



## ***FULL COUNCIL REPORT***

Date Written	9 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 *
Report Author	Anthony Lewis / Helen Griffiths
Service Area	Learning
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	29 <sup>th</sup> January 2020

*To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Securing Sufficient Nursery Education for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report sets out an assessment of whether the current provision of nursery education for the County Borough is sufficient to meet the needs of the area. This assessment considers both FPN1 places (pre-nursery for rising 3's) and FPN2 places (nursery for rising 4's).
- 1.2 The report concludes that subject to some moderate changes to the current provision detailed in 6.30, the local authority is able to secure sufficient provision of English Medium places from 2020/2021 onwards.
- 1.3 The report concludes that sufficient provision of Welsh Medium nursery education cannot be secured currently, as more Welsh Medium places are required and the report sets out plans to address this in 6.52 and 6.53 as part of a wider strategy to increase the number of pupils receiving Welsh Medium primary education across the county borough.
- 1.4 The report also concludes that despite securing sufficient provision of English Medium places some parents will still choose to wait to access an FPN1 place in their 1<sup>st</sup> preference school rather than accept a place in an alternative school and recommends a long-term strategic approach to address this in 8.5.
- 1.5 As part of the long-term nursery education strategy the report also recommends that, the capacity issues in three schools currently making Scenario C non-viable be addressed, so as to enable full-time FPN2 places to eventually be provided across all of the County Borough's schools.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The nursery education offer of English Medium places proposed for academic year 2020/2021 as detailed in 7.2 is sufficient for the County Borough, and the local authority is working towards securing sufficient provision of Welsh Medium nursery education places, as detailed in 6.51 and 6.52, and is approved.
- 2.2 The Nursery Education Admissions Policy detailed in section 7.0 is approved and reviewed annually as part of published admission arrangements, with a three yearly update on nursery education provision being brought back to Council.
- 2.3 The funding of April FPN1 places implemented through the scheme of delegation from April 2020 (subject to the relevant consultations) is approved.
- 2.4 The revenue budget required to deliver a seedling WM Primary school, as detailed in 9.3, be built into the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2021 onwards and approved.
- 2.5 The long-term nursery education strategic aims for FPN1 and FPN2 places set out in 8.5 and 8.6 are approved.

## 3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under section 118 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and the Nursery Education and Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership (Wales) Regulations 2005, this Council is under a duty to *secure sufficient provision* of nursery education for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil for children from the term following their third birthday.
- 3.2 This eligibility framework for nursery education gives rise to three different entry points for children during the academic year; **January**, for those who turn three during the Autumn Term, **April**, for those who turn three during the Spring Term and **September**, for those who turn three during the Summer Term.
- 3.3 Children who are eligible to start nursery education in either January/April following their third birthday, can access one or two terms of 'pre-nursery' education before progressing to a full academic year of 'nursery' education the following September onwards.
- 3.4 Children who are not eligible to start nursery education until September also receive a full academic year of nursery education but they do not access any 'pre-nursery' education prior to this. Therefore, children receive between three and five terms of nursery education depending upon when in the year they are born.
- 3.5 Welsh Government (WG) refer to the 'pre-nursery' phase of nursery education as FPN1 (Foundation Phase Nursery 1) and the 'nursery' phase as FPN2 (Foundation Phase Nursery 2). For ease of reference and a consistent use of terms this report will adopt the same usage of FPN1 and FPN2.
- 3.6 The following table illustrates that the amount of nursery education children are eligible to access depends upon when during the academic year they turn three.

**Table 1:**

When does child turn three during 2019-20 academic year?	Earliest Entry to Nursery Education	Number of terms of nursery education during 2019/20 academic year  (FPN1)	Number of terms of nursery education during 2020/21 academic year  (FPN2)	Maximum number of terms of nursery education
1 <sup>st</sup> Sep 2019 to 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2019	January 2020	2	3	<b>5 Total</b>  2 FPN1 3 FPN2
1 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> Mar 2020	April 2020	1	3	<b>4 Total</b>  1 FPN1 3 FPN2
1 <sup>st</sup> Apr 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2020	September 2020	0	3	<b>3 Total</b>  0 FPN1 3 FPN2

- 3.7 The table shows that all children are eligible for three terms FPN2 from the September following their third birthday. However, those children whose third birthday falls between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 31<sup>st</sup> March are also eligible to access either one or two terms FPN1 in either the January or April prior to this.
- 3.8 This apparent inequity in the number of terms of nursery education a child is able to receive prior to starting Primary school is a consequence of the legislative and regulatory framework. This is beyond the scope of the Council's duty, which remains to *secure sufficient provision of nursery education, both FPN1 and FPN2, from the term following a child's third birthday until they enter full-time primary school* i.e. until they enter Reception class.

