

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014-2017 Summary Report





Introduction

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a measurement of the nature and extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare within each local area. It should help the authority to identify where there are gaps in the market and - in consultation with partners - plan how to support the market to address them.

The Childcare Act (2006) underpins the Welsh Assembly Government's childcare strategy and enshrines in law:

- Parents' legitimate expectation of accessible, high quality childcare for children and their families; and
- Local Authorities' responsibilities for providing information to parents and prospective parents to support their parenting role.

At its core, the Assessment provides an analysis of supply and demand that highlights the following potential gaps in the local childcare market:

- **Geographical Gaps:** a lack of childcare places in an area (wards have been used in this assessment)
- **Income Gaps:** a shortage of affordable childcare
- **Specific Needs Gaps:** a shortage of childcare for disabled children, or children with other specific needs.
- **Language Gaps:** a shortage of Welsh language provision.
- **Time Gaps:** a shortage of childcare when it is required by parents
- **Age Gaps:** a shortage of care suited to children of a certain age group.

While the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has particular relevance for the Council's **early years and childcare policy**, it is also important in informing the development of strategies such as **Families First**, the **Flying Start Programme**, local **Child Poverty Strategy** the developing Blaenau Gwent **Single Integrated Plan** and will provide up-to-date and relevant information that helps the local authority to anticipate the impact of the UK government's **Welfare Reforms**.





Information Gathering

Information for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has come from a range of sources and activities. The 2011 Census has provided a range of statistical information regarding the population along with other up-to-date Welsh and UK Government data. Information about the supply of childcare has been collected and collated by Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service (FIS). The FIS also coordinated a number of surveys included a survey of nearly 1,000 parents and carers, gathering their views about childcare. Surveys of employers, childcare providers and other stakeholders took place in 2013 along with a number of consultation events to ensure that special interest and hard-to-reach groups of parents and carers were included.

The data has been collated using definitions set out in the Childcare Act (2006) and using Welsh Government guidance on the delivery of Childcare Sufficiency Assessments.

Information has been pulled together for each ward in Blaenau Gwent to enable comparisons to be made between different areas and to assess where there may be gaps in childcare provision across the County Borough.



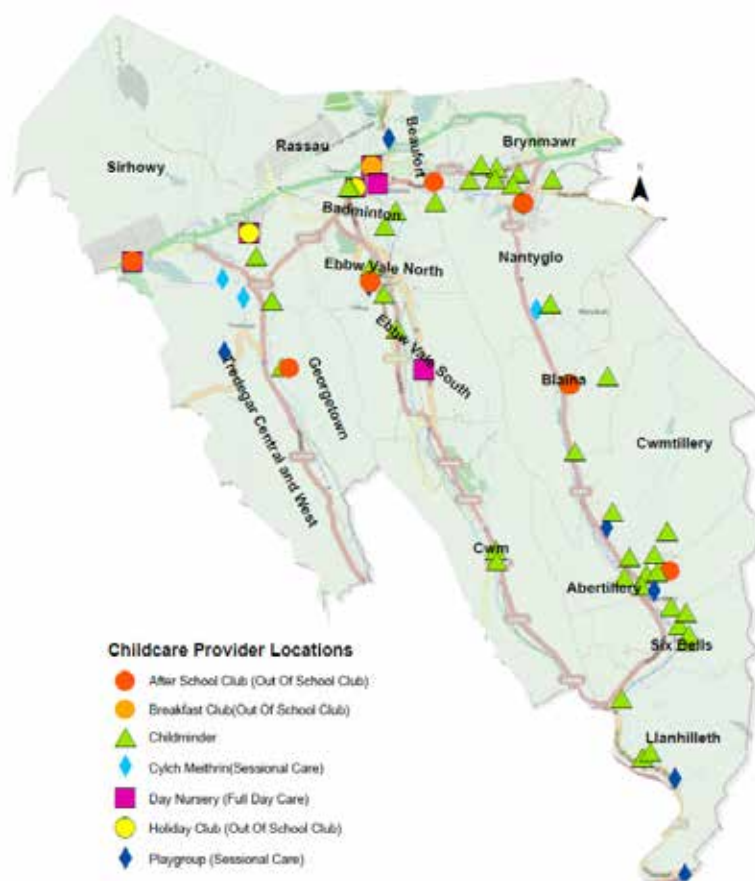


The Supply of Childcare

There are 67 childcare provider settings in Blaenau Gwent offer 78 different childcare provisions. The figure consists of the following types of childcare provision:-

- 44 Childminders
- 6 Day Nurseries
- 9 Playgroups
- 3 Cylchoedd Meithrin, 1 of which provide nursery wrap around;
- 9 After School Clubs, 1 Breakfast Club and 6 Holiday Clubs provided by 9 Out of School Clubs (including 4 day nurseries that are also providing out of school childcare).

Figure 1: Location of Childcare Services



Together, these settings provide 1,292 across the County Borough although as shown in the figures and map below, the places are very unevenly spread.





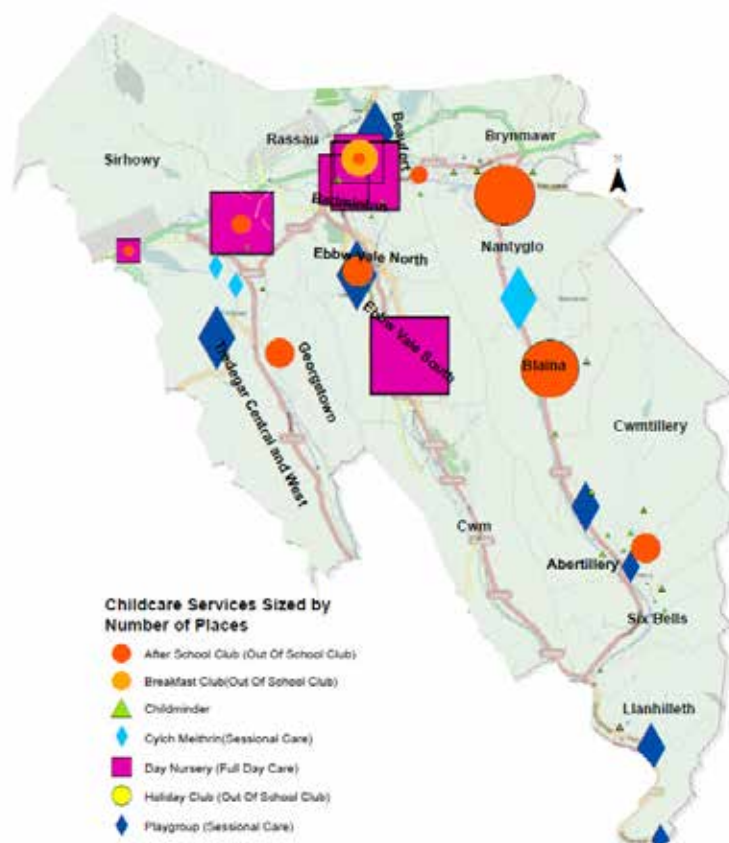
Figure 2: Number of places by locality and provider type

