,000 more night workers in Wales than there were in 2014
- There were 165,000 people regularly working nights in Wales - 13% of the workforce.
- In the UK, care workers (432,000) accounted for the majority of night workers, followed by nurses and midwives (232,000)
- The next most common profession for night workers was road transport drivers (208,000).
- Wales has the third highest share of workers doing night work, compared with the other eleven UK regions.

³ The most up-to-date data and metrics on the NOMIS website indicate that 3,200 employees who are resident in the Torfaen locality work in the sales and customer services sector, which it can be reasonably assumed would have a relatively high(er) incidence of hours outside of 8.00am – 6.00pm.

confirmed that an independent review of childminding in Wales will take place in 2022).

There was 0 new registrations of childminders in the Torfaen locality during the period April 2021 – February 2022.

Essentially, there were 35 registered childminders operating in the locality in December 2021, offering 228 places. In comparison, there had been 44 childminders operating in the locality in 2017. Once again, this is a pan-Wales issue (i.e. the incidence of childminders exiting the sector).

However it is a pertinent issue due to the fact that the October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey denoted a relatively high incidence of parents requesting more flexibility for their childcare – for example “[I need more] *flexible hours... there are not enough childminders that support weekends, evenings, early starts, bank holidays etc*”, with it being a traditional facet that where flexibility is required, the childminding profession is best able to respond.

- 2.3 A key outcome of the June 2021 SASS responses was that 59 full day care staff, 5 sessional care staff and 4 staff from out of school provisions had left the childcare sector in the past 12 months to pursue different occupations and careers (see Figure 275 of the main CSA). Anecdotal evidence suggests that they are exiting the early years and childcare workforce due to pay rates and that they are frequently leaving to pursue careers in the hospitality and sales sectors.

Stakeholders that were consulted for the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment repeatedly feedback that retention and recruitment of suitably qualified staff *is their biggest challenge currently*.

Additionally, in response to the survey with childcare providers which supplemented the SASS feedback, one-third of respondents reported *recruitment of workforce* as being of concern.

Essentially, a theme that is becoming evident *throughout Wales*, is that retention and recruitment is proving to be a growing problem and the Local Authority will need to monitor this ongoing incidence aligned to the Torfaen locality before critical levels are breached.

- 2.4 **On the vital theme of quality in childcare – parents and carers provided consistent feedback which demonstrated that they were broadly happy with this factor.** For example, parents and carers who responded to the Welsh Government parental demand survey repeatedly expressed their belief that the quality of provision was high (stated by 67% of respondents). Ultimately the theme of quality did not feature as an issue that parents and carers believed needed to be enhanced.

However, this is a key issue for the Local Authority to also consistently monitor, particularly as availability of funded childcare programmes/places is set to increase.

- 2.5 In response to the June 2021 SASS survey, 6 childcare providers reported concerns that they may only be sustainable for up to another 6 months (see Figure 26 of the main CSA). **The Local Authority therefore needs to monitor the ongoing occupancy (and vacancy) metrics at these providers to ensure that this does not result in any localised sufficiency gaps.**

Further details on those providers are:

- One was full day care provider located in the Abersychan 5 LSOA
- One was an out of school childcare provider located in the Llantarnam 2 LSOA
- One was a full day care provider also located in the Llantarnam 2 LSOA
- One was an out of school childcare provider located in the Llanyafon North LSOA
- One was a sessional care provider located in the Upper Cwmbran 1 LSOA
- One was a childminder operating in the New Inn 2 LSOA

- 2.6 43% of parents who responded to the Welsh Government parental survey stated that they **intended to access more childcare in the forthcoming years - and this was most frequently a type of out of school childcare.** (It can be noted, that for the 2017 CSA, a private day nursery was the most frequent type of registered childcare that a parent intended to use).

Indeed the three types of childcare that were highlighted with the highest frequency by such parents were (see Figure 247 of the main CSA):

- Before School/Breakfast Club = 49% of relevant parents
- After School Club = 44% of relevant parents
- Private Day Nursery = 44% of relevant parents

However, the SASS response from summer 2021 indicates that there has been a 5% reduction in the number of out of school places accessible across the Torfaen locality since the 2017 Torfaen Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was published.