#### **4.0 NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION 2014/15 ONWARDS**

- 4.1 In 2014/2015, (academic year) more than 200 three year olds eligible for a nursery education place were unable to access a place in the term following their third birthday. These delays occurred in January and April 2015 and entry into nursery education was delayed by either one or two terms until September 2015. At that time, the local authority did not exercise control over the nursery admissions process and parents applied directly to schools.
- 4.2 Most schools only operated one admission into nursery education each September and those schools that did admit pupils in January only did so up to the 1979 figure, which limited the number of three year olds that the local authority would fund based on the census of three year olds from 1979. Very few schools operated any intake in April.
- 4.3 In March 2015, as part of a strategic drive to deliver services at the statutory level, Council decided to implement part-time only nursery education across the County Borough for all rising three's and rising four's. The main service benefits to this change were expected to be;

- consistent offer of nursery education to all children rising three and rising four;
  - removing delays to access in January and April so that all pupils can enter at the earliest opportunity; and
  - securing immediate transition for Flying Start pupils to maximise the benefit of pre-school and nursery education for those from the most disadvantaged communities in the County Borough.
- 4.4 This change, which was to be implemented from September 2015, was challenged legally in March/April 2015.
- 4.5 Following receipt of legal counsel's advice that Council:
- had proceeded on the basis that it was incorrectly advised part-time nursery education is the statutory requirement for all eligible three and four year olds; and
  - had not in fact made a formal determination that part-time nursery education was in fact sufficient for the County Borough
- the Council reversed its decision to implement part-time only nursery education.
- 4.6 Legal counsel further advised that since the Council's statutory duty is to secure sufficient provision of nursery education rather than simply provide part-time places, the authority must first determine what sufficient provision is for its own area before considering an appropriate change to current provision.
- 4.7 Prior to making this determination and potentially changing the current provision of nursery education across the County Borough, legal counsel advised that the Council must understand the potential impact of any nursery education proposals on the following;
- a. Its duty to secure that the provision of nursery education is sufficient for its area (see Section 118(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998).
  - b. Its duties in relation to Childcare Sufficiency (see Section 22(1) of the Childcare Act 2006).
  - c. Its duties in relation to Child Poverty (see the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010).
  - d. Its duties in relation to Children in Need (see Sections 17 and 18 of the Children Act 1989).
  - e. Other (relevant) statutory duties.

Further, the consideration of whether a proposal would meet the Council's statutory duty in relation to sufficient nursery education must take into account not only the number/proportion of children who receive nursery education and the duration of the nursery education that they receive, but also the particular circumstances and needs of children and families in the local authority area.

- 4.8 In the local authority's school Admissions Policy published on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015, all parents/families seeking access to a nursery education place were advised that the provision of nursery education was subject to review and may change in due course and this has remained in subsequent admission documents.
- 4.9 Since this time, the local authority has resumed use of its statutory powers as the Admissions Authority to allocate nursery education places in schools to pupils the term following their third birthday. It has removed the 1979 figure from nursery admissions and consequently all schools now have a January and April intake for

eligible three year olds subject to available space, although April admissions remain unfunded for the Summer Term.

- 4.10 These improved access arrangements have resulted in a significant increase in the access to nursery education with 91% of children accessing the term after their third birthday during 2017/2018. The 97 children who were unable to access nursery education in their first preference school during January/April 2018 compares to over 200 children in the same situation during 2014/2015.
- 4.11 In addition, some of these 97 children may have taken up one of the additional 26 places utilised in the three Registered Education Provider's (REPs) over this period and so the actual number delayed access to nursery education during 2017/2018 is likely to be less than 97 or 9%. The comparable figure in 2018/19 is 90 or 7% of pupils with potentially delayed access; up to 24 of these may have taken up a place in a REP.
- 4.12 The overall reduced take up of nursery education places in non-maintained REPs over the past six years also reflects the improved access to nursery education in maintained schools.