Blaenau Gwent Council Ward	After School Club (Out Of School Club)	Breakfast Club(Out Of School Club)	Childminder	Cylch Meithrin(Sessional Care)	Day Nursery (Full Day Care)	Holiday Club (Out Of School Club)	Playgroup (Sessional Care)	Total
Abertillery	24		27				26	77
Badminton			8					8
Beaufort	14		4		55		52	125
Blaina	46		6			46		98
Brynmawr	48		41			48	24	161
Cwm			6					6
Cwmtillery			23				40	63
Ebbw Vale North	24		4			24	56	108
Ebbw Vale South			9		63			72
Georgetown	24		3					27
Llanhilleth			24				66	90
Nantyglo			4	52				56
Rassau	10	29	8		79	20	26	172
Sirhowy	24		10		69	16		119
Six Bells			16					16
Tredegar Central and West				42			52	94
BG Total	214	29	193	94	266	154	342	1292



Figure 3: Location of childcare services sized by registered places (2013)

(The size of each icon represents the relative number of registered childcare places)

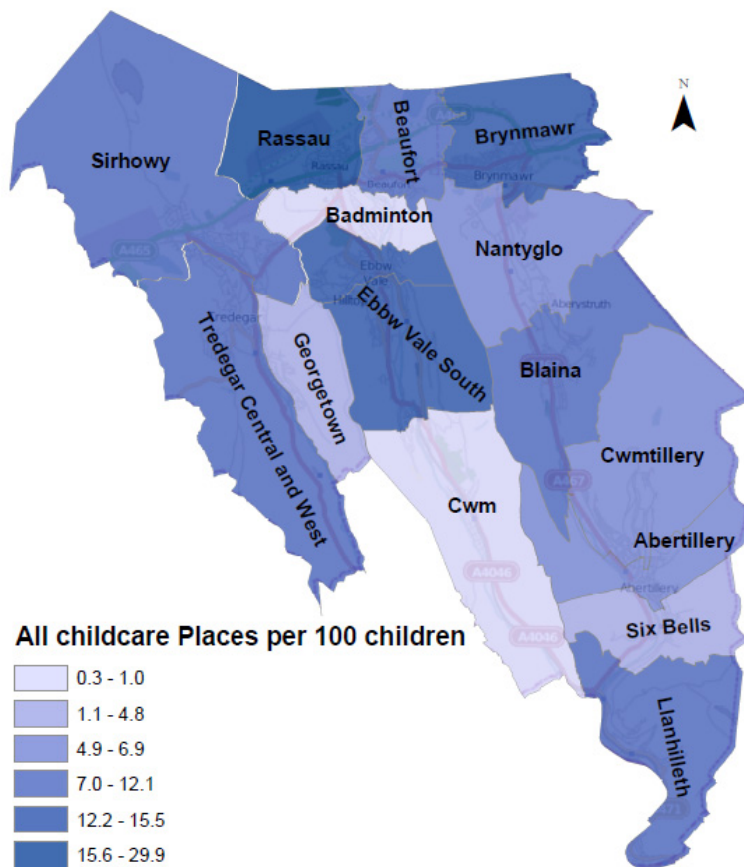




The total number of places in each locality differs between term and during school holidays. While there are 1138 childcare places in Blaenau Gwent during term time, this is reduced to 613 places during school holidays. Not all of these childcare places can be accessed by all age groups of children.

The number of childcare places available compared with the total number of children aged 14 and under in each ward provides a more accurate measurement of the amount of childcare available in each area and is illustrated below. This shows that there is relatively little childcare in areas such as Cwm and Badminton compared with Ebbw Vale.

Figure 4: Childcare places per 100 children in the local population



The availability of these places varies across the year as shown below as a table with areas with the highest and lowest levels of childcare highlighted:





Figure 5: Number of children per childcare place by locality

Blaenau Gwent Council Ward	School Holidays Only	Term Time	Number of Children 0-14 years	Children per childcare place term time	Children per childcare place during school holidays
Abertillery	27	77	721	9.3	26.7
Badminton	8	8	411	51.1	51.1
Beaufort	59	125	663	5.3	11.2
Blaina	52	52	811	15.5	15.5
Brynawr	89	113	904	8	10.1
Cwm	6	6	723	120.5	120.5
Cwmtillery	23	63	794	12.6	34.5
Ebbw Vale North	28	84	771	9.1	27.5
Ebbw Vale South	72	72	762	10.5	10.5
Georgetown	3	27	564	28.8	18.8
Llanhilleth	24	90	742	8.2	30.9
Nantyglo	4	56	909	16.2	227.2
Rassau	107	152	558	3.6	5.2
Sirhowy	95	103	941	9.1	9.9
Six Bells	16	16	397	24.8	24.8
Tredegar Central and West	0	94	955	10.1	N/A
Total	613	1138	11626	10.2	18.9

In terms of the language medium through which childcare is available in Blaenau Gwent, 2 (or 3%) of childcare settings offer a Welsh medium childcare service; 1 (1%) offers a Welsh medium and English medium service; no settings are Bilingual; 47 (60%) are predominantly English with some use of Welsh; and 28 (36%) are English medium settings.

The number of the childcare places that might be available for parents who are working or looking to move into work is evident from vacancy rates in current childcare provision. Overall, 520 of places were reported vacant to the Family Information Service in 2013. This is an average vacancy rate of 40%. There are relatively high levels of vacancies across all types of childcare ranging from 19% in pre-school playgroups to 60% in holiday clubs and day nurseries.

Availability of childcare by area, age and across the year

Abertillery: is among the wards with the highest number of providers for 0-4 year olds. The ward reported as being one of the wards with the lowest number of places available after 6pm, which indicates the lack of flexible childcare within this ward for working parents after 6pm. In terms of childcare for 5-10 year olds, this ward scored





one of the highest in number of providers for childcare for 5-10 year olds. There is also no childcare provision in this ward for 5-10 year olds through the medium of welsh. There is a high number of places available for this age group before 7.30am. For 11-14 year olds (11 to 17 year olds if disabled), Abertillery indicates one of the highest number of places available for this age group, there is no childcare places available in this ward for welsh medium provision. Low level of number of places is available after 6.00pm for this age group.

Badminton: this locality scored neither highest or lowest for any elements of supply, which might suggest healthy levels of supply for this age group, depending on local demand. Number of places available before 7.30am and after 6.00pm are one of the lowest within Blaenau Gwent. This ward has one of the lowest number of providers for children aged 5-10years, with the lowest number of places available after 6.00pm and no provision in the welsh medium. This ward scored highest with the number of vacancies that they currently have possibly indicating that although supply is one of the lowest those providers that are available have sufficient vacancies to meet the demands of this age group within this locality. In terms of childcare for 11-14 years (or 11 -17 years old if disabled), this ward scored either highest for any element of supply, which might suggest healthy levels of supply, depending on local demand. There is no provision available in this ward for Welsh Medium for this age group. The Number of vacancies available within this locality is one of the highest.

Beaufort: this locality scored high for the number of places registered during term time, with low number of children per place, term time and school holidays, which may indicate that the levels of supply are healthy, depending on local needs. This locality also scores low for the number of places open between 7.30am and 9.00am and number of places open after 6.00pm, which may be due to the breakfast club at one of our day nurseries. In terms of childcare for 5-10 year olds, this ward scored low for the number of providers available and low for the number of places registered with CSSIW both term time and during school holidays, however they also scored low for the number of children per place both term time and school holidays, possibly indicating a sufficient childcare available per place during term times and holidays. There is no welsh medium provider in this locality for children aged 5-10 year old. In terms of childcare for 11-14 year olds (or 11 to 17 year olds if disabled) this locality scored low for the number of places registered for both term time and school holidays. The ward scored one of the highest for the number of vacancies they currently have for this age group.





