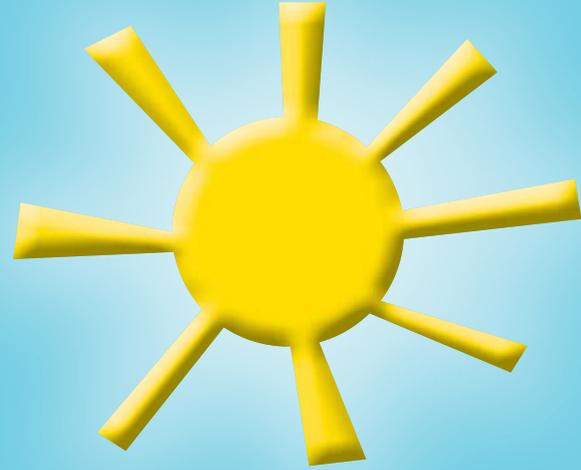


Blaenau Gwent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Annual Refresh March 2012



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 longer term economic vision for the Council, as set out in the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan, remains unchanged. Potentially transformational improvements will continue, such as the opening of the Learning Campus in September 2012, the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road, the focus on local enterprise development, further progress on key projects at the Works, and the availability of European Structural Funds for the period 2014-2020 which should all impact on the demand for high quality childcare.

There are still plenty of vacant places in Blaenau Gwent therefore, it is implied that there is sufficient childcare available in Blaenau Gwent to meet current demand at this time but we must keep developing the sector inline with the increase in demand which occurs each year.



**SUMMARY
Population**

The highest concentrations of children and young people continue in the West (Tredegar) and North/North-East (Brynmawr and Nantyglo) of the Borough.

Birth rates are rising slightly once again.

Demand for childcare

Awareness raising of childcare/childcare roadshows and marketing schemes, that have been evaluated, have had an impact on take up of childcare places in particular sessional places for 2-3 year olds.

Children funded via the Authorities Assisted Places Childcare Scheme rose from 111 in 2010/11 to 131 in 2011/12, this in turn has impacted on demand for childcare and also has an impact on vacancy rates and sustainability of settings.

There was a 2% increase in children with ALN and disabilities accessing childcare. 43 children were able to access childcare with 121 support through the scheme.

Demand for Welsh Medium Childcare is still low despite intensive marketing.

Flying Start – the roll out of Flying Start will mean increased amount of childcare places needed for 2 and 3 year olds from 2013.

Supply of Childcare

While there have not been major changes to the supply of all types of childcare, the following are the notable developments in 2012:

There was a net gain of 129 childcare places.

Take up of after school and holiday provision increased although there are still a large amount of vacancies in this area.

5 childminders deregistered in Blaina in the past year and this will have to be addressed, however there are other childcare options in plentiful supply in this area.

Other key developments impacting on demand for childcare

Welfare benefits changes for lone parents have started to impact on demand in 2009.

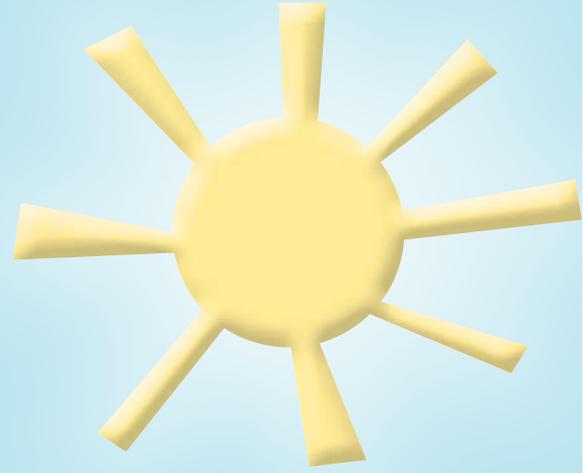
Demand may change in response to changing prices and on childcare requirements for children who speak Welsh or are bilingual.

The economic recession has impacted on Businesses and employment in Blaenau Gwent but not especially on the childcare sector.

“The Works” development will be watched closely to ascertain its impact on demand for childcare, although childcare has been planned for the site.

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.



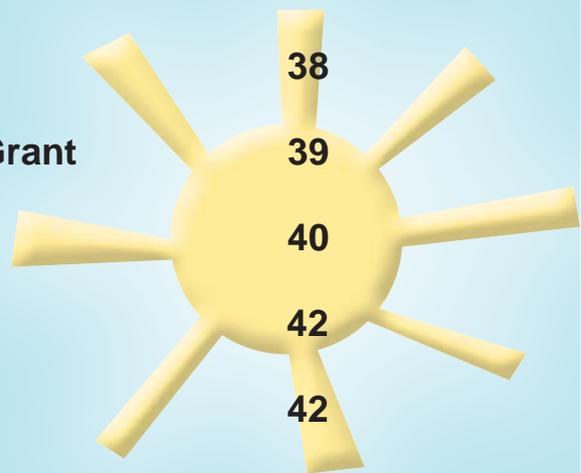
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1. Introduction

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 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every 3 years (2008, 2011 etc) with a "Refresh" of the data published on an annual basis.

In April 2011, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council published its last Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011-2014 with its 3 year strategic plan. This set out the findings regarding registered childcare for children up to the age of 14 or up to 18 with disabilities within the Authority. This document is the Annual Refresh of the CSA for 2012.

A summary of the full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011, Action Plan and Summary Refreshes are all available on www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

2.0 Factors affecting demand for childcare

2.1 Background

Blaenau Gwent has historically had the lowest amount of childcare provision in Wales but the childcare sector in Blaenau Gwent has expanded by over 1300% in the past ten years and has probably seen the fastest childcare expansion of all Local Authorities. To meet the demands of this intense, rapid expansion we constantly have to develop extra childcare places and recruit and train new staff.

In the CSA 2011 registered, childcare places in Blaenau Gwent had increased from 114 places in 2002, to 1,362. There has been a further 129 places created in 2011/12 and Blaenau Gwent now has 1,491 registered childcare places. This demonstrates the use of childcare by the community of Blaenau Gwent is now more common.

Settings in Blaenau Gwent are fortunate because although the country is in economic recession the sector in Blaenau Gwent is still experiencing growth, this may be because of an increased availability of registered childcare or constant knowledge and awareness raising and marketing of the various opportunities around childcare, although it must be stated that the applications to Assisted Places has increased.

We must not be complacent about the economy and the setting's business infrastructure must be supported throughout these difficult times so growth continues in our sector. If the sector is not supported through this difficult time we could be facing a situation where we lose settings and undo all the hard work we have invested into this sector over the past ten years.

As an Authority we need to build childcare places inline with demand. It is a very fine balancing act as surplus places cost money so we need to build places inline with demand. For this reason there is a need for development work to sustain existing childcare levels and build in areas where there are gaps.



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
Badminton	27 children up	
Beaufort	28 children up	
Blaina	16 children up	
Brynmawr	38 children up	
Cwm	19 children up	
Cwmtillery	30 children up	
Ebbw Vale North		11 children down
Ebbw Vale South	1 child up	
Georgetown	24 children up	
Llanhilleth	38 children up	
Nantyglo		1 child down
Rassau		7 children down
Sirhowy	6 children up	
Six Bells	17 children up	
Tredegar Central and West		7 children down
Total		

Greatest increase greatest decrease

The greatest increase in birth rate change to that predicted in the CSA 2011, is in Brynmawr and Llanhilleth. The biggest decrease in births is Ebbw Vale North. The highest populations of children and young people remain and are projected to remain in the West (Tredegar) and North/North East (Brynmawr/Nantyglo).

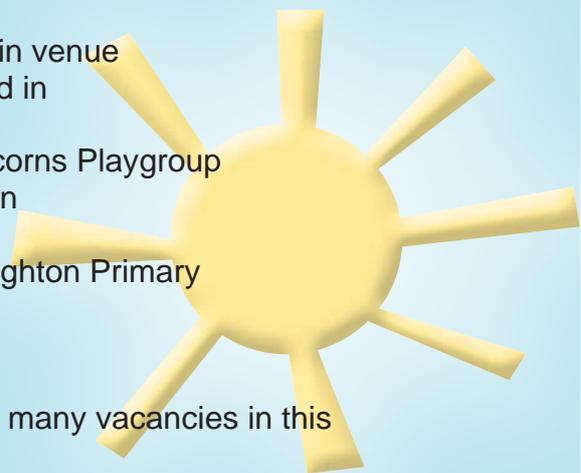
Potential impact on the childcare market according to new birth population changes

Full daycare including childminders

Still plenty of capacity in full daycare areas within the Authority although a choice of day nursery provision is still highlighted as a need in the Abertillery area.

