

# GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



## Report to the Cabinet

**Meeting Date:** 25th April 2017  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Mair Rowlands  
**Contact Officer:** Rachel Jones  
**Contact Number:** 01286 678824  
**Item Title:** Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

### 1 DECISION SOUGHT

1. To approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2017-22 for submission to the Welsh Government
2. To use existing resources and funding to address the gaps identified in the assessment, and to develop additional child care where necessary, according to the action plan.

### 2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

The Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment)(Wales) Regulations 2016, made under section 26 of the 2006 Act, requires local authorities to prepare assessments of the sufficiency of childcare provision (Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) in their area and to keep these under review.

The draft Assessment must be published on the Local Authority website for a period of 28 days to allow sufficient time and opportunity for individuals and groups who have been involved in the consultation to comment.

Following this, the Local Authority must review the document before publishing the final assessment on the Authorities' website.

### 3 INTRODUCTION

The Childcare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) expands and clarifies in legislation, the vital role local authority's play as strategic leaders in the provision of childcare locally. The 2006 Act reinforces the framework within which local authorities already work - in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent, community and maintained sector - to shape and secure children's services and focuses in particular on the provision of:

- sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs; and
- information, advice and assistance relating to childcare to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child.

Section 22 of 2006 Act places a duty on local authorities to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, provision of childcare that is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area to enable them to:

- take up, or remain in work; or
- undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

Regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under section 26 of the Act, require local authorities to undertake childcare sufficiency assessments for their area. The Regulations prescribe the process and planning cycle, the consultation and publication requirements, including details of the information which must be captured in the assessment. This is a necessary step to securing sufficient provision, enabling local authorities to identify gaps and establish plans to meet the needs of parents.

Equality has been taken into account when drawing up the parental questionnaire, during the consultations and in completion of the Assessment.

See Attachment 1 - Gwynedd Council Childcare Sufficiency Assessment  
2017-22

#### **4 REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION**

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment responds to Gwynedd Council's duty under the Childcare Act 2006.

The action plan responds to the gaps that have been identified within the Assessment.

Procedures are in place to ensure the following requirements within the Childcare Statutory Guidance are met:

Under the duty to secure sufficient childcare provision, local authorities should work with partners to develop and implement the Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan, that removes shortcomings and maintains the strengths identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments. The Action Plan should be kept under continuous review and updated and reported upon on an annual basis via progress reports. Each year local authorities should aim for continuous improvement in securing sufficient childcare provision.

A central childcare budget and Out of School Childcare Grant from the Welsh Government are to be used for this purpose.

#### **6 NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE**

Local Authorities must submit their Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan to Welsh Ministers by the 30th April 2017, with Progress Reports submitted annually thereafter.

#### **7 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION**

Consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders, organizations and partner agencies has been undertaken as part of the Assessment process. Details can be found on pages 6-8 of the Assessment.

The results of the consultations were crucial in shaping the Assessment.

### **Monitoring Officer Comments**

The recommendations address a statutory requirement stemming from the Childcare Act 2006 to review the provision for child care in the County and to report on this to the Welsh Government. The legislation and guidance around this set out a number of specific requirements including undertaking a consultative Process. It is also a statutory requirement to adopt an action plan in response to the assessment and this is reflected in the recommendations.

#### **Equality issues**

The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to address the impact of decisions on issues of equality and rights.

Equality has received particular attention from the parent questionnaire, during the consultations and compilation of the Assessment.

### **Chief Finance Officer Comments**

The Decision sought is in two phases, and no doubt members will address the first part which are the priorities in the action plan (the Assessment and action plan come to the Cabinet for approval before formal submission to Welsh Government).

If the Cabinet approves the gaps that need to be met, then I confirm (as is stated in the second phase of the decision) that there are resources and finances already available in the Children and Supporting Families Division Early Years Department for the proposed action plan to develop additional childcare.

There are resources in the 'Childcare Act 2006' budget (a budget of £119,650 which is already funded in the Council's 2017-18 budget) and the Out of School Childcare Grant (a budget of £ 84,540 in 2017-18 to be funded by specific grants available for this purpose from the Welsh Government), therefore implementation of this plan does not require additional financial commitment.

### **Chief Executive Comments**

As is clear from the report, the Council has a statutory duty to conduct this Assessment. As confirmation has been given that all resources for implementation are in place, I do not have anything to add.