The Local Authority therefore needs to be considerate that a sufficiency gap with regard to out of school childcare does not grow, particularly in LSOAs where it was evident that responding parents *recurrently* stated that they intended to access out of school childcare in forthcoming years, including:

- Coed Eva
- Llantarnam 2
- Llanyrafon North 1
- Pontnewydd 2
- Two Locks 1

One outcome of a specific piece of research undertaken for the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was that six schools stated that they may have space to extend their capacity - and childcare planners within Torfaen County Borough Council may want to explore how such settings could (re)organise to utilise such space for further out of school childcare provision.

Theme 3 - Specific needs for children with ALN

- 3.1 10% of parents/carers who responded to the October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey outlined that they had at least one child with diagnosed and/or undiagnosed additional learning needs. Informal childcare, such as friends and families is commonly the type of support that such families will use/access.

However, qualitative feedback from the survey and from virtual e-sessions incorporated a repeated incidence of such parents/carers outlining their challenges identifying and/or securing suitable and affordable formal childcare – in particular out of school childcare, which carers (most) repeatedly outlined that they ideally would like to access more of in the forthcoming years.

It therefore can be concluded that as the incidence of ALN children continues to grow (and it does in the Torfaen locality, as well as within Wales in general), their needs to be a corresponding frequency of childcare providers having the ability to provide suitable/quality (including through a dedication to the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme) and affordable places for these children – and this incidence should be monitored.

- 3.2 81% of parents/carers who responded to the October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey stated that they intended to access the Childcare Offer at some point in the forthcoming future (see Figure 231 of the main CSA).

However, 5% of parents/carers who responded to the Welsh Government parental demand survey and stated that they *do not* intend to use the Childcare Offer said that this was because, (in their experience) there was insufficient places available for (what the survey constructed termed) children with a disability.

Theme 4 - Age of children for whom childcare is available

- 4.1 There are approximately 1,010 2 year olds currently resident in the Torfaen locality (see Figure 2 of the main CSA). Figure's 220 and 221 of the main CSA also indicate that parents tend to access informal childcare/friends and family for support with childcare for under 2 year olds – as did feedback received via the virtual e-focus groups.

The Welsh Government has of course outlined ambitious plans in terms of broadening the ability of parents and families who have two-year olds to access funded childcare provision, from September 2022 onwards.

This informs a potential and maybe forthcoming ‘age gap’.

Essentially it is *possible* that in order to meet the expectations for all universal 2 year olds to be able to access funded childcare, there may be a requirement to expand provision (and affirm sufficiency) for this age group.

However Welsh Government has stated this will be a phased expansion of early year’s provision to include all 2 year olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision.

Theme 5 - Specific needs for Welsh Medium childcare provision

When considering the context for this theme, it is vital to note that new childcare builds in the Torfaen locality plan to accommodate a proportion of Welsh-medium childcare places, i.e. the Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw and Gofal Teg at Ysgol Panteg developments.

The October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey also indicated that 68% of respondents did *not* wish to access Welsh-medium childcare provision in the forthcoming future. However...

- 5.1 There is a trend that the incidence of Welsh speaking in the Torfaen locality is year-on-year steadily increasing and that the number of parents and families that request Welsh-medium childcare continues to increase. It can also be noted that approximately 50% of Welsh speakers live in the Cwmbran locality.

Encouragingly, since the 2017 Torfaen Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, there has been a 17% increase in Welsh medium settings. **However, essentially, the Local Authority needs to continue to monitor the incidence of accessibility to Welsh-medium childcare places aligned to the ambitions of specific families.**

Of the respondents to the Welsh Government October 2021 parental demand survey who stated that they did not (then) access Welsh-medium childcare, 23% stated that they may want to access it in the future.

- 5.2 There are evidently 0 Welsh-medium sessional schemes operating in the Torfaen locality during school holidays. Indeed there is a discernible lack of Welsh-medium provision accessible during the school holidays - particularly through analysis of the summer 2021 SASS responses.

Added to this observation, it was noted that a repeated stated issue from representatives of schools who responded to their specific survey was that there was ***in their opinion*** a shortfall in accessibility to Welsh-medium childcare.

Additionally, ‘umbrella’ organisations, including those with Cwlwm repeatedly outlined their belief that there was a *lack* of school-aged Welsh language childcare provision in the locality ⁴.

⁴ The June 2021 SASS responses indicated that (only) one childminder could speak in Welsh

Theme 6 - Affordability of childcare

- 6.1 The Childcare Offer is one of the Welsh Government's flagship programmes that helps families to access affordable, and funded, provision. Whilst access to the early education element of the Offer is universal, access to the childcare element is only available to eligible working parents.