Preschool Provision

Abertillery ward – no planning needed
Badminton ward - develop preschool provision
Beaufort ward – Mini Me's/Twinkle Tots newly opened
Blaina ward – Suffice provision in area
Brynmawr – Welsh medium preschool to be developed
Cwm – Mini Allsorts relocating – extra spaces
Cwmtillery – Will become a Flying Start area - expand Mini Me playgroup
Ebbw Vale North – will become a Flying Start area – capital bid in
Ebbw Vale South – will become a Flying Start area
Georgetown – planned preschool provision – difficulty in venue
Llanhilleth – expansion of Flying Start area – capital bid in
Nantyglo – Suffice provision in ward
Rassau – Will become a Flying Start area – expand Acorns Playgroup
Sirhowy – expansion of Flying Start area – capital bid in
Sixbells – proposed Meithrin
Tredegar Central and West – proposed Meithrin at Deighton Primary



Out of school clubs

The market is responding to growth in demand but still many vacancies in this area and more promotion/awareness raising needed.

2.3 Demographic Data

Nationally the childcare sector has been relatively robust during the recession and Blaenau Gwent is no different. The childcare market is still at a period of growth. Childcare providers are reporting some parents may have reduced their hours and some are not paying so much in advance but generally the market is very buoyant.

The current recession is clearly having a short term impact in terms of the affect locally on jobs and business profitability. However, the longer term economic vision for the Council, as set out in the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan, remains unchanged. Potentially transformational improvements will continue, such as the opening of the Learning Campus in September 2012 , the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road, the focus on local enterprise development, further progress on key projects at the Works, and the availability of European Structural Funds for the period 2014-2020.

2.4 Employment data

Welfare to work agenda

There has been little impact on the Blaenau Gwent childcare market to date, as a result of direct pressure from support to individuals as the welfare to work agenda came into bearing in April 2011. It is envisaged that more clients who have multi layered needs will present themselves/be referred from support agencies, as the agenda embeds itself. This may have a growing impact for childcare in 2012, and need must be closely monitored through our EYDCP links with Jobcentre Plus. The welfare to work agenda is marked by major changes in levels of benefit payment made and assessment regimes for



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 12	IB/ESA May 2011	IB/ESA August 2011
Blaenau Gwent	1780	2928	3033	3140	3171	3226	3233	3263	3416	3431 (+15)	7.9%	5950	5940 13.7%
	JSA %												
Wales	4.5 %												
UK	4.1 %												

In these areas **JSA** has risen by **200** in February. **IB/ ESA** has fallen by **100** between May 2011 and August 2011.

Other Benefits (August 2011)							
	ESA and Incapacity Benefits	Lone Parent	Carer	Other income related benefit	Disabled	Bereaved	Unknown
Blaenau Gwent	5,940	920	800	290	670	90	~

Definitions

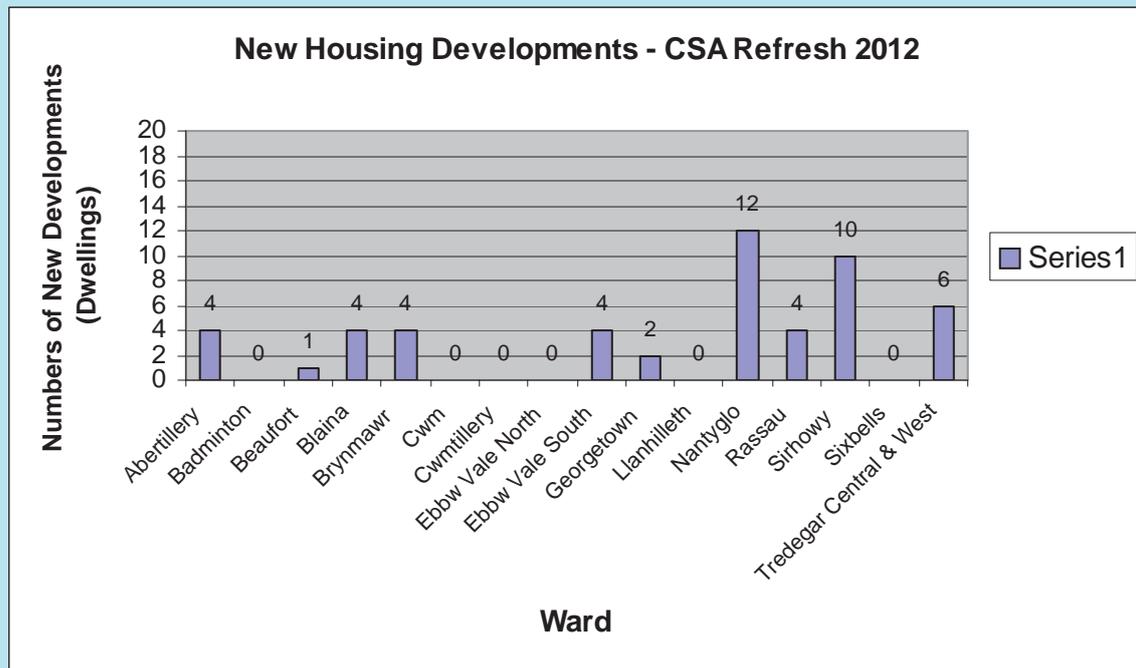
- The figures for Incapacity Benefit are only published in February/March, May, August and November. The next release is due 16 May 2012, which will give November 2011 data.
- Unemployed, refers to people without a job who were available to start work in the two weeks following their interview and who had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained.
- Economically inactive are people who are neither in employment nor unemployed. This group includes, for example, all those who are looking after a home or retired.
- JSA is payable to people under pensionable age who are available and actively seeking work.

There was no new information available to examination changes in the number of parents/carers accessing the Working Tax Credit.



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.



The main proposal, which will have a definitive impact on childcare within Blaenau Gwent, is “The Works” development in central Ebbw Vale although childcare for this area has been planned alongside the Masterplan.

The Works is a vibrant and distinctive development in the heart of Blaenau Gwent. The proposal is a regeneration project to redevelop the former Ebbw Vale steelworks site. The Masterplan proposes a mix of uses including the Learning Campus, Local General Hospital, Leisure Centre and Sports Pitches, a Theatre, high quality offices and around 700 homes.

The hospital – Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan opened in December 2010, and has created over 2000 full-time and part-time jobs. This development has had little impact on demand for childcare in the Ebbw Vale area and therefore it is proposed to carry out a childcare feasibility study alongside a Family Information Service outreach session, at the hospital to raise awareness with employees of local childcare options, in May 2012.

The Learning Zone (Ebbw Vale Campus College) and the 3-16 school, is also part of The Works: Ebbw Vale regeneration scheme and the primary phase will merge the three schools into one facility and also provide a new integrated children’s centre with a mix of childcare options. It is scheduled to open in September 2012

Up to 720 new houses will be built on the site but at the moment no interest from contractors has been put forward. The residential area will include a range of types and style of housing, with a mix of ownership options including open market, intermediate low cost and other affordable housing. A mix of full

daycare, sessional, wraparound, out of school childcare has already been planned and features in the 3 year strategic childcare action plan.

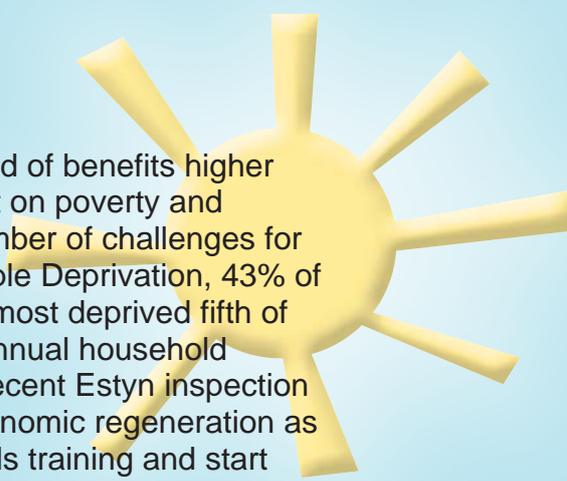
Other areas that may impact on demand for childcare

There are no army/forces in Blaenau Gwent, the nearest is in Brecon over 12 miles away. Our FIS survey to childcare providers tells us that they have stated that this base has no impact on childcare in Blaenau Gwent.