Blaina: this ward emerged as one of the ward with the lowest number of providers for children aged 0-4years. They currently have one childminder within this ward. In terms of the number of children per place during term time and school holidays for this age group the ward in one of the highest in Blaenau Gwent, which could suggest the lack of availability of childcare for this age group, depending on local need. In terms of childcare for 5-10 year olds this ward scored high for the number of places registered for term time and holidays. The number of vacancies available for this age group is also high. This may indicate that the current provision available for the supply of childcare for both term time and holiday for this age group is of a healthy level, depending on local needs.

Brynmawr: this ward has one of the highest number of providers for 0-4, very few indicators suggested either high or low supply in this ward which might suggest that there is a healthy supply for this age group. In terms of 5-10 years this ward scored high to the number of providers available and number of places registered for term time and holidays, this may indicate that in terms of childcare available for this age group, there is more than sufficient available depending on parents needs. In terms of 11-14 years (11-17 years if disabled), although there is a high number of providers available, there is also a low number of vacancies available for this age group.

Cwm: this ward scored low for the number of providers in both age groups, which indicates a low number of places available within this ward. The number of vacancies within this ward for children aged 0-4 years is also low. Other than these elements, few indicators suggest either high or low supply in this ward for 5-10 year olds. There is a high number of vacancies within this ward for children aged 11-14 years or (11-17 if disabled).

Cwmtillery: There are very few indicators which suggest either high or low supply in this ward which might suggest that there is a healthy level of supply for 0-4 years and 5-10 years. There is a high score of places available for children aged 0-4 years available before 7.30am and a low number of places available between 9.00am – 12.30pm and 12.30pm – 3.30pm this reflects the pre-school provision that is available within this ward. In terms of 11-14 years (17 years if disabled) these scored high for the number of places registered both term time and holidays. Number of place's open after 6.00p.m. scored high and also vacancies for this age group scored high for this ward.





Ebbw Vale North: this ward has scored high for the number of children per place during school holidays and term time for all age groups. This may suggest that currently there is more than sufficient childcare for children of each age group. There is currently no welsh medium places available across the age groups. There is a low number of places open from 7.30-9.00, with a scoring of high for the number of places available between 12.30pm and 3.30pm, there is also a low number of places available for children aged 0-4 years that are open from 3.30pm-6.00pm and after 6.00pm. In terms of 5-10 year olds there is a low score of places open before 7.30pm and after 6.00pm

Ebbw Vale South: this ward currently indicates a low number of places registered per child both term time and school holidays for children aged 0-4 years, this reflects the opening of a new day nursery provision we have in this ward we have a the new children's centre. There is also a high number of vacancies within this ward again reflecting the opening of a new day nursery provision and this being in its infancy and currently not full to capacity. This may indicate a sufficient supply of childcare dependant on local need for this age group. In terms of 5-10 year olds there is a low number of providers for this age group, there are very few other indicators that score high or low. There are no welsh medium providers within this ward for 5-10 year olds. There are very few indicators for children aged 11-14 years or (11-17 years if disabled) that would suggest either high or low in supply for this age group within this ward.

Georgetown: This ward indicates that there are a low number of providers for each age group, this may indicate the limited number of providers within this locality. This may suggest a significant shortfall in supply of childcare in this ward, depending on local childcare needs. In terms of 11-14 years (or 17 years if disabled) the number of vacancies available are one of the highest.

Llanhilleth: This ward indicates one of the highest number of providers available for 0-4 years, high number of places available between 9.00am-12.30pm, there are currently two pre- school playgroups available in this ward. With a low number of places available for 13.30-3.30pm. There is a high number of registered places term time for this age group. There is no welsh medium provision available for this age group. In terms of the 5-10 year olds there is high number of children per place during term time. There is a low number of providers registered also indicating a high number of registered places with CSSIW for term time and school holiday for children aged 11-14 years (or 17 years if disabled).





Nantyglo: this ward indicates that it has one of the lowest number of providers for children aged 0-4years, with a high number of children per place during term time and holidays. This ward is the only ward with welsh medium provision, which is supplied by the ClychMeithrin. It also scored low with regards to the number of places available between 7.30am and 9.00am and before 7.30am. The ClychMeithrin provides afternoon sessions, which is why this ward scored one of the lowest for number of places available between 3.30pm and 6.00pm. In terms of the number of providers available for 5-10 year olds in this ward, this scored low, with the only form of childcare being available through a registered childminder. In terms of 11-14 years or (17 years for disabled children) no other elements of supply were highlighted suggesting that supply for this age group to be at a healthy level for this ward.

Rassau: this ward scored high for the number of places registered with CSSIW during school holidays and term time for children aged 0-4 years, there is currently day nursery and pre-school provision provided by more than one provider type within this ward. In terms of 5-10 year olds there are a high number of providers, there is currently provision being provided by more than one childcare type within this ward. Other than this indicator there were no other indication that this ward for this age group or 11-14 years (11-17 if disabled) supply levels were neither high nor low, indicating a possibly healthy level of supply for this age group within this ward. There is no welsh medium provision within this ward for these age groups.

Sirhowy: this ward scored high for the number of places available during school holidays and term time for children aged 0-4 years, alongside the number of vacancies for this age group was scored high, indicating capacity within provider types within this ward, the number of places available after six is high. In terms of 5-10 year olds, the number of providers available scored high as was the number of places registered with CSSIW term time and holidays were scored high, indicating capacity at the various provider types available. Sirhowy scored neither high or low in any of the childcare supply indicators for children aged 11-14 years (or 17 if disabled), which might suggest that supply is healthy for this age group.

Sixbells: No element of supply were shown to be high or low within this ward, which might suggest that childcare supply is at a sufficient level in this locality, depending on local childcare needs. There is no Welsh Medium childcare available for any of the ages mentioned in this report. There is a low number of providers providing places





between 3.30pm and 6pm and low indicators show that there are a very few places available for children 5-10 years after 6.00pm

Tredeggar Central and West: supply indicators for the ward of Tredeggar Central and West show that this ward has the lowest number in terms of providers and places across all age groups covered in this report. There are no registered childcare providers for 5 to 10 year olds in Tredeggar Central and West. The numbers of children per place are therefore the highest in Blaenau Gwent with few places available. This may suggest a significant shortfall in supply of childcare in this ward, depending on local needs.