(Once again) 81% of parents/carers who responded to the October 2021 Welsh Government parental demand survey stated that they intended to access the Childcare Offer at some point in the forthcoming future (see Figure 231 of the main CSA).

Furthermore in early 2022, the Welsh Government announced that from September 2022 they will be expanding the Offer to enable parents who are in education and training to also benefit from the additional hours of funded childcare it provides. The expansion of the Offer will focus initially on parents who are enrolled on higher and further education courses. Once this change has been implemented, the Welsh Government will include additional cohorts of learners over time. This could include those in adult learning, work based learning, community learning and also those undertaking more short-term learning, including ESOL courses. Additionally, from the 1st April 2022, the Childcare Offer will be expanded to enable eligible parents who are on adoption leave to access the Offer for the child who is the subject of the adoption, provided this in line with their Adoption Support Plan.

However, the research undertaken for the 2022 Torfaen Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has indicated that some parents are unsure how and when to access the Offer – indicating a possible **affordability (support) gap and an information gap too**.

- 6.2 The most recurrent barrier to accessing formal childcare that was highlighted by parents/carers who responded to the Welsh Government parental survey was that the cost of childcare had prevented them from accessing a formal provision. 37% of responding parents stated that the cost of childcare had, at some point, prevented them from accessing childcare - see Figure 227 of the main CSA.

Indeed the most frequent reason as to why a parent stated that they were dissatisfied with their existing childcare arrangements was (an issue surrounding) affordability, plus feedback from employability professionals - including representatives of PaCE - reported how this was a key issue for their clients.

Within this context, it should also be note that two-thirds of childcare providers stated in response to a supplementary survey with their sector in late 2021 that they had plans over the next 18 months to increase their fees.

Cumulatively, this therefore indicates a continuing affordability gap.

Torfaen Family Information Service needs to **continue to** communicate and disseminate information about existing funded childcare initiatives and forthcoming

new initiatives such as: (a) the extension of the Childcare Offer to parents in education and training and parents who are on adoption leave and:
(b) the offer of free childcare to all two-year-olds within the next three years, given how logical it is that these two initiatives will benefit specific families.

The Local Authority should also be mindful of the fact that 43% of the CSA employability survey respondents stated that they did not know about Tax Free Childcare - and what it was.

- 6.3 Specific – though repeated – feedback from stakeholders, partners and parents that was generated as part of the research for the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment highlighted how registered childcare could be unaffordable for single/lone parents - particular.
Some singles parents reported that despite receiving help through Universal Credit, they were unable to afford childcare fees on top of living costs.

Theme 7 - Location of childcare in relation to population, ward and school catchment

- 7.1 The Blaenavon locality has witnessed an increase in the resident number of 0-5 years since 2017.
However, it can be observed that there are a number of sufficiency shortfalls within this Blaenavon locality - including:
- There 0 childminders in Blaenavon
 - There are 0 full day care places that are accessible in the Medium of Welsh
 - There are 0 sessional care providers operating in the locality
 - There are minimal part-time early years places accessible in the locality
 - There is a relatively low number of breakfast clubs accessible in the locality.
- 7.2 A potential sufficiency gap (and pressure for places) may be evident in the (south of) Pontypool locality as the phasing of new housing developments in the South Sebastopol housing development begin to be occupied, with the completion of new housing yields set to peak during the period 2022-2024 - see Figure 15 of the main CSA.

Additionally three locations where sufficiency needs to be monitored aligned to the phasing and occupations - including potentially new families – are:

- County Hall (Pobl) development site in Cwmbran - which will account for 143 new housing yields during 2023-2026
- Mamhilad development site in Pontypool - which will account for 255 new housing yields during 2023-2026
- Malthouse Lane development site in Llantarnam - which will account for 164 new housing yields during 2022-2024

- 7.3 The June 2021 SASS responses indicated a relatively low number of vacancies in the Pontypool area and (more specifically) the New Inn 4 LSOA (South East of Pontypool) for full day care places, indicating a potential forthcoming geographical gap, in particular when the universal places for 2 year old programme comes in to effect.
- 7.4 The Local Authority needs to remain aware that there are certain LSOA's where the number of children per childcare place is relatively high - such as:
- the Two Locks 2 LSOA in Cwmbran
 - the Greenmeadow 2 LSOA in Cwmbran
 - the Pontnewydd 1 LSOA in Cwmbran
 - the Abersychan 3 LSOA in Pontypool