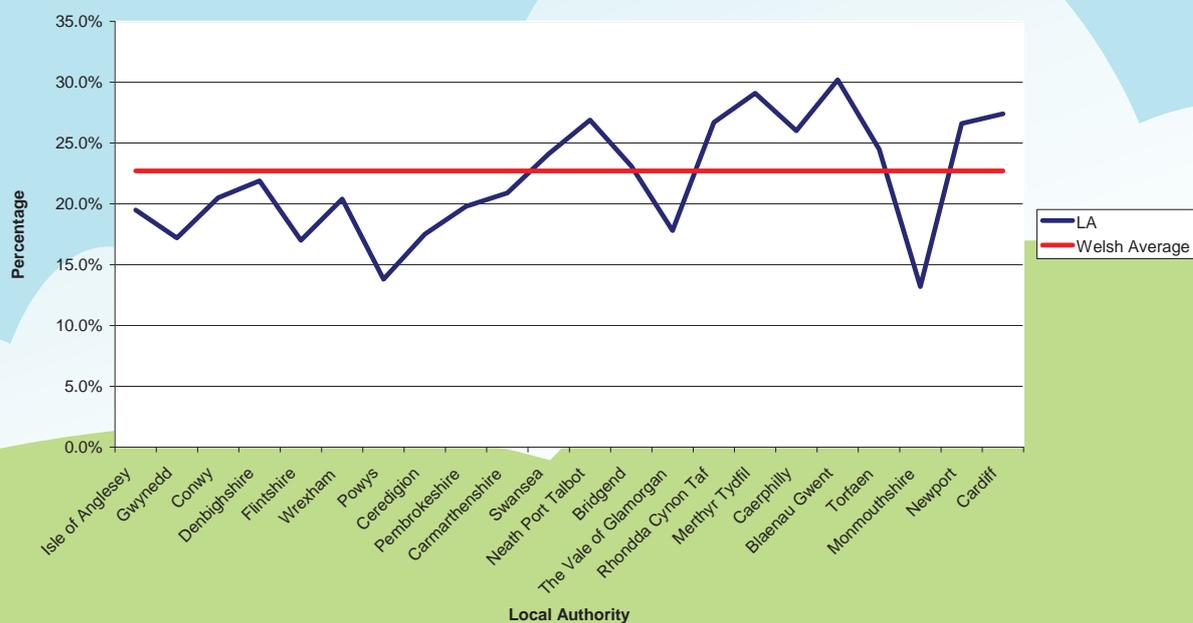
There are also no HM Prisons within Blaenau Gwent.

2.6 Child Poverty Initiatives

A high proportion of working age adults claim some kind of benefits higher than the Wales average, which in turn has a big impact on poverty and deprivation levels within the Borough, presenting a number of challenges for Blaenau Gwent. According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 43% of lower super output areas in Blaenau Gwent are in the most deprived fifth of Wales. As a result there is a comparably low level of annual household income (£25,800 compared to £30,600 for Wales). A recent Estyn inspection highlighted Blaenau Gwent’s strategy for skills and economic regeneration as an area of good practice helping parents to access skills training and start new businesses, however recent research undertaken as part of Families First Pioneer has identified that there will be significant impact on 16-25 year olds arising from Welfare Reform and external economic factors.



Percentage of Children Living in Poverty 2010
(Number of children living in workless households)



The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a duty on Welsh Ministers to publish a new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

This new **Child Poverty Strategy for Wales** sets out the vision and strategic objectives for reducing child poverty. The three new strategic objectives for tackling child poverty are to:



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.

The strategy contains the following section on childcare
'We (The Assembly Government) know that there are some significant challenges if we are going to provide the right type of childcare, in the right place, and of a quality that will support the development of children in the early years. A priority for this Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan must be to promote accessible, affordable and high quality childcare – which offers a dual benefit for employment and early years development.

The Child Poverty Strategy highlights the commitment too;-

- Develop a strategic and coherent approach to childcare policy in Wales to provide integrated solutions to improve the supply and diversity of childcare provision. This will include developing the childcare infrastructure by increasing and improving the range of provision.
- Close the gap between demand and supply for childcare in Wales.
- Work with Local Authorities and the Sector Skills Council to develop and enhance the childcare workforce in Wales.
- Continue to promote the availability of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit and where possible, to extend the reach of the scheme to parents with older children.
- Help schools to build on existing provision and consider what additional services or activities that they and their partners might develop, particularly in the field of childcare.
- Continue to support the development of out of schools care in Community Focused Schools and the development of activities for children and young people as part of that childcare package. Community Focused Schools can provide important wraparound childcare.

The key Child poverty initiatives are;-

Flying Start

Flying Start is targeted at 0-3 year olds in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. It aims to create positive outcomes in the medium and long term. It is a prescriptive programme, based on international evidence of what works.

What it means in practice

- free quality part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds
- an enhanced Health Visiting service (where the Health Visitor caseload is capped at 110 children)
- access to Parenting Programmes
- access to Language and Play sessions.



* Please see Flying Start plan of this plan.

Families First Deputy Minister for Children Huw Lewis announced Wales “Families First” project as part of the Welsh Government’s commitment to support families and tackle child poverty.

The aim of the project is to lead the way in improving the delivery of services to families across Wales, especially those living in poverty, as set out in the Assembly Government’s draft Child Poverty Strategy. The Assembly Government wants to rapidly identify best ways of working and share this on an all –Wales basis.

Communities 1st

The **Communities First** Programme aims to address the needs of families and children living in our most deprived (Communities First) areas, experiencing multiple deprivation. There is a wide range of work being undertaken targeted at supporting children and young people through Communities First and the programme exists to provide local people with opportunities to play an active role in shaping the future of their community and engage mainstream services such as Families First proposals.

2.7 Conclusions from Demand;-

What does the demand tell us now in 2012/2013?

In conclusion, the data that has been analysed from the demand exercise tells us there are no new emerging gaps for childcare provision in Blaenau Gwent that have not already been planned for.

Does this reinforce gaps on previous gap analysis?



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.

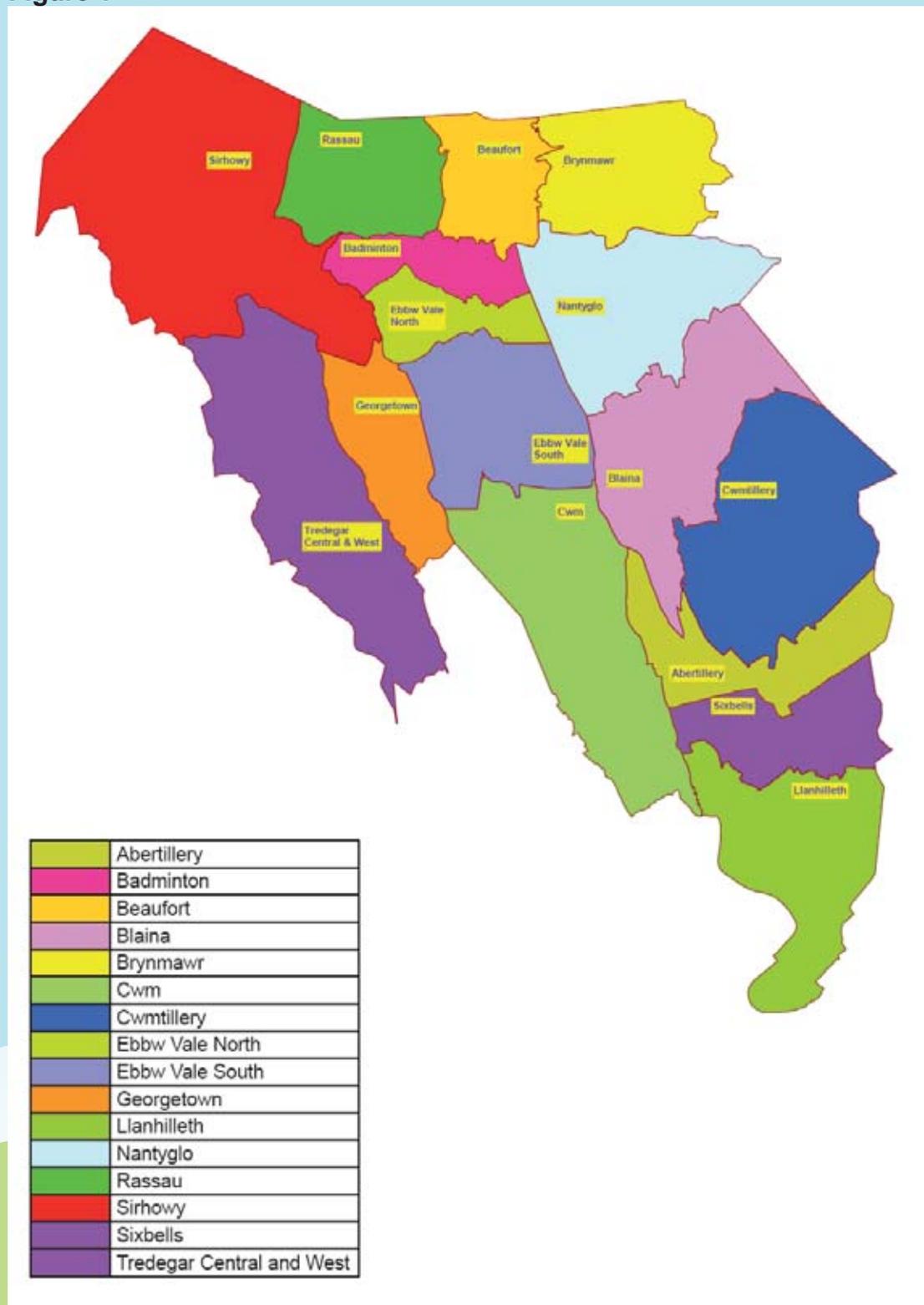
In order to carry out this refresh, all registered childcare providers have been given the opportunity in reviewing the information we currently hold on them, allowing them to provide comments on the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent for this analysis.