Funded Early Education

Three and four year olds in Blaenau Gwent may apply for a free part time nursery education place in either a maintained nursery class or in a private or voluntary sector childcare setting such a play group, day nursery or cylchmeithrin. There are 28 settings in Blaenau Gwent approved to provide free part time nursery education places for three and four year olds. Of these 26 (92.8% of nursery education providers) are maintained nursery classes in schools; 1 (or 3.5%) is a private day nursery; 1 (or 3.5%) are playgroups. Nursery education settings are evenly distributed in terms of ward locations within Blaenau Gwent. In the 2012/13 academic year nursery admission there are 826 places available in maintained provision. For this academic year 2012/2013, in total 766 places were offered to eligible children 3 and 4 year olds whose parents required a nursery place. This is a overall take up of 87.9% of all children eligible for a place. 0.8% of places overall were taken up by Early Years Funded Childcare Settings. Flying Start

Flying Start Childcare

Flying Start offers free part time childcare for children aged two years and who live within one of the five designated Flying Start catchment areas in Blaenau Gwent. (Deighton, Sirhowy, St Illyd's, Garnlydan and Swffryd)

Currently there are 5 childcare settings in Blaenau Gwent approved to provide Flying Start childcare offering settings 179 places. During the autumn term 2013, 43 funded Flying Start childcare places were taken up by eligible children across Blaenau Gwent.





Demand and ability to pay for childcare

There were 11,626 children aged 0 to 14 living in Blaenau Gwent in 2011, making up on average nearly 17% of the total population. This is similar to the proportion of children in Wales.

Figure 6: Population of children in broad age bands by Ward (ONS, 2011)

Ward	Aged 2 and under	Aged 3 & 4	Aged 5, 6 & 7	Aged 8, 9 & 10	Aged 11, 12, 13 & 14	Aged 15, 16 & 17
Abertillery	158	75	150	123	215	162
Badminton	67	43	75	70	156	145
Beaufort	136	92	103	131	201	155
Blaina	163	107	161	142	238	199
Brynmawr	209	145	170	147	233	200
Cwm	159	91	133	130	210	176
Cwmtillery	186	96	140	157	215	197
Ebbw Vale North	158	107	142	148	216	228
Ebbw Vale South	163	97	144	139	219	151
Georgetown	110	79	124	98	153	121
Llanhilleth	198	97	146	116	185	211
Nantyglo	171	125	177	161	275	171
Rassau	119	87	105	100	147	114
Sirhowy	199	138	160	169	275	247
Six Bells	86	45	87	70	109	113
Tredegar Central and West	184	126	206	160	279	223
Blaenau Gwent	2466	1550	2223	2061	3326	2813

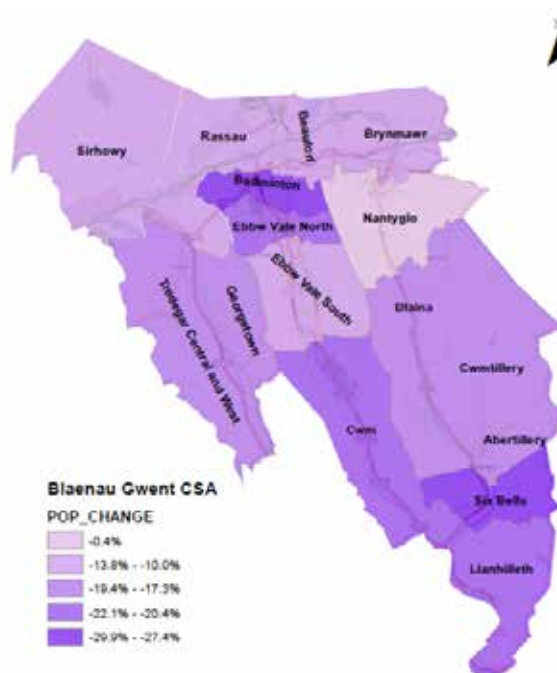
There are proportionately more children in some areas, particularly in Nantyglo Ward (19.6%). In Badminton Ward however, children only made up 13% of the population.

According to the 2011 Census, the population of children fell by -17% between 2001 and 2011. If this were to continue at the same rate it would have dramatic impact on the future demand for both early education and childcare services. Both birth rates and migration out of the Borough contribute to the decline, but it is not clear from official statistics which is the primary cause. The drop in numbers of children varies across Blaenau Gwent as shown on the following map.





Figure 7: Change in population of children aged 0 to 14 years 2001 to 2011



The population of Blaenau Gwent is becoming more ethnically diverse, but only marginally as over 98% of the population categorise themselves as White British. A similar proportion have English as their main language with just 2.2% of the population able to understand spoken Welsh. Nonetheless, almost a third of young people aged 10 to 14 years can speak Welsh which along with strategic objectives to increase the proportion of Welsh speakers, may drive future demand for Welsh medium early years and childcare.

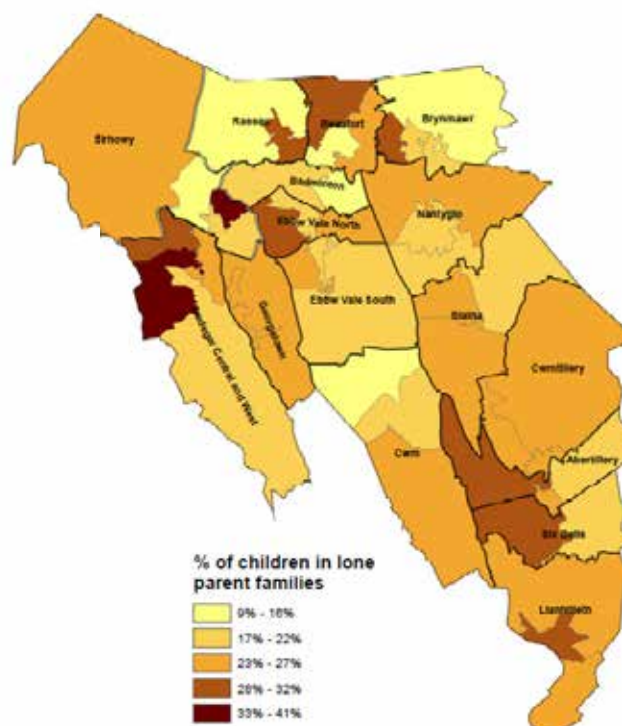
There are estimated to be 628 disabled children aged 0 to 14 in Blaenau Gwent and according to official figures, there are 520 children in the area deemed to be vulnerable. 71% of these children suffered from abuse or neglect, (the highest proportion in Wales). 11% had mental health problems, 4% had substance misuse problems, and 4% had been looked-after at some time during the previous 12 months.

Family structures in Blaenau Gwent are less traditional than in other parts of Wales with more cohabiting couples and more lone parents than in Wales as a whole. In areas such as Tredegar West & Central, over 40% of children live with a lone parent. The proportion of lone parents will affect demand for childcare as despite having a greater need for childcare to support employment, lone parents are the least likely to be economically active.





Figure 8: Proportion of children living in Lone Parent households



The proportion of people who are in work or actively looking for work in Blaenau Gwent is lower than in Wales and it is therefore likely that market-led demand for childcare will be lower. With mothers predominantly taking responsibility for childcare, the proportion of women in the workforce is also likely to be reflected in childcare demand. In Blaenau Gwent, fewer women are economically active and of those who are, more are unemployed. Unemployment in Blaenau Gwent is almost twice the average in Wales and has doubled since 2008.

Given that the vast majority of people drive to work and that employment rates within the urban centres are higher than elsewhere, childcare that supports employment – particularly for pre-school children – may be better located in these areas, while for those living away from employment hubs, working parents will need neighbourhood out of school childcare.

29% of children in Blaenau Gwent live in households where no adult works. In some areas this proportion rises to over 35%. In these areas, market-led demand for childcare will be lower, but childcare need is greater to break down barriers to work.