**Table 2:**

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>No: Places Sep</b>	<b>No: Places Jan</b>	<b>No: Places Apr</b>
<b>2013/2014</b>	3	33	57
<b>2014/2015</b>	4	31	49
<b>2015/2016</b>	2	17	33
<b>2016/2017</b>	1	4	23
<b>2017/2018</b>	5	11	31
<b>2018/2019</b>	1	10	25

- 4.13 Data is not currently captured to be able to state how many children accessed a place in a non-maintained REP because of delayed access to a nursery education place in school. Some parents may choose a part-time place in a REP rather than in a school due to the potential for wrap-around childcare to top up a part-time offer to full-time.
- 4.14 Consistent with the current School Admissions Policy and local custom and practice, schools continue to decide whether the places allocated by the local authority are part-time or full-time, subject to class configuration, overall demand for places and funding implications. The local authority has therefore worked closely with schools to encourage January admissions to be part-time in order to maximise available space for April admissions and this has been an effective approach in helping to optimise the available supply of nursery education places within the current policy framework.
- 4.15 However, there remains a mixed economy for the offer of full or part-time places for rising three's and rising four's accessing nursery education, although this is far more consistent than was the case in 2014/2015. Based on the intakes during 2019:

- 14 schools offer part-time FPN1 in January and April, and then full-time FPN2 in September;
- 3 schools offer part-time FPN1 in January and April, and then continue to offer part-time FPN2 in September; and
- 5 schools offer full-time FPN1 if they start in January, part-time FPN1 if they start in April, and then offer full-time FPN2 from September.

As a result of this:

- 80% of FPN2 places are full-time in September, 20% are part-time;
- 84% of FPN1 places are part-time in January, 16% are full-time; and
- 100% of FPN1 places in April are part-time.

- 4.16 Schools that provide full-time FPN1 places in January limit the available space for FPN1 places in April and in some cases, access for the April intake is prevented as the school is then too full. One of the main reasons this takes place is because children accessing FPN1 places in April are not funded until the following September when they access FPN2 but the January FPN1 intake are funded immediately.
- 4.17 Part-time places in schools are on average 2.5 hours of education per day, 12.5 hours per week, whilst full-time places are on average 5 hours of education per day, 25 hours per week. REPs offer part-time places only, which are 2.5 hours per day, up to 5 days per week.
- 4.18 In order to address the requirement to secure a sufficient provision of nursery education and to ensure nursery education provision is equitable across the County Borough the local authority commissioned Pleydell Smithyman Ltd to undertake a research assessment of nursery sufficiency for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

## **5.0 SECURING SUFFICIENT NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION – RESEARCH REPORT**

- 5.1 The purpose of the assessment undertaken by Pleydell Smithyman Ltd is to support the local authority to make an informed decision regarding securing sufficient nursery education provision for Merthyr Tydfil.
- 5.2 The methodology for the research undertaken by Pleydell Smithyman Ltd included the following:
- desktop review of research, policy and strategy in relation to the impact of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC);
  - parental/carer engagement via questionnaires and focus groups; and
  - scenario impact analysis - an evaluation of the impact of each of the following three scenarios in respect of the local authority's duties listed under 4.6 ie. nursery sufficiency, childcare sufficiency, child poverty and children in need:-
    - Scenario A – status quo
    - Scenario B – part-time only for rising three's each January/April and rising four's each September
    - Scenario C – part-time only for rising three's each January/April and full-time for rising four's each September.

- 5.3 The research project was undertaken during the Autumn and Spring Terms 2018/2019 and the final detailed report '*Securing Sufficient Nursery Education for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil*' is included as a Background Paper. This will be referred to as the 'research report' throughout the remainder of this report.
- 5.4 The desktop review of research relating to the impact of ECEC is included in Appendix 1 of the research report.
- 5.5 Parental engagement took place in the form of two questionnaires included as Appendices 2 & 3 of the research report; one questionnaire for the 2018/2019 nursery education cohort of parents and one for the prospective 2019/2020 nursery education cohort. A focus group from a sample of parents who completed the questionnaire was also held to provide opportunity to discuss parents' views in more detail.
- 5.6 Both questionnaires received very good response rates circa 30% with 231 families responding to the nursery education questionnaire and 220 families responding to the pre-school questionnaire. These response rates were helpful in enabling meaningful extrapolation of questionnaire results to the whole population of eligible three and four year olds.
- 5.7 This analysis of the parental engagement is detailed in Section 4 of the research report and a key infographic of results has been provided as Appendices 4 & 5.