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.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council localities

Figure 1



3.2 Analysis of Supply Summary

There is a total of 83 registered providers located across Blaenau Gwent County Borough. All settings are registered with CSSIW (Care and Social Services Inspectorate), a fee is payable and therefore all parents accessing these provisions are eligible to claim the Childcare element of the Tax Credit.

3.3 Number of registered providers

Chart 1 indicates that there were 83 CSSIW registered providers in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as of the 31st December 2011, an overall increase of 3 settings since 31st October 2010 (this is offset by de-registrations).

Of these:

- 40 (48%) are childminder settings an overall increase of 1 setting
- 6 (7%) are private day nurseries an overall increase of 1 setting
- 16 (20%) are pre-school playgroups an overall increase of 1
- 9 (11%) are holiday clubs and overall increase of 1 setting
- 12 (14%) are out of school clubs, of these 10 provide after school care, with an overall increase of 1 and 2 providing breakfast club provision, with no overall increase.
- 6 provisions provide wrap-a-round care an with an overall increase of 1 setting

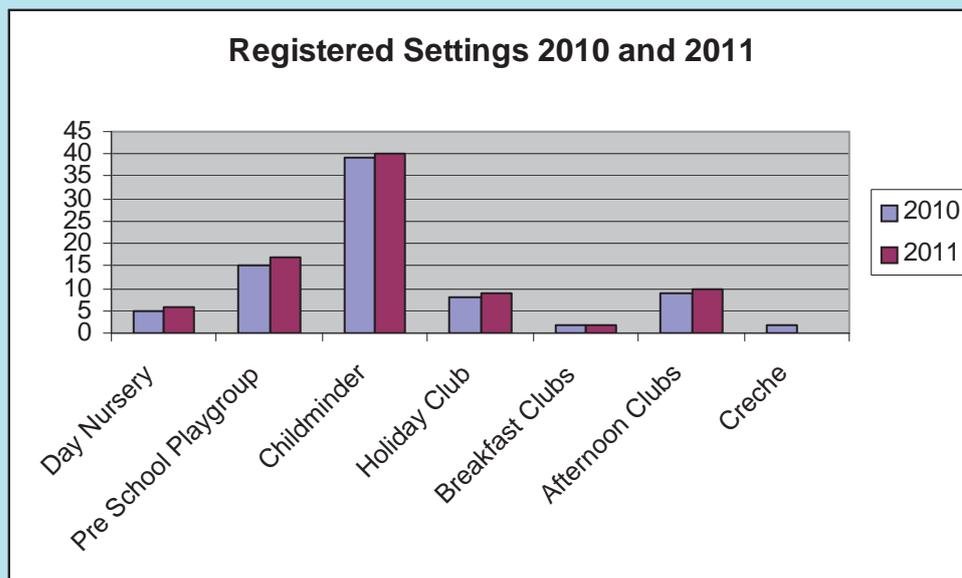


Chart 1 indicates the overall number of settings in 2010 and 2011

3.4 Total Free Provision

In addition there are

- 24 Free Breakfast Clubs
- 30 Early Years education providers, of these 3 settings are in the non-maintained sector and 27 are located in schools
- 6 registered Flying Start Settings

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	235	261
Breakfast Club	45	45
Childminder	162	168
Creche	27	0
Day Nursery	218	260
Holiday Club	213	241
Meithrin/Playgroup	464	516
Total	1364	1491

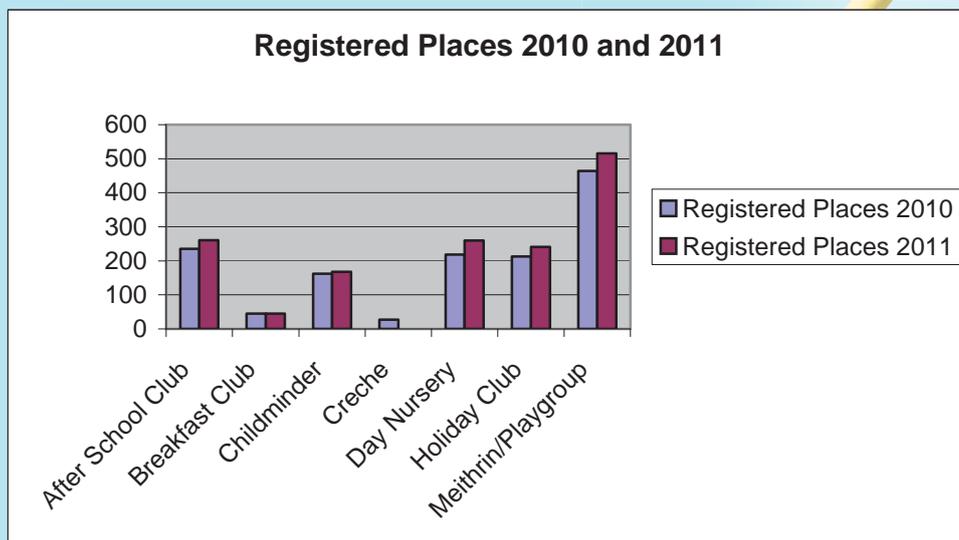
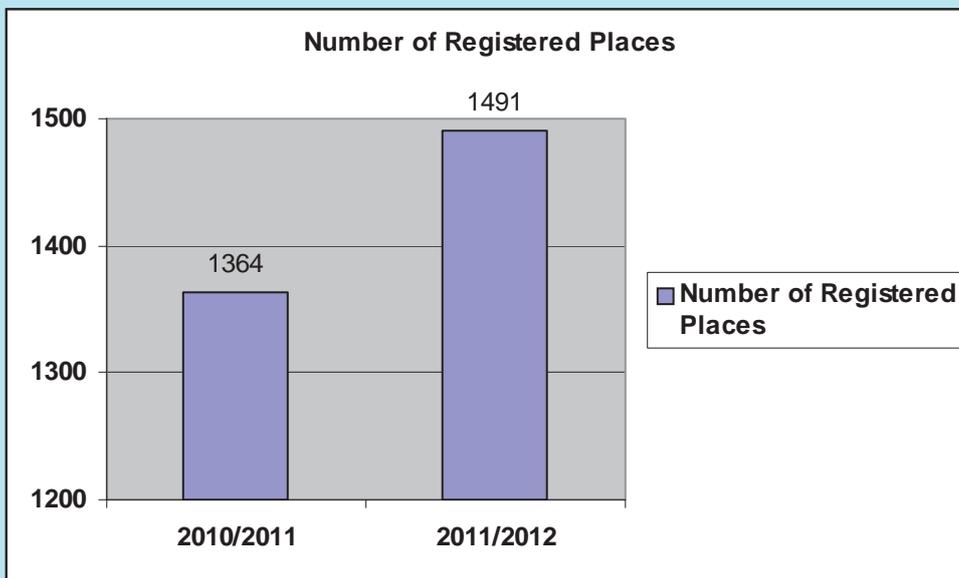


Chart 2 indicates the total number of CSSIW registered places by setting type. There are a total number of 1491 places compared to 1364 in 2010, an increase of 127 places (8.5%).



This figure also takes into account settings offering 2 sessions per day (e.g. a setting registered for 24 children may have 2 sessions 1 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon therefore this figure has been calculated as 48 children). OOSC data includes after school clubs in day nursery settings. Holiday clubs includes data for holiday clubs in day nursery settings. 14-17 places are available in all settings and available on an ad hoc basis providing there is funding available for additional staff.

Chart 3 above indicates the overall total increase of registered childcare places within the borough from 2010/11 to 2011/12.

Section 5 - Vacancies Places by age range Section

5.1 Total Number of vacancies for children aged 0-17 years

This section addresses the total number of vacancies within both English and Welsh registered settings, broken down by age range and overall registered vacancies. The figures show actual numbers collected from registered settings on 31st December 2011 by The Family Information Service. These figures will differ from the number of places offered in section 3 as it allows for both part-time places and children over the age of 8 years.

Note: The figures below do not include early years education places or free breakfast clubs

- 880 total vacancies in the age range 0-17 years.