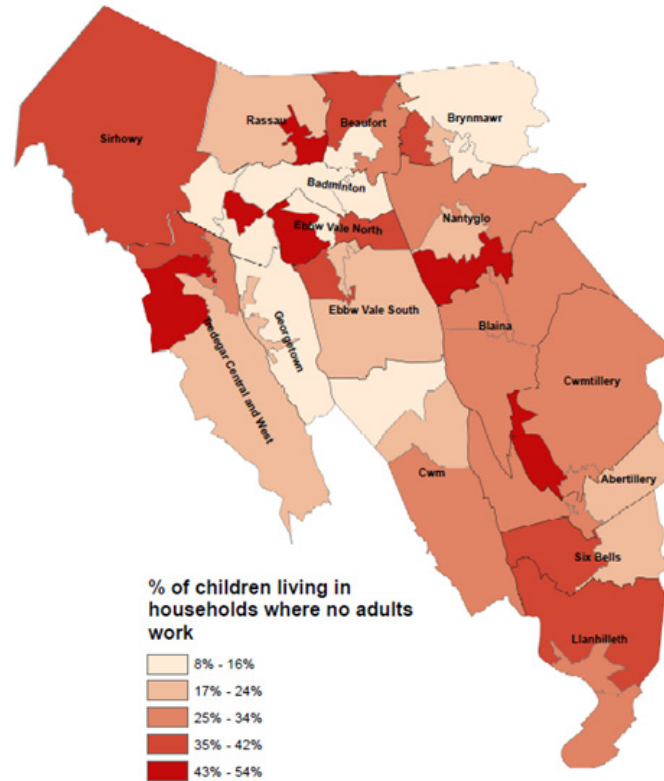
Household incomes in the area are lower than the average for Wales with over a third of households with children in poverty, rising to over a half in some areas. As well as poverty caused by unemployment, in-work poverty is likely to be a significant problem.





Sustaining market-funded childcare services in this environment is likely to be very challenging.

Figure 9: Children Living in Poverty



New housing development is unlikely to create demand for childcare across the County Borough, yet in specific areas where new estates are planned, there may be local needs that need to be met. If the development of Ebbw Vale as an employment hub is successful, it may increase demand for daycare in the area. If the planned new school at Six Bells is realised, then there may be an increase in demand for wrap-around and out of school childcare.





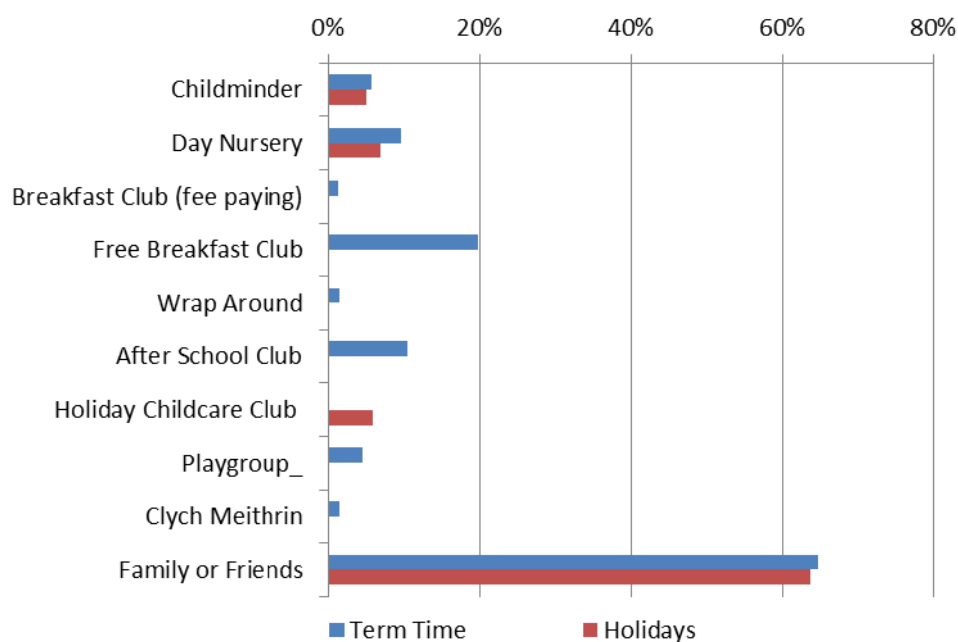
The views of parents and carers

Responses from 969 parents to a survey about childcare undertaken in 2013 are sufficient to allow a good deal of statistical confidence that their views represent the population of Blaenau Gwent as a whole. Responses to the survey were broadly in line with the profile of the population at large and allow the following conclusions to be drawn.

Most families (80%) in Blaenau Gwent use some form of childcare regularly but most commonly they rely on informal care provided by family, friends and neighbours. Less than a third of parents who use childcare use a service that they pay for.

Children are more likely to be cared for by someone other than their parents during school holidays, but again, informal care is by far the most common choice both during term-time and in school holidays. Families who rely on formal are more likely to be married, are most likely to have higher incomes and tend to have younger children.

Figure 10: Proportion of all parents using childcare during term time and school holidays



Of those who use formal care, parents with the youngest children use day nurseries, playgroups and childminders while once children are of school age, free breakfast clubs are the most popular form of childcare, followed by after school clubs. However, during school holidays, use of formal care is much lower than in term time with few children in paid-for childcare provision





There is a general correlation in Blaenau Gwent between high informal childcare use and low formal childcare use. This is likely to be linked in part to the availability of formal childcare in any area and in part to structural factors such as employment rates, family incomes and deprivation.

Parents mainly use childcare to support their work (77%) but over a quarter use childcare for the social and learning benefits for their child.

On average, those children in Blaenau Gwent receiving childcare, received 11 hours per week in term time and nearly 13 hours in school holidays. Where parents in use childcare in term-time, they tend to use it for relatively few hours, with almost half of parents who use childcare, doing so for less than 6 hours per week. During school holidays, the overall proportion of childcare is less but the hours are greater. Children under 5 in term time receive the most average hours of care per week. There is a strong correlation between household income and the number of hours children spend in childcare. Households with incomes of over £37,000 used twice as many childcare hours as children in families earning £12,000 or less.

Where parents pay for childcare, they pay on average £50 during term-time and £66 in school holidays (comparative data for the whole of Wales is not available, but a recent survey in England found that parents spent on average £54 per week). This equates to 14% and 19% of the average salary in Blaenau Gwent. The cost of childcare decreases as children get older and spending on childcare by lone parents was found to be lower than for couples.

Welsh Medium childcare is used by only a very small proportion (2%) of families but is used predominantly by children with English-speaking parents.

Families with a disabled child use less childcare than others and they use a smaller amount of informal care and far less formal care. Parents with a disabled child are less likely to be working and unsurprisingly, household incomes were found to be lower than average. This suggests that many families cannot afford childcare – which for disabled children often costs more – and so cannot work, and this problem often worsens as children get older and fewer services are available.

