

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2014**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER, SOCIAL SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **FLINTSHIRE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2014 - 2017**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To inform Members of the Social and Health Care Scrutiny Committee of the findings of the Flintshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for the period 2014-2017.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Childcare Act 2006 underpins the Welsh Assembly Government's childcare strategy "Childcare is for Children" 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.

2.02 The intention of the Act is to place a duty on Local Authorities in Wales to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare in order to train, to work, or to prepare for work. The Act provides the Assembly with powers to make regulations requiring Local Authorities in Wales to prepare assessments of childcare sufficiency in their areas.

2.03 This Assessment of Childcare Sufficiency executes Flintshire County Council's obligations under Section 26 the Childcare Act (2006). It identifies gaps and makes recommendations that will meet the needs of parents so that the Authority can fulfil its childcare sufficiency duty.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The duties on Flintshire County Council to manage the local childcare market need to be taken seriously and resourced appropriately. Childcare should be recognised as a crosscutting issue that benefits the wider economy and community as much as individual children and

families.

- 3.02 This assessment of sufficiency suggests that the childcare market is functioning adequately across much of the County in meeting the needs of most working parents. However, there are areas where there are shortfalls in the volume or type of childcare. Here, childcare is insufficient to meet not only the demands of working parents, but also insufficient to break down the barriers to work or training that a lack of childcare creates for families not in work.
- 3.03 In the majority of areas, the role of the Authority should be in monitoring levels of supply against changing demand; providing information; and ensuring high levels of quality.
- 3.04 Through partnership working with Communities First, Jobcentre Plus, Families First Projects the Childcare Development Group aims to target groups of parents who need intensive support, or specific localities where the market is not functioning. This could make a difference to families and their ability to participate and contribute to the local economy, and to raise children out of poverty.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 To advise Members of the Council's Childcare Sufficiency Audit 2014-2017.
- 4.02 For Members to note the contents of the report and support the ongoing work being undertaken by the Childcare Development Group in working towards addressing the recommendations in the audit of sufficiency.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 Funding to support the childcare market in Flintshire comes from the following sources:
- FCC Childcare budget
 - FCC Early Education budget
 - Welsh Government Flying Start Grant
 - Welsh Government Out of School Childcare Grant
 - HMRC via childcare tax credits

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 Access to childcare can be a barrier which prevents parents/carers from accessing training and/or employment. The Flintshire Assisted Places Scheme provides families on low incomes with financial support to assist them in paying for a childcare place

6.02 The Family Information Service provide information to families to enable them to access information about help with childcare costs.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 There are no environmental impacts as a direct result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The report takes into account the diverse needs of the population of Flintshire and it considers how childcare can be made accessible to:

- Children with a disability
- Children from minority ethnic groups
- Welsh speaking children
- Children in rural areas
- Children of lone parents

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 There are no direct personnel implications for Flintshire County Council as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to assess the sufficiency of childcare provision to enable parents to access employment or training. There is a requirement that consultation is undertaken to gather the views of:

- Parents
- Children/Young people
- Employers
- Childcare providers

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Between October 2013 and February 2014, a consultation exercise took place to establish the views of parents and carers.

11.02 An electronic survey was publicised to all parents of children in Flintshire via schools, through existing childcare provision, local press, County Council website and Twitter account, local employers and in a number of other locations where parents meet.

11.03 Face-to-face consultation took place through existing structures such as parent and toddler groups; integrated centres; family learning groups in schools; pre-schools; health clinics and other locations where parents were already meeting.

- 11.04 Parents in more deprived areas and in marginalised groups (such as parents of disabled children) were targeted to provide balance against the likelihood that fewer parents in these areas and groups would return surveys.
- 11.05 Feedback gathered throughout 2013-2014, from parents who access assistance with the costs of childcare has also been incorporated.
- 11.06 Childcare providers were engaged through a telephone survey carried out between September 2013 and December 2013. They were representative of types of provision as well as geographically spread across the authority.
- 11.07 Children and young people were engaged in consultation about their views of childcare within Flintshire. In August 2013 41 children and 11 members of staff from 4 holiday clubs attended a consultation day. A further 41 children in 7 holiday clubs were consulted during holiday club sessions. Between November 2013 and February 2014 35 children from 1 welsh after school childcare setting and 7 English settings were consulted on their views of childcare. The clubs were set in both rural and urban areas of Flintshire and representative of the type of provision and geographically spread across the county.
- 11.08 Thirty nine employers were consulted between September 2013 and December 2013. They ranged from small and medium enterprises to large multinational employers employing in excess of 5,000 staff and they were located throughout the county.
- 11.09 Flintshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014/17 has been shared with Cabinet in July 2014.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 Flintshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014-2017

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Childcare Act 2006

Welsh Government Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit 2010

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