Chart 4 Number of vacancies for children aged 0-17

Political Ward Description	Provider Type Description	Over 18 Months To 5 Years	Over 5 Years - Under 8 Years	Over 8yrs - Under 14 Years	Under 18 Months	Total
Abertillery	Total	39	17	17	3	76
Badminton	Total	6	5	2	5	18
Beaufort	Total	2	1	1	1	5
Blaina	Total	51	43	59	7	160
Brynmawr	Total	25	35	29	5	94
Cwm	Total	11	11	10	1	33
Cwmtillery	Total	1	19	19	1	40
Ebbw Vale North	Total	21	20	20	1	62
Ebbw Vale South	Total	6	1	1	6	14
Georgetown	Total	4	1	3	1	9
Llanhilleth	Total	9	6	4	4	23
Nantyglo	Total	15	14	13	3	45
Rassau	Total	65	49	33	4	151
Sirhowy	Total	19	3	3	24	49
Six Bells	Total	5	5	2	3	15
Tredegar Central and West	Total	53	16	16	1	86
Total		332	246	232	70	880

NB the above figure will differ from that of total vacancies as it incorporates part time vacancies and including full time vacancies.

5.2 Comparison Figures 2010 – 2011

Chart 5 Changes in Childcare since 2011

Provision	FIS Provider Name	Date Registered De-Registered	New Registration	De - Registration
Day Nursery	Butterflies Day Nursery	Dec-11	50	
Creche	Dinky Dragons	Apr-11		12
	Leaps and Bounds	Apr-11		15
Childminders	Keren Price	Apr-11	5	
	Claire Watkins	May-11	3	
	Belinda Taylor	Jun-11	3	
	Laura Edwards	Dec-11	4	
	Michelle Robins	Dec-11		3
	Michelle Owen	Dec-11		3
Pre School Playgroup	Mini Me Beaufort	Dec-11	20	
	Twinkle Tots	Dec-11	24	
	Busy Bees	Jan-11		18
	Cylch Meithrin Dwylo Bach	Jan-11		20
Out of School Clubs	Gob Stoppers HC Tredegar	Jul-11	20	
	Gob Stoppers HC Abertillery	Jul-11	24	
	Helyg Sbri Di Ri is Ysgol	Dec-11	16	
	Whizz Kids HC	Apr-11		24
	The Laughing Lions	Dec-11		26
	Only Kidz Aloud			
Total			169	121

5.3 Breakdown by ward places vacancies 0-7 years

Chart 6 Number of vacancies for children aged 0-7

Political Ward Description	Provider Type Description	Over 18 Months To 5 Years	Over 5 Years - Under 8 Years	Under 18 Months	Total
Abertillery	Total	39	17	3	59
Badminton	Total	6	5	5	16
Beaufort	Total	2	1	1	4
Blaina	Total	51	43	7	101
Brynmawr	Total	25	35	5	65
Cwm	Total	11	11	1	23
Cwmtillery	Total	1	19	1	21
Ebbw Vale North	Total	21	20	1	42
Ebbw Vale South	Total	6	1	6	13
Georgetown	Total	4	1	1	6
Llanhilleth	Total	9	6	4	19
Nantyglo	Total	15	14	3	32
Rassau	Total	65	49	4	118
Sirhowy	Total	19	3	24	46
Six Bells	Total	5	5	3	13
Tredegar Central and West	Total	53	16	1	70
Total		332	246	70	648

- The above chart shows that there are currently a total of 648 vacancies available for children aged 0-7 years.

5.4 Breakdown by ward places vacancies 8-17 Years

Chart 7 Number of vacancies for children aged 8-17years

Political Ward Description	Provider Type Description	Over 8yrs - Under 17 Years	Total
Abertillery	Total	17	17
Badminton	Total	2	2
Beaufort	Total	1	1
Blaina	Total	59	59
Brynmawr	Total	29	29
Cwm	Total	10	10
Cwmtillery	Total	19	19
Ebbw Vale North	Total	20	20
Ebbw Vale South	Total	1	1
Georgetown	Total	3	3
Llanhilleth	Total	4	4
Nantyglo	Total	13	13
Rassau	Total	33	33
Sirhowy	Total	3	3
Six Bells	Total	2	2
Tredegar Central and West	Total	16	16
Total		232	232

- The above chart shows that there are currently 232 vacancies for children aged 8 years to 17 yrs (14-17ys included).

5.5 Breakdown of ward vacancies places by Age Category and Languages Spoken

The above table indicates that there are currently 36 vacancies available in those settings that are of a dedicated Welsh Setting only and 499 vacancies are available in an English/Welsh setting and 218 vacancies available in an English only setting.

NB Please note that the providers indicates the type of settings they are which is then recorded by FIS.

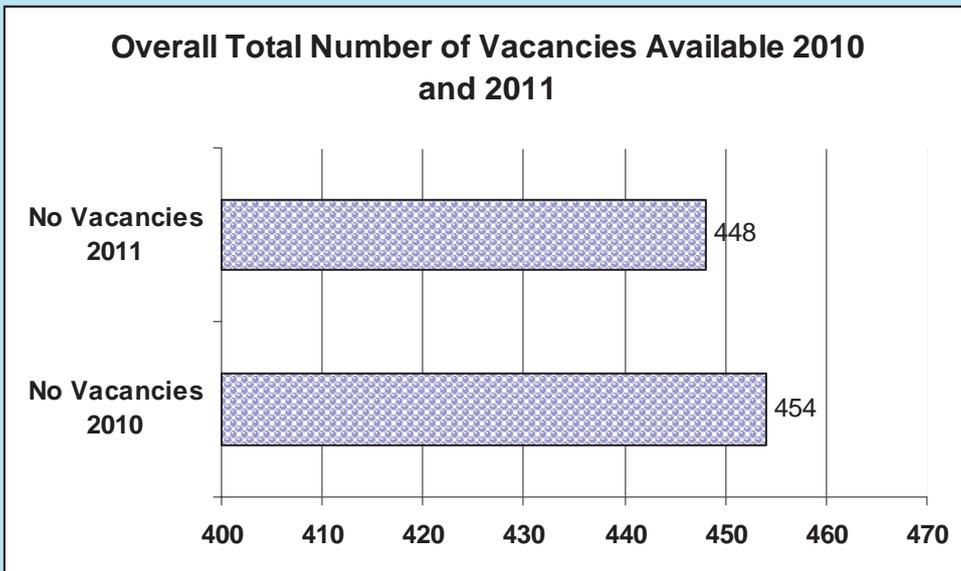
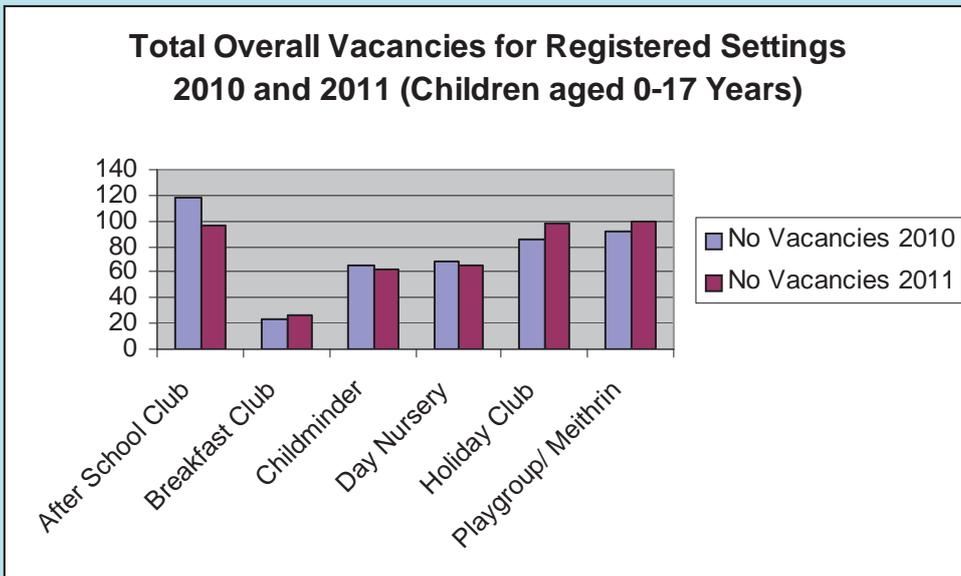
Chart 8 Number of vacancies for children aged 0-17 broken down by age category and spoken language for that setting

Political Ward Description	Provider Type Description	(A) Welsh Setting	(B) Welsh/ English	(C) Bilingual/ Setting	(D) English/ Welsh	(E) English Setting	Total
Abertillery	Total				30	46	76
Badminton	Total					18	18
Beaufort	Total				5	0	5
Blaina	Total				176		176
Brynmawr	Total		0		72	23	95
Cwm	Total				32	1	33
Cwmtillery	Total				3	1	4
Ebbw Vale North	Total			0	5	15	20
Ebbw Vale South	Total					14	14
Georgetown	Total				4		4
Llanhilleth	Total				13	10	23
Nantyglo	Total	12			9	12	33
Rassau	Total				118	33	151
Sirhowy	Total				0	45	45
Six Bells	Total				15		15
Tredegar Central and West	Total	24			17		41
Total		36	0	0	499	218	753

Chart 9

Number of Full Time Vacancies in Registered Settings for Children aged 0-17 Years

Provider Type	No Vacancies 2010	No Vacancies 2011
After School Club	119	97
Breakfast Club	24	26
Childminder	65	62
Day Nursery	69	65
Holiday Club	86	98
Playgroup/ Meithrin	91	100
Total	454	448



The above chart indicates that there were 454 overall vacancies in 2010, and 448 overall vacancies in 2011, an overall decrease of 6 places but this is because of the new day nursery and holiday clubs coming on board. The overall vacancy rate had dropped to 368.