Parents of disabled children attending a focus group said that they were not always confident in the expertise and training of childcare workers in being able to care for

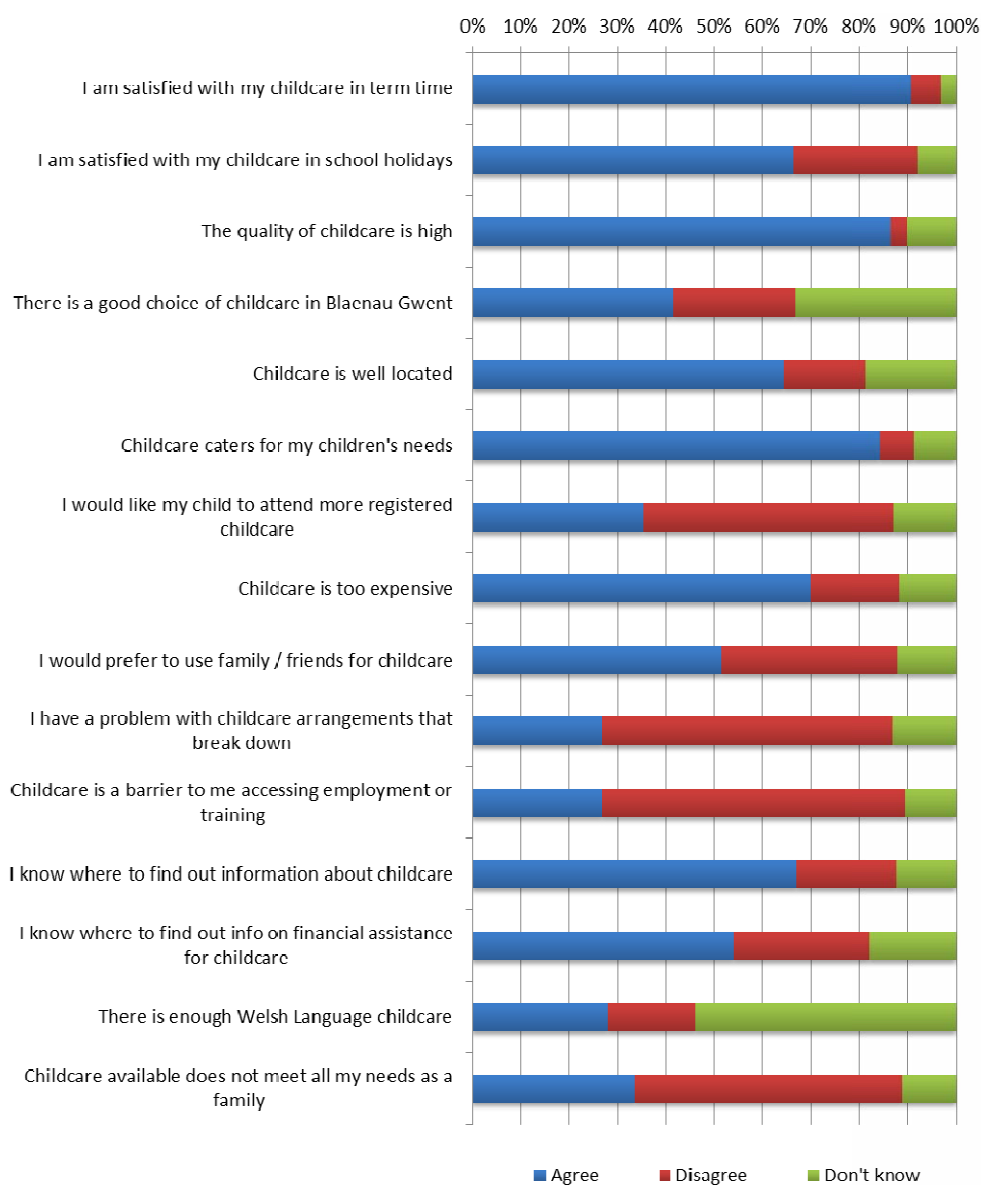




their disabled child. High staff turnover and poor communication were also mentioned as negative factors.

Overall, parents in Blaenau Gwent (83%) seem satisfied with their current childcare arrangements although they are less so during school holidays (46%). Most parents believe that the quality of childcare in Blaenau Gwent is high and that it meets their children's needs. Choice however, is clearly an issue with a third of parents being dissatisfied with the choice currently on offer, and many saying that it wasn't where they needed it. Over two-thirds of parents said that childcare was too expensive.

Figure 11: Parent's views on childcare (n=580)





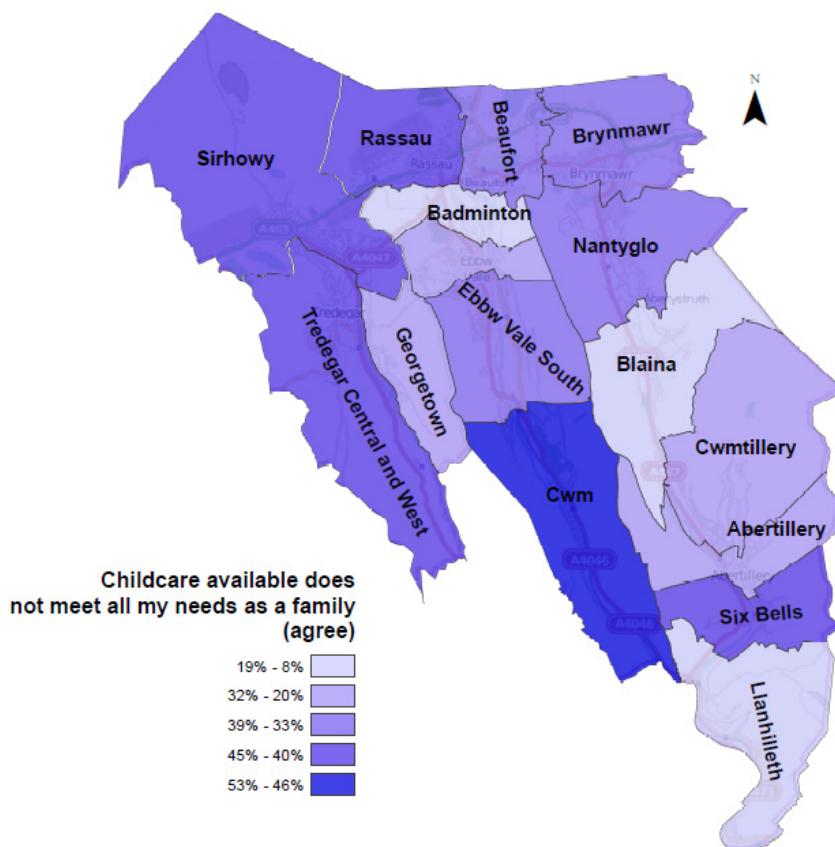
Over a half of parents in Blaenau Gwent say that their preference is for informal childcare provided by relatives or friends. For those parents already using informal care, most prefer it over formal care while a half of those currently using formal care would prefer to use informal care.

Just over a quarter of parents said that childcare was a barrier to accessing employment with higher rates among those actively looking for work, but most said that they knew where to find out about childcare if they needed it.

Very few parents expressed an opinion relating to the provision of Welsh Medium childcare but of those that did, most felt that there was enough provision.

The proportion of parents who said that existing childcare meets their needs varied across Blaenau Gwent with higher levels of dissatisfaction in areas where there is less provision such as in Cwm and Tredegar. Parents are also far less satisfied with the availability of holiday provision and childcare that wraps around the school day.

