



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills & Culture Scrutiny Committee

17th February 2022

Report of the Head of Early Years, Inclusion & Partnerships – Hayley Lervy

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Childcare Capacity and the Effect of the Pandemic

Purpose of the Report:

To provide Members with an update on childcare capacity in Neath Port Talbot and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector.

Executive Summary:

The Think Family Partnership's Early Years and Childcare Team has continued to support the childcare sector in Neath Port Talbot throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Up to five registered settings have closed as a result of Covid.

A number of grant pots have been administered to provide financial assistance to settings, with approximately 210 applications being made.

Background

The Think Family Partnership's Early Years and Childcare Team is in place to support childcare settings across the county borough area.

Through financial support for new developments and sustainability of existing settings, access to free training, and through work with partners to strengthen the links between children and other early year's services, the team work to ensure that a quality childcare sector is built for children and families in Neath Port Talbot.

Childcare Settings and the Pandemic

One setting has closed down permanently as a result of COVID. One childminder has de-registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), but the team have been advised of four childminders who do not intend to re-open.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
New settings opening	2	5	6
Childminders/Nannies opening	2/0	3/0	2/1
Overall setting numbers at end of year (end Dec 21)	131	124	121
Overall registered childcare numbers at end of year (end Dec 21)	2,335	2,413	2,333

Issues Identified by the Sector

- The initial lockdown and series of breaks resulted in a significant break in attendance and take up of childcare.
- Initially during lockdown there was a break in provision and following on from that parents often made the choice to delay the take up of childcare provision.
- Playgroups had to close on occasion due to Covid breakouts and children not attended due to self-isolating. This resulted in a fragmented service.
- Low morale within the sector at the lack of recognition from Welsh Government for childcare and for the anxiety of staff

returning to work, worrying they will spread virus to their own family

- No face to face support from Flying Start/Early Years Development Officers. Contact was mostly with managers rather than with all staff, as done on a physical visit to the setting. Opportunities for building relationships between setting staff and Development Officers was paused.
- Internet issues
- Staff not having appropriate IT devices
- Families missing out on Play & Stay sessions.
- Parents unable to go into settings.
- Attachment issues for children/parents.
- Children have missed out on making friends/ friendship in settings and in family life.
- Some parents/children have become less confident due to not mixing.
- FS Settings were encouraged to send their paperwork directly to the schools for transition.

Support throughout Covid-19 Pandemic

The Early Years & Childcare Team continue to support settings to ensure they are as COVID secure as possible, accessing risk assessments, policies and procedures via umbrella organisations, as well as supporting managers to keep up to with date changes to the Protective Measures Guidance from Welsh Government.

Flying Start settings have embraced the challenges resulting from COVID 19 and continue to deliver a high quality, essential part of the Flying Start programme despite the extra restrictions and considerations.

Settings engaged with the Healthy & Sustainable Pre-School Scheme (HSPSS) have seen visits to settings paused, however, the team maintain regular contact with settings offering support, guidance and updates, and reminding them of the important messages of HSPSS and of continuing their good practice.

One setting has agreed to pilot a virtual HSPSS accreditation process to help with Covid adaptations. This will include virtual tours and online group sessions for question and answers on certain aspects.

Specific support in response to the pandemic includes:

- Regular updates sent to settings from WG, Health, LA, umbrella orgs via email.
- Support phone calls, emails and video links available but not always easy to gauge the needs or concerns of staff via email, telephone or virtually.
- Outdoor visits offered when restrictions allowed
- Online training provided, including mandatory courses, behaviour management, and food safety.
- Promoting extra Covid funding for settings and encouraging them to apply/
- Providing a Schemas Scheme of Work and resources delivered to all NPT childcare via team outdoor visits
- Resources provided and delivered to support priority areas for HSPSS
- Links to mental health support for staff and children regularly shared and focused on in discussions.

During the COVID pandemic, additional funding was awarded to all local authorities to provide financial support to the childcare sector as they maintained “business as usual”.

Year	Grant	£	No. settings benefitting	Purpose
20-21	WG CWTCH Grant	£102,700	48	Covid recovery
20-21	WG Childcare Providers Grant	£7,455	3	Sustainability through Covid
20-21	WG uplift to sustainability fund	£133,957	96	Sustainability through Covid

20-21	WG Childcare Offer Covid Capital Grant	£122,784		Covid safe delivery of childcare
21-22	WG uplift to sustainability fund	£173,500	66	Sustainability through Covid
21-22	WG Childcare Offer Covid Capital Grant	£65,544		Covid safe delivery of childcare

In addition to the above, funding was secured from WG for childcare settings delivering Flying Start and/or the Childcare Offer to improve IT at their settings.

A broader update on the support provided to the childcare sector is included in a separate Think Family Partnership Update report for Education, Skills & Culture Cabinet Board Report (17.02.22).

Financial Impacts:

No impact

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

No impact

Legal Impacts:

No impact

Risk Management Impacts:

No impact

Crime and Disorder Impacts:

No impact

Counter Terrorism Impacts:

No impact

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts:

No impact

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

No recommendations.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

No decision required.

Implementation of Decision:

No decision required.

Officer Contact:

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