Number of settings providing a pick up and drop off service

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Meithrin	OOSC	Playgroup
Abertillery	4				
Badminton	2				
Beaufort	2				
Blaina		1		1	1
Brynmawr	5				1
Cwm	1				
Cwmtillery	3				
Ebbw Vale North	1				
Ebbw Vale South	2	1			
Georgetown	1			1	
Llanhilleth	2				
Nantyglo	1				
Rassau	1	2			
Sirhowy	3				
Six Bells	4				
Tredegar Central & West	1				

6 Funded Places

6.1 Nursery Places for 3 and 4 Year provision

Information provided by the LA in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council indicates that there are 1,034 nursery places available for 3 and 4 year olds. This is broken down into 974 places at schools (including community schools, church schools and Welsh schools) and 60 places available to registered non-maintained settings. For the academic year 2010/11, in total 789 places were offered to eligible children 3 and 4 year olds whose parents required a nursery place. This is a take up of 76% of all children eligible for a place. The table on following page indicates the individual breakdown and take up of places at schools and funded playgroups for the academic year 2010/11. The highest take up of school places was in the Brynmawr/Nantyglo area (83%) and the lowest take up was in Ebbw Vale area (72%).

- 38% of places available were taken up in the playgroups.

Please note data is unavailable as to the profile of children taking up a place, the ward where the children live and whether they take up a place in the ward where they live.

Settings that are non-maintained education providers are also inspected by Estyn. Estyn reports for the non-maintained sector can be found on www.estyn.gov.uk

Acorns Nursery

ESTYN inspection is due Summer Term 2012.

Report from Summer 2006

Brynmawr Pre School

ESTYN inspection is due Summer Term 2013.

Last report Summer 2008

Mrs Tiggywinkles Day Nursery

ESTYN inspection is due Spring Term 2017

Report from Spring Term 2011

<u>SCHOOLS</u>	<u>PLACES AVAILABLE</u>	<u>PLACES ALLOCATED</u>
ABERTILLERY AREA		
ABERTILLERY PRIMARY	52	44
BLAENTILLERY PRIMARY	26	7
BRYNGWYN PRIMARY	26	24
QUEEN STREET PRIMARY	26	19
ROSEHEYWORTH MILLENIUM PRIMARY	26	18
SOFRYDD PRIMARY	26	16
ST. ILLTYDS PRIMARY	26	35
TOTAL FOR AREA	208	163
EBBW VALE AREA		
ALL SAINTS	26	20
BEAUFORT HILL PRIMARY	26	26
BRIERY HILL PRIMARY	26	6
CWM PRIMARY	52	21
GLYNCOED PRIMARY	42	45
PONTYGOF PRIMARY	26	16
RHOSYFEDWEN PRIMARY	26	19
WAUNLWYD PRIMARY	26	17
WILLOWTOWN PRIMARY	60	56
TOTAL FOR AREA	310	226
BRYNMAWR/NANTYGLO AREA		
BLAENYCWM PRIMARY	50	37
YSGOL BRO HELYG	60	59
COED Y GARN PRIMARY	52	33
ST MARY'S CIW	30	29
ST MARYS RC	30	32
YSTRUTH PRIMARY	52	40
TOTAL FOR AREA	274	230
TREDEGAR AREA		
BRYNBACH PRIMARY	26	25
DEIGHTON PRIMARY	26	23
GEORGETOWN PRIMARY	52	51
GLANHOWY PRIMARY	52	35
ST JOSEPH'S	26	13
TOTAL FOR AREA	182	147
TOTAL FOR THE BOROUGH	974	766
FUNDED SETTING		
BRYNMAWR PRE SCHOOL	15	9
ACORNS PLAYGROUP	15	4
MRS TIGGYWINKLES	15	7
TOTAL	60	23

Chart

9

Indicates nursery places available and allocated for both schools and 3 Year old Education Providers within the Borough

7 Quality

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 commitment to quality with its own quality assurance schemes (3 schemes – one for each area of childcare Parent and Toddler groups, Preschool, OOSC's) that were developed in 2003 and annually assessed since this time.

Blaenau Gwent were one of the first EYDCP's in Wales to implement its own scheme and have shared good practice across other Authorities. The development of high quality early years and childcare services is one of the key aims of Blaenau Gwent EYDCP see the EYDCP 3 Year CSA Strategic Plan 2011-2014 - Priority 7, Quality Assurance;- to ensure the quality of all registered early years and childcare services, with its 6 key actions for quality assured childcare. An important way of improving quality is for a childcare provider to take part in the Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance Scheme. Childcare providers who complete a quality assurance scheme are demonstrating their commitment to quality. There are many different quality assurance schemes for childcare providers available across the country. Blaenau Gwent EYDCP has its own Quality Assurance Scheme, which a setting must achieve before passing onto one of the National Quality Assurance Schemes.

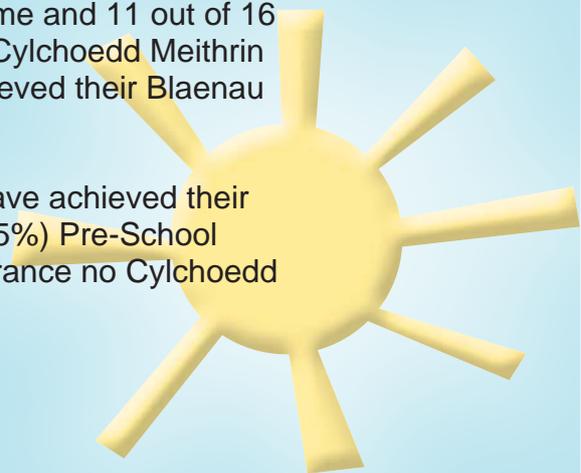
In 2011, need was also identified to appoint a Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) into the Blaenau Gwent Childcare Strategy Team to raise standards in the non-maintained early years/childcare sector as this level of intense quality support seemed to be missing for the umbrella organisations support to settings, according to inspections and feedback. The QIO is also responsible for data collection and monitoring of progress made of children attending preschool childcare settings.

Blaenau Gwent EYDCP tie in many incentives to promote quality and encourage settings to achieve quality assurance e.g. we market, promote and fund quality childcare. Settings can only access marketing support, Assisted Places, ALN funding, Sustainability Grants and expansion grants if their setting is quality assured.

7.2 Pre-School Playgroup and Day Nursery Quality Assurance

The table below indicates that 5 out of our 6 (86%) Day Nurseries have achieved the Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance Scheme and 11 out of 16 (69%) Pre-School Playgroups 2 (12.5%) of which are Cylchoedd Meithrin achieving this through the Medium of Welsh have achieved their Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance Scheme.

It also indicates that 3 out of 6 (50%) Day Nurseries have achieved their National Quality Assurance Award and 6 out of 16(37.5%) Pre-School Playgroups have achieved their National Quality Assurance no Cylchoedd Meithrin have achieved their National Quality Award.



Provider Type Description	FIS Provider Name	Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance	Date Achieved	National Quality Assurance	Date Achieved	3 Year Educational Provider
Day Nursery	Butterflies Day Nursery	Working towards				
	Candystripes Day Nursery	Achieved	27/03/2006	NDNA	25/05/2007	
	Daisy Dell Day Nursery	Achieved	23/05/2007	NDNA	09/03/2009	
	Mrs Tiggywinkles Day Nursery	Achieved	07/03/2003	NDNA	04/08/2008	YES
	Puddleducks Day Nursery	Achieved	20/02/2008			
	Wiggly Giggly's Day Nursery	Achieved	05/09/2011			
Pre School Playgroup	Acorns Playgroup	Achieved	10/12/2002	WPPA	02/03/2009	YES
	Brynmawr Pre School Playgroup	Achieved	12/12/2002	WPPA	19/03/2010	YES
	First Friends	Achieved	05/08/2011			
	Jack & Jills Playgroup	Achieved	12/12/2002	WPPA	19/08/2010	
	Ladybirds	Working Towards		WPPA	24/06/2011	
	Mini Allsorts	Achieved	25/06/2003	WPPA	22/07/2009	
	Mini Me Beaufort Playgroup	Working Towards				
	Mini Me Pre School Playgroup	Achieved	05/01/2012	WPPA	19/10/2010	
	Stepping Stones Playgroup	Working towards				
	Swffryd Sunflowers	Achieved	27/07/2011			
	Tiny Treasures	Achieved	27/07/2011			
	Tweenie Tots Playgroup	Achieved	08/02/2012			
	Twinkle Tots (Flying Start)	Working Towards				
Cylchoedd Meithrin	Cylch Meithrin Abc	Working towards		National MM	26/01/2010	
	Cylch Meithrin Helyg Bychan	Achieved	17/10/2011	Working towards		
	Cylch Meithrin Pobl Bach	Achieved	23/03/2011	Working towards		