Figure 12: Parents who agree that ‘Childcare available does not meet all my needs as a family’





Parents who do not use childcare in Blaenau Gwent are more likely to be unemployed, on low incomes and living in areas where there is less childcare. Analysis of responses from these parents suggest that factors such as employment opportunities and parental choice have a greater influence on whether parents use childcare in Blaenau Gwent than the availability, affordability and accessibility of childcare itself.

Gypsy and Traveller families were consulted and found to be using very little pre-school childcare as they preferred to have younger children at home with them. With older children, they used childcare to enable their children to socialise with their peers.

The needs of employers

A small-scale survey of largely private sector employers was undertaken in 2013 to gather their views on childcare. Whilst the size of the sample makes it difficult to say with any certainty that the same is true of all employers in Blaenau Gwent, 86% of the organisations employed staff who were parents of children 14 and under, with almost all offering flexible working options – mainly part-time contracts. A very small percentage of employers offered childcare-related benefits to staff and take up was correspondingly low.

Just over half had experienced no difficulties in recruiting or retaining staff and just under half felt that childcare had, albeit to a slight extent, been a factor in preventing an employee taking up or continuing employment. Over half of the employers surveyed had experienced no difficulty with parents returning to work after maternity or paternity leave.

Employers appeared not to be particularly knowledgeable about the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent – and only a very small number provided information about childcare provision to their employees. They were guided largely by their personal experiences of employing staff who had children and, perhaps predictably when presented with the possibilities, felt that recruitment and retention would be helped by different types of childcare being provided at different times and at different locations – whilst being more affordable.

The majority of employers did, however, have concerns about the childcare market in general and most cited the high cost of childcare as the major factor, particularly in an area with typically low incomes.





In response largely to individual staff needs, employers showed a willingness to assist employees with children. The practical help provided largely took the form of offering flexible working arrangements – particularly part-time contracts and flexi-time – to enable staff to care for their own children or to use the informal care sector by working around the availability of friends and family.

The views of Stakeholders

Childcare providers in Blaenau Gwent are aware of many of the same issues as parents. They recognise that the childcare that exists is of good quality, but that there is only a limited amount available and that it is not always accessible in the ways that families may need it.

Many childcare providers are committed to making childcare accessible to parents, particularly those from low-income families or with disabled children. However, providers recognise that they need more training and support.

Other organisations working with families recognise the importance of childcare to their work and agree that the quality of care is good. Organisations tackling family poverty by trying to help parents into work – such as Jobcentre Plus and Families First - were concerned with the lack of after school and school holidays services and provision outside of normal working hours. They said that a lack of availability in evenings, at weekends, during school holidays and at other times prevented parents from accessing shift-work opportunities.

The cost and accessibility of transport to get to childcare services was said to be an issue that prevented parents in Blaenau Gwent from being able to access childcare and therefore work. Yet childcare provider organisations said that the lack of affordability put pressure on childcare settings.

Mudiad Meithrin said that the lack of Welsh medium nursery provision outside the Ebbw Fawr Valley was having a negative impact on the transfer rates to Welsh medium education.



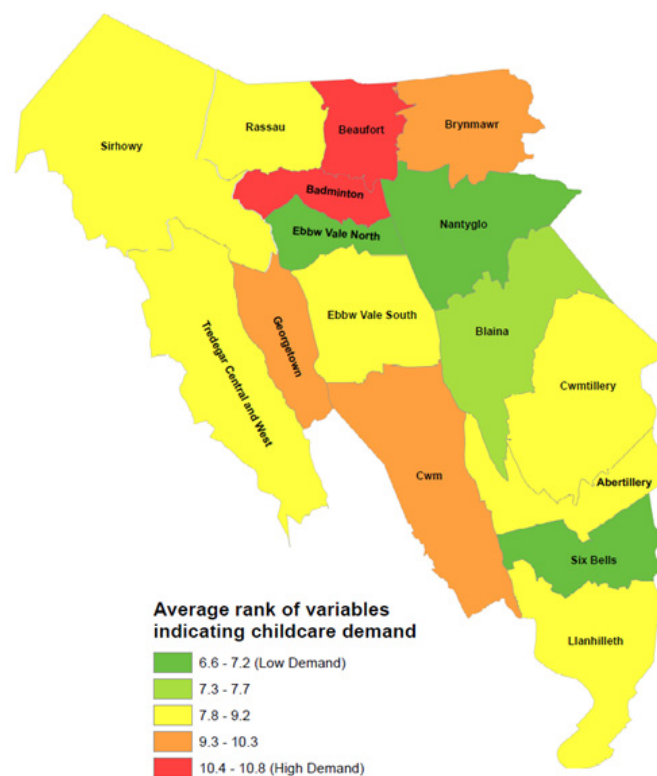


Childcare Gaps

Gaps in childcare are measured as the difference how much childcare is available (at what price, in each locality, at each time, and whether that provision is able to meet any specific needs the parents of children may have) and the demand for childcare that is both expressed by parents, and evident from secondary data sources (demographic, social and economic data).

In Blaenau Gwent, there is higher demand for childcare from parents who are in work, two-parent families, and households with higher incomes. There are areas within Blaenau Gwent where the number of such families is low and therefore demand for childcare is low. Demand for childcare is likely to be highest in Blaenau Gwent in Badminton and Beaufort Wards. Demand is likely to be lowest in Nantyglo, Six Bells, and Ebbw Vale North.

Figure 13: Map of childcare demand



However, a significant factor in Blaenau Gwent is the high proportion of families that use, and prefer to use informal childcare. This is supported by high vacancy rates in existing childcare provision where even in areas where the social and demographic profile suggests that demand should be higher; there are plenty of formal places available.





The number of parents wanting to use formal care in Blaenau Gwent may actually be falling as parents find it too expensive and indicate a preference for informal care.

Analysis of the supply of childcare highlights specific gaps for childcare at different times of the day, during term time and school holidays for different age-groups and for Welsh Medium care. It also identifies areas of the County Borough with limited access to some types of formal childcare. There are areas in Blaenau Gwent where when levels of demand and supply are linked would seem to indicate gaps in childcare availability. Development of more childcare might be needed in Badminton (term-time only), Beaufort (for school-age children), Cwm and Georgetown.

Figure 14: Supply and Demand

Ward	0 to 4 years		5 to 10 years		11 to 14 years		Demand Level
	Children per childcare place term time	Children per childcare place during school holidays	Children per childcare place term time	Children per childcare place during school holidays	Children per childcare place term time	Children per childcare place during school holidays	
Abertillery	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	#N/A	High	Medium
Badminton	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Beaufort	High	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Blaina	Low	Low	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Brynawr	Low	Medium	High	High	High	High	High
Cwm	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Cwmtillery	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Ebbw Vale North	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Ebbw Vale South	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Georgetown	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Low	High
Llanhilleth	High	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	Medium
Nantyglo	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Rassau	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	Low	High
Sirhowy	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Six Bells	Low	High	Medium	High	High	High	Low
Tredegar Central and West	High	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	Low

However, there may not be sufficient demand even in the areas ranked the highest, for additional childcare to be sustainable. Challenging social and economic conditions and in particular rates of parental employment make sustaining paid-for childcare very difficult.