The Local Authority also needs to remain strategically aware that there are 0 registered childcare places accessible in the following LSOAs (with green text denoting areas of relatively high deprivation):

Name of LSOA	Number of resident 0-4 year olds in 2020 (source ONS)	Position in Torfaen WIMD2019 rankings (out of 60 LSOAs) ⁵
Greenmeadow 1	89	9
Greenmeadow 3	97	10
Trevelin 2	106	15
Wainfelin 2	52	25
Blaenavon 1	84	28
Pontnewydd	76	29
St Dials 3	136	30
Blaenavon 4	81	34
Two Locks 3	86	38
Upper Cwmbran 2	38	49
Llanyrafon South 1	58	50
Croesyceiliog North 2	59	51
Fairwater 4	53	56
New Inn 3	32	60

Theme 8 - Information about childcare availability and facets of provision

- 8.1 The Welsh Government parental demand survey indicated that in response to the conjecture: I know where to find out about information about childcare - 19% of respondents stated: tend to disagree and 9% stated: strongly disagree. This suggests that for approximately 29% of responding parents, an information gap existed, despite the ongoing and concerted role of the FIS and the Local Authority.
- 8.2 Additionally, 50% of responding parents stated disagree, in response to the point: I know where to find out information on financial assistance for childcare.

⁵ <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/StatisticsCensusInformation/WIMD/WIMD-LSOA-Profiles.aspx>

Recommendations and Action Plan

Theme - Times at which childcare is available

Recommendation 1:

Torfaen County Borough Council officers - plus partners such as DWP and employability professionals - should consider a protocol agreement for monitoring the incidence (and evidence) of employability of parents and carers being effected by childcare – and help to establish greater ‘flexibility’ as a joined-up response.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council should continue to work internally (between teams/officers – including Torfaen Employability Team) and in partnership with external organisations such as DWP.</p> <p>There should be a , joined-up approach, which continues to aim to ensure that parents/carers that want to enter or return to the workplace are aware of how and where they can access support and advice and that they are aware of financial forms of support, including Tax Free Childcare and the Childcare Offer. Indeed promotion of the forthcoming extension to the Childcare Offer and the autumn 2022 roll-out of universal childcare for 2 year olds will need to be considered.</p>	<p>FIS, Torfaen Employability Teams, DWP</p>	<p>April 2022- March 2027</p>	<p>Development of agreed Partnership working on a 6 monthly basis to identify any access to childcare concerns Partners such as DWP and employability professionals feedback that an incidence of employability being affected by childcare challenges decreased.</p> <p>Feedback to be disseminated at Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</p>	<p>HIGH</p>

Recommendation 2:

Torfaen County Borough Council should continue to monitor any evidence of employability being influenced by an absence of 'flexibility' within local childcare provision – including aligned to (opening) times and those working parents that are required to work shift hours and patterns.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council will work in partnership with organisations such as CWLWM, Pacey in Wales and Early Years Wales to promote the potential advantages of childcare providers developing a more inherent mindset towards flexibility – including fee paying business advantages.</p> <p>Specific work will also include an urgency to increase the number of registered childminders operating in the locality – given that profession's inherent ability to provide a flexibility to parents who require this facet due to their work or studying.</p>	<p>Childcare Manager Childcare Development Officers FIS</p>	<p>April 2022- March 2027</p>	<p>To enhance the degree to which local parents - including Torfaen-resident parents employed shift hours and/or parents now working from home on a permanent basis - can access childcare at times that equate to their immediate needs, which on a growing basis are evidently part-time or on certain days, mornings or afternoons of a week - or at weekends.</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p>

Recommendation 3:

Torfaen County Borough Council needs to consider how it can encourage childcare providers to offer opening and closing times that accommodate working patterns, with a priority on early morning opening times at day nurseries and breakfast/before school clubs.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Torfaen County Borough Council need to continue to monitor the extent to which breakfast club/before school opening times - across all sectors - are returning to normal post-COVID. They should also monitor the extent to which after school clubs closing times are returning to their pre-COVID times.	FIS	2022	A lower incidence of working parents will report difficulties with their work routines (effectively getting to work on time or being able to leave work at suitable contracted times) when CSA monitoring research and consultation is undertaken.	HIGH

Theme - Types of childcare that are available

Recommendation 4:

Torfaen County Borough Council needs to re-establish a vibrant childminding sector in the locality, including through a targeted recruitment campaign and in partnership with organisations such as CLWLM and Early Years Wales.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council's Childcare Development Officers to continue the regeneration of the childminding sector. This could be developed in consultation with relevant WESP partners and other umbrella organisations/ forums.</p> <p>A specific childcare recruitment and retention plan will be refined in 2022 which will focus on this cohort of childcare professionals, particularly aligned to its traditional ability to offer childcare outside of traditional 8am-6pm hours</p>	<p>Childcare Development Officers FIS Childcare Manager</p>	2022-2027	<p>The number of registered childminders operating in the locality will increase by between 10% and 15% by March 2027– including in priority LSOAs of need and particularly in Cwmbran where there will be a pronounced increase in local housing developments.</p> <p>Increase in the number of childminders in Blaenavon</p>	HIGH

Recommendation 5:

Torfaen County Borough Council need to continue working in partnership with childcare umbrella organisations and Welsh Government (We Care Campaign) on retention and recruitment (including of apprentices) . They should visibly demonstrate to key partners such as the new Coleg Gwent's Torfaen Learning Zone, Coleg Gwent and Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw their commitment to such a recruitment and retention drive.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council will need to prioritise ensuring a recruitment and retention plan to its early years and childcare workforce remains as a key commitment to EYDCP.</p> <p>There should be ongoing concerted partnership working with childcare providers (including to encourage and support them to take on apprentices) and local stakeholders including the FE sector and secondary schools.</p> <p>The recruitment campaign will incorporate a facet of increasing the number of Welsh-speaking professionals.</p>	<p>Workforce Development FIS Childcare Manager</p>	2022-2027	<p>The number of workforce members that have Level 3 and Level 5 qualifications exiting the sector will decline and the numbers entering the sector will increase.</p> <p>A new cohort of early years and childcare professionals will enter the sector in Torfaen for the period 2022-2027.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>

Theme - Age of children for whom childcare is available

Recommendation 6:

Torfaen County Borough Council should focus on – including where opportunities present themselves via individual childcare providers or stakeholders such as schools – prioritising the establishment of further 2 year old cohort places, in order to help meet a possible (increased) demand that will be evidenced as an outcome of the Welsh government’s universal childcare for 2 year olds programme.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>TCBC will prioritise in 2022 ensuring that its early years childcare sector and existing childminder cohort are prepared for the advent of the phased universal 2 year olds offer.</p> <p>All opportunities for the development of new provisions/ places or an extension to existing capacities will be strategically encouraged to consider allocate a cohort of places for 2 year olds.</p> <p>Sufficiency of places for 2 year olds will be monitored as part of the 2023 CSA update.</p>	<p>Childcare Manager Flying Start Manager Childcare Development Officers FIS</p>	<p>April 2022- March 2027</p>	<p>The phased roll-out and initiation of the Welsh Government universal offer for 2 year olds will develop in the Torfaen locality so as to ensure that all families that wish to access a place are able to do so - including at a location of their choice. This ability will be evidenced via forthcoming CSA updates.</p> <p>The early years childcare sector located in Torfaen will be fully prepared and informed about the initiative.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>

Recommendation 7:

Torfaen County Borough Council need to retain an awareness that when parents/carers were invited (as part of the Welsh Government parental survey) to state what type(s) of childcare they anticipated requiring **more of** in the next two years, this was most frequently a type of out of school childcare.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council will identify opportunities to develop new school and non-school based out of school childcare provisions, including during both term-time and during the school holidays.</p>	<p>Childcare Manager Childcare Development Officers FIS</p>	<p>2022-2027</p>	<p>The number of out of school childcare places with: (a) after school clubs; (b) breakfast clubs and; (c) holiday playschemes will increase by 10-20% by 2027 – including in areas/LSOAs where parents who responded to the October 2021 Welsh Government parental survey recurrently stated that they intended to access more of such provision in forthcoming years – for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coed Eva LSOA in Cwmbran - Llantarnam 2 LSOA in Cwmbran - Llanyrafon North 1 LSOA in Cwmbran - Pontnewydd 2 LSOA in Cwmbran - Two Locks 1 LSOA also in Cwmbran 	<p>HIGH</p>

Theme - Specific needs for children with ALN

Recommendation 8:

Torfaen County Borough Council should direct its childcare sector to prioritise enhancing their support for children with ALN – including aligned to the ALN Transformation Programme which was initiated in the country in autumn 2021.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council should work in concerted partnership with its day care providers, sessional care providers, registered childminder and it's out of school childcare partners, to further prioritise ALN-themed and focused training initiatives, and accessibility themed improvements.</p> <p>Relevant officers throughout the Childcare Team should also encourage all of the childcare providers that are operating in the locality to demonstrate a visible and promoted dedication to the ALN transformation programme.</p>	<p>Early Years ALN Lead Officer Workforce Development Childcare Development Officers</p>	<p>April 2022- March 2027</p>	<p>Carers of children with ALN will have increased confidence in their ability to access quality childcare which can support their child(ren) and their special needs.</p> <p>The incidence of COVID-19 creating further challenges in terms of the early development (setbacks) for certain children will be further addressed and the cohort affected will be further supported – including via a better trained and prepared workforce, that are committed to and knowledgeable about the ALN Transformation Programme</p>	<p>HIGH</p>

Theme - Specific needs for Welsh Medium childcare provision

Recommendation 9:

Torfaen County Borough Council should retain an awareness that although demand for Welsh-Medium childcare provision is aligned to sufficiency, and not an immediate priority, the incidence of families having an interest in Welsh-Medium childcare may continue to increase as the profile and outcomes of Cymraeg 2050 Work Programme continues to progress.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council should continue its priority work with WESP partners and other key local partners that work to promote the Welsh language to ensure that any family that wishes to access Welsh-medium childcare are able to do so.</p> <p>The establishment of new provisions will be monitored so as to calculate and check the ongoing contribution to the accessibility of Welsh-medium childcare places.</p>	<p>Childcare Manager Childcare Development Officers FIS</p>	2022-2027	<p>The number of Welsh language accessible places will increase in the Torfaen locality by 10% by 2027. WESP will continue to be integrated into strategic developments and new provisions associated with childcare sufficiency and planning.</p> <p>Welsh-speaking families and/or families that have ambitions to develop a Welsh-language proficiency will be able to access childcare of their choice.</p>	MEDIUM

Theme - Affordability of childcare

Recommendation 10:

Torfaen County Borough Council needs to continue to promote an awareness among parents, families and childcare providers of the availability of Tax Free Childcare, as a source of financial support – plus the availability of additional forms of support such as the Childcare Offer.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Torfaen County Borough Council and its FIS will continue to energetically promote financial forms of support towards childcare including via: (a) Tax Free Childcare; (b) the Childcare Offer and its forthcoming extensions to make more parents eligible; (c) Flying Start childcare places and; (d) the forthcoming universal offer for 2 year olds.	FIS	April 2022- March 2027	The take-up metrics of Tax Free Childcare will increase up to 2026. Parents who are in education and training will now be able to access funded childcare places and this will boost the employability theme highlighted in recommendation 1. above.	HIGH

Theme - Location of childcare in relation to population, ward and school catchment

Recommendation 11:

Torfaen County Borough Council needs to retain an awareness that sufficiency may be affected in geographical areas where a pronounced incidence of new housing developments/completions are due to be progressed, in particular the South Sebastopol development in the South of Pontypool.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
<p>Torfaen County Borough Council will work in partnership with relevant childcare settings and potentially schools to explore options for reorganisation at their space and setting, particularly those based in Pontypool and Cwmbran.</p> <p>This would be thoughtfully explored with care so as not to destabilise the sustainability any existing childcare providers.</p> <p>The Local Authority will continue to monitor the incidence of new housing developments being approved and any notable phasing/completions.</p>	<p>Childcare Manager FIS Childcare Development Officers</p>	2022-2027	<p>Relevant officers with an involvement in childcare will investigate new (childcare) developments which will increase the number of new childcare places – aligned to the four main types of registered childcare – and will have an ability to advise on geographical areas of need, aligned to major new housing developments.</p>	MEDIUM

Theme - Information about childcare availability and facets of provision

Recommendation 12:

Torfaen County Borough Council should continue to prioritise the key role of its Family Information Service and also continue to prioritise the promotion of financial forms of support to accessing registered and quality childcare.

Action	Responsible Officer from TCBC	Key Timescale	Target Outcomes	Priority (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)
Torfaen Family Information Service should continue to prioritise its outreach and promotion strategies that focus on financial forms of support that can help families to access CIW registered childcare.	FIS	2022-2026	The number of FIS enquiry metrics about funded childcare and financial forms of childcare will have increased.	MEDIUM