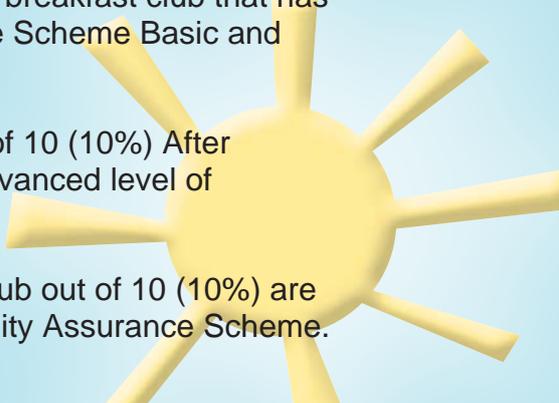
Chart 10 - Quality Assurance Table indicating Quality Assurance within Registered Settings

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	
Funky Monkeys ASC	Working Towards	Working Towards	
Candystripes Blaina	Training received		
Candystripes Tredegar	Training received		
Candystripes Abertillery	Training received		
Georgetown ASC	Training received		

7.4 National Association Childminding Association – Blaenau Gwent Quality Network

There are currently 14 Registered Childminders out of 40 (35%) that are part of the Blaenau Gwent Quality Network.

Blaenau Gwent EYDCP are currently working on the last of its specialised quality assurance programmes – A Blaenau Gwent Quality Assurance programme for Childminders, which will be launched at end of April.

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.

9 Childcare from Community Focus Schools Childcare grant

The CFS childcare grant in 2011-2012, has made a significant difference to the availability of out of school provision and other childcare in Blaenau Gwent.

Blaenau Gwent CBC alongside CPCKC have developed a further 5 out of school and holiday clubs and helped toward funding a new day nursery, in areas identified by the CSA 2011 and according to demand identified by feasibility studies with parents.

Other factors affecting demand and ability to pay were taken into consideration when planning for clubs i.e. unemployment rates of school catchment areas, free school meals and the amount of working and training parents in each locality.

The childcare funding has enabled childcare provision to be more accessible to children and families. Strong links have been forged with schools when developing new provision. Where it has not been possible to develop a service within school premises, the school has been fully supportive of the alternative venue and assisted with marketing and promotion of the service. It is important that all out of school childcare provision becomes an integral part of the school ensuring involvement in school events, newsletters and websites.

The result has been that 6 settings have opened between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2012, resulting in 96 registered after school and holiday club places being created in Blaenau Gwent and 50 full-time daycare places.

Butterflies Day Nursery
Gobstoppers Tredegar
Gobstoppers Abertillery
HC and ASC – Welsh School
ASC Ebbw Vale

The opening of the above clubs has only been made financially possible through the Community Focused Schools start up grants.

Sustainability of after school and holiday clubs is a big issue across Wales and came out as one of the highest areas for development in most Authorities CSA.

Sustainability grants are also made available through the CFS childcare grant to ensure clubs open and remain open £7000 has been allocated to this area. The CFS childcare grant sustainability element has certainly helped Blaenau Gwent keep vulnerable settings open, but due to uncertainty about future funding levels to support the clubs we aim to use the finding of a survey in 2012 /2013 and funding for 2012/13 to help plan long term sustainability for the clubs.

We also continue to monitor take up of holiday and after school provision receiving this funding – carrying out business health checks etc.



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 Welsh-medium education for their children has increased, resulting in increased numbers of Welsh speakers. Every local authority in the area has seen an increase in demand for Welsh-medium education, and is committed to ensuring that all families seeking Welsh-medium education are able to access high-quality Welsh-medium education at all phases of education within reasonable travelling distance from their homes, from early years through to higher education and lifelong learning.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was presented by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in conjunction with the local authorities of Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen. The five local authorities work together in partnership to plan and deliver Welsh-medium education across the area. The plan details how Blaenau Gwent County Borough and the partner authorities will aim to achieve the Welsh Government's outcomes and targets outlined in the National [Welsh Medium Education Strategy](#) at a local and regional level.

The five authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen adopt the Welsh Government's vision for Welsh language education as set out in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy:

To have an education and training system that responds in a planned way to the growing demand for Welsh-medium education, reaches out to and reflects our diverse communities and enables an increase in the number of people of all ages and backgrounds who are fluent in Welsh and able to use the language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace.

Blaenau Gwent EYDCP are passionate about the development of Welsh Medium childcare in support of WG's newly evolving strategy for the Welsh Language "A living Language, a language for Living" which reflects the vision to see the Welsh language thrive. Blaenau Gwent Childcare Strategy Unit works in close partnership and has excellent relations with Mudiad Meithrin and together we have strived passionately to increase the demand for Welsh Medium Preschool provision. Unfortunately this is a very slow process, new settings have been opened but take up has been so slow that we have lost the settings despite intense marketing and promotion campaigns.

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)

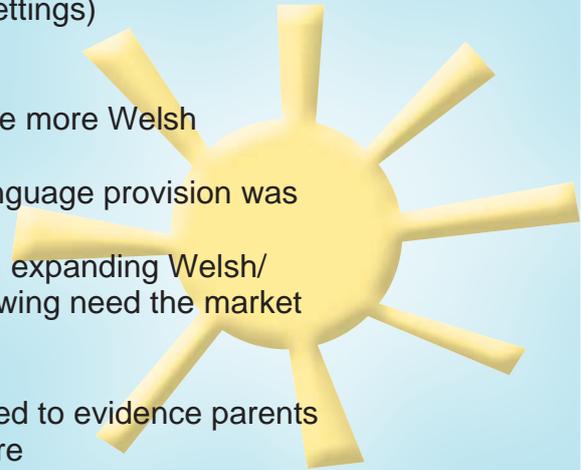
The CSA 2011 also said :-
14% of employers, strongly agreed that there should be more Welsh language/ bilingual provision.
50% of providers consulted felt that bilingual/Welsh language provision was good/excellent
37% stated they had plans in place or are interested in expanding Welsh/ bilingual provision 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 school would have raised knowledge and awareness of the Welsh Language in the Ebbw Fach valley and in turn generate demand for the Meithrin Abertillery.

There is also talks underway to open a new Welsh Medium primary unit in Tredegar, which would again hopefully raise Welsh medium childcare in that valley.



11 BME/Ethnic minority groups

In the CSA 2011, the factors affecting demand and ability to pay report show that non-white minority ethnic groups make up less than 1% of the population of Blaenau Gwent, according to the 2001 census, there is no new data available to date. There was also little evidence that suggests families from BME groups experience different gaps in the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent in comparison to parents/carers generally.

- There was a low response rate from BME groups to the questionnaire survey 2010/11 (just over 3%) which may reflect the low BME population in Blaenau Gwent generally.
- Those parents/carers from BME groups who responded to the parent/carer survey were more likely to state that childcare was too expensive compared to other parents/carers. However, this is based on a small sample and caution should be applied in interpreting this finding.
- Focus groups with parents/carers at an ESOL class, showed that some parents /carers felt that more and better quality information is needed on what childcare is available and what funding and support there is for parents/carers.

There is no further available data for this sector for 2011/ 2012.

12. Vulnerable children

As at **31.01.12** there are **628** children designated as Children in Need (**3.6 %** increase on last years figure), **137** Looked After Children (**3.7 %** increase on last years figure) and **63** children on the Child Protection Register (**38%** decrease on last years figures). It is anticipated that this will have no impact on the sufficiency of childcare places required. It may, however, have an impact on the number of children requiring placements in the Assisted Places Scheme via Families First. Numbers and availability of places on the scheme will be monitored in light of this when the new pilot is evaluated March 2012.

Families with disabled children and young people, and those with young carers, will be seen as an intrinsic part of the Families First programme within Blaenau Gwent. All services will be designed to be fully inclusive with an emphasis on delivering holistic needs led services which support children with disabilities and their families, alongside all families. This will include family support workers offering support and provision such as income maximisation, welfare rights, family support and parenting as part of multiagency team around the family packages which draw in expertise and involvement from universal and specialist services. It is envisaged that the Community Hubs will have a strong focus on support families of children with disabilities, which will be embedded into all job descriptions and service specifications.

- 1 To coordinate regular information to parents - through Local Authority's Disabled Children Index newsletter

There will be a strong emphasis on ensuring that all elements of the activity funded through the ring fenced disability strand are full sustainable.