Compared with other areas Wales, childcare in Blaenau Gwent can cost the same or in some cases even more, yet wages and family incomes are lower. This is reflected in the proportion of parents who find childcare to be unaffordable. With nearly a third of children living in workless families, the price of childcare is likely to be a significant barrier to parents looking to move into work or training.





Flying Start is providing the kind of free, compensatory childcare that those children most at risk of poverty and social exclusion need, but it does not reach all of those who might benefit.

While parents of disabled children are less likely to need childcare to support their work, they face additional barriers in accessing formal childcare in the form of staff knowledge and a lack of specialist training. There is also a gap in the provision of accessible holiday care for this group.

There is limited supply of childcare outside of normal working hours in Blaenau Gwent contrasted with a low, but consistent demand from parents (and echoed by providers) suggesting a gap in this area. Across the year, many parents said that there was not enough holiday care available both for pre-school and school-aged children. The supply of childcare across the age-ranges dips dramatically during school holidays when many sessional care providers and out of school clubs are closed.

While the supply of Welsh Medium, Dual-Medium and Bilingual childcare is very limited in Blaenau Gwent, there is very little demand for additional Welsh Medium childcare expressed by parents.

There are limited childcare places available for children aged 0 to 2 but vacancy rates suggest that demand for places is low with plenty of capacity should parents require a place.

There is more provision for 3 and 4 year olds both in terms of number of places and geographical spread and with plenty of vacant places, there would seem to be no gaps.

While formal childcare services for 5 to 10 year olds are sporadic across Blaenau Gwent, particularly in the southern valleys, vacancy rates suggest limited demand and therefore difficulties likely in sustaining provision.

While there is some formal childcare that would be available for children and young people aged 11 to 14 (and to 17 for disabled children) it goes mainly unused with parents relying on informal care.





Blaenau Gwent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Action Plan 2014/17

Priority 1 – To Raise and Maintain Quality Standards

Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	Baseline (what is the data saying now?)	Measure of success (include targets, how much do we want to do)	Responsible Officer and Partners	Timescales
Childcare services that are independently assessed as providing high quality care and early education.	Embed the Environment Rating Scales into all Early Years and Childcare Settings	12.8%	100%	HB/KS/JN/BDO	March 2017
	All Childcare Providers have achieved Blaenau Gwent Quality Award	0	100%	HB/KS/JN/BDO	March 2017
Childcare services that are perceived as good quality by parents.	Through marketing and publicity raise public awareness of high quality childcare.	87% of parents perceive quality of childcare in BG to be high.	Over 90% of parents perceive quality of childcare in BG to be high.	HB/KS/JN/BDO/RB	March 2017

Priority 2 – Maintain Sustainability in Settings to ensure Sufficiency of Childcare

Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	Baseline (what is the data saying now?)	Measure of success (include targets, how much do we want to do)	Responsible Officer and Partners	Timescales
A varied, sustainable childcare sector that meets family needs.	Provide a comprehensive programme of support to existing childcare providers and the development of new childcare.	1292 registered childcare places	1292 registered childcare places.	HB/BDO	March 2017
	Regular monitoring of vacancy rates as an early warning of concerns.	40% (Vacancy Levels as at Dec 2013)	25% (Vacancy Levels as at Dec 2016)	RB	December 2016



	Suite of grants to support all registered childcare providers.	0	No loss of registered settings or registered places.	HB/BDO	March 2017
	Family Information Service to promote the benefits of using high quality childcare.	40% (Vacancy Levels as at Dec 2013)	25% (Vacancy Levels as at Dec 2016)	RB	March 2017
	Create new childcare places in response to changing conditions where this can be proven to be needs-led and sustainable.	1292 registered childcare places	Increase in registered childcare places in-line with flying start expansion.	HB/NH	March 2017

Priority 3 – To stimulate demand for Welsh Medium Education

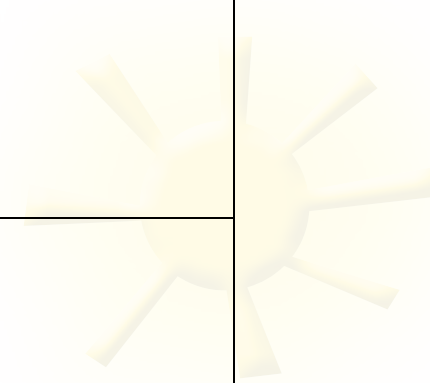
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	Baseline (what is the data saying now?)	Measure of success (include targets, how much do we want to do)	Responsible Officer and Partners	Timescales
Increase the number of 3 and 4 year olds entering Welsh Medium Education	Increase the number of Welsh Medium Registered Childcare Providers	3 Registered Cylchoedd Meithrin	25% Increase in the number of Welsh Medium Childcare Providers	HB/BDO/Mudiad Meithrin	March 2017
	Support English Medium childcare providers to encourage and increase confidence in using Welsh throughout the day	10 English Medium Childcare Providers supported during 2013/14	1 Funded Welsh Language Officer providing an increase of 25% support annually to English Medium Childcare Providers.	HB/Mudiad Meithrin	March 2017
	Raise awareness to parents of the benefits of	No baseline	Increase in the number of children	HB/BDO/RB/Mudiad Meithrin	March 2017





	bilingual education.		progressing onto the Welsh Medium Education.		
	Encourage and support childcare providers to improve their level of welsh in order to re-categorise their language status under the Childcare Act 2006	2% of all registered childcare providers classification code is deemed as a Welsh Medium Setting	% Increase in the language categorise status under the Childcare Act 2006	HB/BDO/RB/Mudiad Meithrin	March 2017

Priority 4 – Information on services for children and families is readily available to parents, carers and professionals					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	Baseline (what is the data saying now?)	Measure of success (include targets, how much do we want to do)	Responsible Officer and Partners	Timescales
The Family Information Service is the one point of contact for all parents, carers and professionals for advice, guidance and support for services for children and their families	Further establish the use of social media as a means of communication.	843	2842 followers on Social Media Networks	RB/OO	March 2017
	Establish and Provide a cohesive Outreach Programme working in partnership with Families First, Communities First, Flying Start and Social Landlords.	110 - 2013/14 Outreach enquiries	% Increase of the number of enquiries through outreach	RB/OO	March 2017





Priority 5 – Create a workforce that is best able to enhance children's outcomes						
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	Baseline (what is the data saying now?)	Measure of success (include targets, how much do we want to do)	Responsible Officer and Partners	Timescales	
Have a competent and suitable qualified workforce committed to CPD that meet the needs of the sector	Monitor training needs through annual training needs assessment.	% of Childcare Practitioners with appropriate L3 + qualifications	25% Increase of Childcare Practitioners with appropriate L3 + qualifications	HB/RB/BDO	March 2017	
	Ensure that childcare practitioners have access to high quality professional development opportunities.	No baseline available 2014/15 Baseline data to be entered 2015/16	% increase in the average number of days of CPD attended by practitioners.	HB/RB/BDO	March 2017	
	Encourage childcare practitioners to access higher-level qualifications.	% of Childcare Practitioners with appropriate L4 or above qualifications	10% Increase of Childcare Practitioners with appropriate L5 or above qualifications	HB/RB/BDO	March 2017	