13 Provision for children with Disabilities and Additional Learning Needs

The ALN subgroup of the EYDCP contributes guidance, advice and information to the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) regarding early identification and monitoring of pre-school children who present with special educational needs and works together with families, children and early years settings to promote positive progress in childcare settings for pre-school children and their families. Blaenau Gwent EYDCP have a robust training programme in place which takes into account all providers need to have informative training around disabilities and special needs and acts effectively to fund training for providers needing specialised training in any field related to ALN/disability which may be needed to ensure a child is placed at their setting.

Blaenau Gwent EYDCP ALN subgroup remit is;-

- To support inclusion for pre-school children with ALN within local early years settings. This will enhance the learning environment and the social development of all pre-school children and thus help to promote the inclusive society that we are all striving towards.
- To promote positive opportunities for development and learning for pre-school children who present with ALN in Blaenau Gwent.
- To develop guidelines to promote positive and informed transition between early years settings.
- To provide training and advice for staff in early years settings.
- To support local developments and interventions for meeting the needs of children in pre-school settings.
- To work collaboratively with the multi-disciplinary members of the EYDCP in order that pre-school children can benefit from quality experiences that meet their individual needs.

The CSA 2011 detailed that some parents were already aware and using the Blaenau Gwent EYDCP Schemes for disabled children and children with SEN and were extremely grateful for the individual advice and guidance given by the professionals and the funding for one to one support given to their child.

Parents also commented that the EYDCP ALN scheme with one to one support for their child was invaluable.

47% of childcare providers consulted felt that provision for children with a disability or additional needs was good or excellent.

In 2011/2012 Blaenau Gwent Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership funded 43 children with Additional Learning Needs to attend a registered childcare setting, providing two sessions a week. Of these 40, 38 (95%) children attended either a Pre-school Playgroup or Cylchoedd Meithrin and two children out of 40 (5%) attended a Day Nursery.

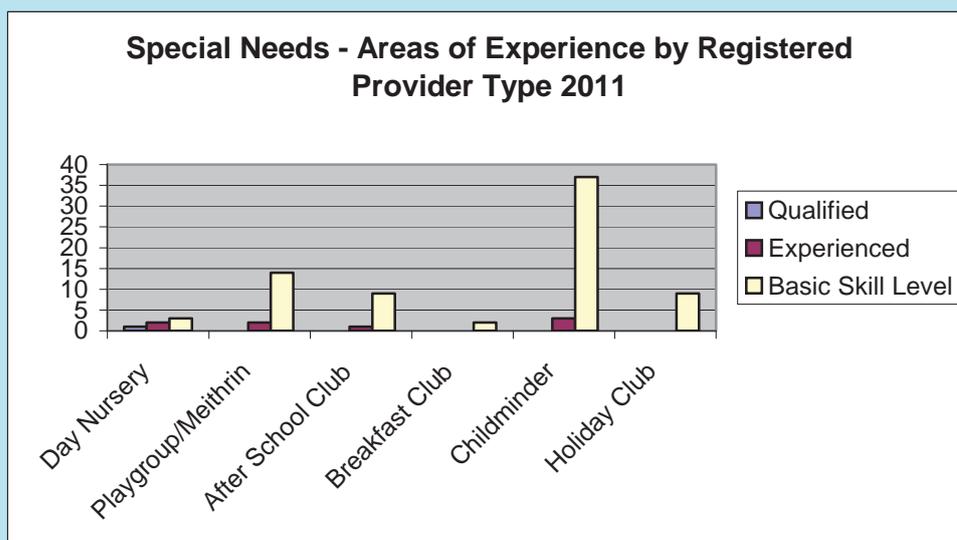
The provision for children attending registered settings, are dealt with on an ad hoc basis by the Early Years SEN Advisory Teacher and dependent on funding for the extra member of staff that maybe required. All registered

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	Experienced	Basic Skill Level
Day Nursery	1	2	3
Playgroup/Meithrin	0	2	14
After School Club	0	1	9
Breakfast Club	0	0	2
Childminder	0	3	37
Holiday Club	0	0	9
Total	1	8	74

The table above indicates the type of registered provider and their area of experience in relation to working with children with special needs. It shows that only 1 registered provider identifies themselves as being fully qualified (1.2%), 8 registered providers deem themselves as experienced (9.6%) and 74 (89%) registered providers deem themselves at a basic skill knowledge level.



Please note this information is provided by the setting themselves.

Chart 11 showing Areas of Experience by Registered Provider Type 2011

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;

- Sirhowy, Tredegar
- Deighton, Tredegar
- Garnlydan, Ebbw Vale
- St Illtyd's, Llanhilleth
- Swffryd, Llanhilleth

Using the data provided by the Welsh Government, and local data and knowledge, the areas in Blaenau Gwent with the highest percentage of 0-3's living in income benefit households have been selected for the expansion. It is proposed that the following areas will then receive FS services between 13/15, based upon the data from the WG, BGCBC data and Aneurin Bevan Health Board data, ensuring that the expansion does not exceed the capped figure of 966

The new capped figure for 2012/13 is 579.

New areas will be;-

- Ebbw Vale North 2 (New Area)
- Ebbw Vale South 1 (New Area)
- Cwmtillery 1 (New Area)
- Nantyglo 3 (New Area)
- Rassau (New Area)



15 Consultation

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 (Brynmaur)
- 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 (Brynmaur)
- More Private Day Nurseries opening resulting in less business for childminders (Brynmaur).
- 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).

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.



Barriers and Gaps

Comments include:

- Settings currently affected by the current economic climate, which has resulted in parents/carers using alternative forms of childcare i.e. family and friends.
- Working parents/carers may find it difficult in finding appropriate after school/holiday clubs for their child/children in certain localities.
- Shift patterns for working parents/carers may be another barrier, difficulty in finding provision that can sustain the hours required.
- Many families are not aware of childcare available to them.
- Families still struggle financially with childcare.
- Transport for some families is a barrier.
- More settings may be needed in some areas.
- Sustainability and staff retention are ongoing factors.
- Flexibility has been highlighted as missing in some childcare provision.
- There are some areas where there is a gap in childcare provision.
- Sustainability and affordability will continue to be an ongoing issue even though costs have been kept low within pre-schools.
- Further development is required with regards to children with ALN where more support and choice for parents were available with residential specialist input provided e.g. speech therapists occupational therapists etc.

Professionals

Only one response was received from the professionals invited to comment.

Full comments are detailed below:

- Parents of disabled children should have more opportunity to access childcare to meet their children(s) needs, particularly children with additional learning needs.

Barriers and Gaps

Comments include:

- Childcare should be available at different times.
- More flexible sessions.
- More affordable.
- Different location that is closer to home, work or study and employer based childcare.
- Childcare that is better at meeting a child's additional needs or disability.
- Access to different types of childcare and better quality provision.

All the above are in particular for children with additional needs.

From the consultation responses the barriers and gaps seem to be what was planned for in the CSA 2011 as key priorities – there are no new factors.

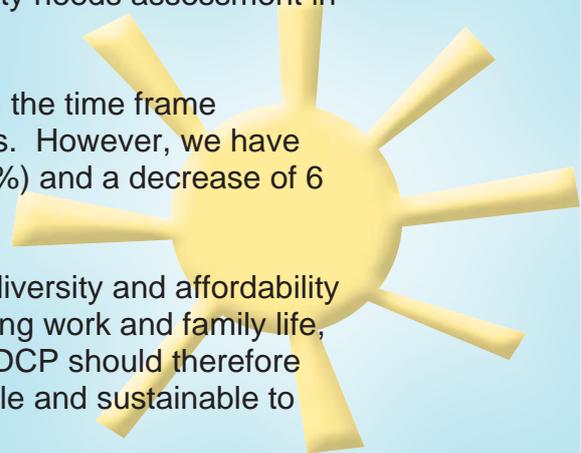
16 Conclusion

In conclusion to the factors identified in the data from demand, supply and other emerging data sections there are no new gaps or gaps that have not been planned for.

The key issues identified are still affordability, flexibility, location and affordable, accessible childcare for children with additional needs to meet the needs of both the parents and children. This is mentioned in a number of contexts. It is important for Blaenau Gwent EYDCP to continue to develop an understanding of current supply through ongoing locality needs assessment in the areas of affordability, flexibility and location.

It was felt that a complete review was not necessary in the time frame specified and findings of this refresh has confirmed this. However, we have seen an overall increase of 129 registered places (8.5%) and a decrease of 6 vacancies throughout the Authority (1.3%).

A childcare market that offers reliability, accessibility, diversity and affordability that allows parents to make real choices about balancing work and family life, which is the Governments Vision. Blaenau Gwent EYDCP should therefore continue to achieve provision that is high quality, flexible and sustainable to secure the best outcomes for childcare.



17 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Progress made on 3 year plan

Appendix 2 - Flying Start CSA

Progress on the CSA 2011 Action Plan

If you would like more information about this refresh in Welsh, large print, Braille or audiotape, or for additional copies of this report, please contact the Blaenau Gwent Childcare Strategy Team – details below.

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