Some key findings from the parental engagement are as follows:

- Between 95% and 99% of eligible children are in nursery education;
- 94% of parents want their children to start nursery the term following their third birthday; the 6% who don't either think their child is not ready for nursery education or that they are not ready to send them;
- 96% of parents want a full-time offer, whether nursery education or a combination of nursery education/childcare. 4% do not want a full-time offer for their children;
- 80% of parents want a full-time nursery education place as a first preference, 8% want part-time nursery and part-time childcare, 8% have no preference how the full-time offer is made up as long as it is full-time; and
- The top five reasons why parents choose a nursery education setting are;
  - 'I want my child to attend Reception in the same school'
  - 'The location/convenience of the school/setting'
  - 'It is my local catchment school'
  - 'My child has friends/siblings who attend'
  - 'The quality of the school/setting'.

These reasons were given by between 52%- 56% of respondents. The next most popular reason was 'Full-time nursery education is available' with 44% of responses.

- 5.8 Parental choice has a significant impact on where and when children enter nursery education as well as parents' preparedness to accept alternative places to their first preference. For many parents choosing a nursery education place is about choosing a school place for the duration of their child's primary education. Other important factors are; the location/convenience of the school/setting, having siblings/friends who also attend and the quality of the school setting.

- 5.9 Between 5% and 6% of parents do not want their child to access an FPN1 place at all because they feel that either they or their child is not ready and these parents are prepared to wait one or two terms to the following September when their child accesses FPN2.
- 5.10 It is also important to note that when it comes to being able to access their preferred setting most parents are prepared to wait even if this means their child is delayed by up to one or two terms. In 2017/2018, only 8.5% of parents with delayed access to their first preference accepted an alternative FPN1 place in a school despite there being accessible alternatives within a reasonable distance.
- 5.11 There is a perception that accessing a nursery education place (either FPN1 or FPN2) secures a Reception place at the same school and there isn't currently a culture where parents are prepared to access an alternative school for FPN1 prior to accessing their preferred school setting for either FPN2 or Reception.
- 5.12 Each of these three phases of Education (FPN1, FPN2 and Reception) has a separate admissions process and children are able to access alternative FPN1 and FPN2 places prior to applying for a Reception place in school. More needs to be done to encourage parents unable to access their first preference place for FPN1 to access an alternative place without detriment to their first preference place for FPN2.
- 5.13 It should be noted that some of those not accessing an alternative FPN1 place in school may not be missing out on FPN1 provision altogether as there are parents who place their child in a REP for one or two terms of FPN1 until their child is able to access an FPN2 place in their preferred school from September.
- 5.14 Parents choose a REP for various reasons including access to wrap around provision, lower child/adult ratios, a transitional placement for those not quite 'school ready', continuity in childcare provision before accessing school, as well as their first preference place in school not being available.
- 5.15 Throughout the analysis detailed in the research report, parental choice is shown to have a significant impact on the take up of FPN1 places where first preferences are not available. This provides a challenge to the local authority and other stakeholders to encourage parents to accept alternatives to their first preferences that are reasonably accessible to ensure their children access nursery education at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.16 Section 6.0 of the research report 'Scenario Impact Analysis' considers a detailed analysis of each scenario, a consideration of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats, as well as an overall conclusion for each.
- 5.17 The scenario impact analysis from section 6.0 has been synthesized within Section 5.0 'Summary of Key Findings'. This section evaluates whether the local authority is able to fulfil its duties with respect to sufficient nursery education and the impact this may have on continuing to meet the other duties.



## 5.18 Scenario Impact Analysis – Summary of Key Findings

The following table provides a high level comparison of each scenario against the duty to secure sufficient provision of nursery education and the corresponding impact each scenario has on the other duties; childcare sufficiency, child poverty and children in need.

**Table 3**

SCENARIO	Status Quo	Part-Time only	Part-Time FPN1 & Full-Time FPN2	Conclusion
	A	B	C	
<b>Sufficient Nursery Education – Places</b>	<p><u>English Medium</u> Yes, subject to parental choice. Current supply provides for expected growth from LDP.</p> <p><u>Welsh Medium</u> No. Insufficient supply of places in both WM schools and across County Borough as a whole.</p>	<p><u>English Medium</u> Yes, subject to parental choice. Significantly increased supply of places overall compared to status quo. Long term future proofing built in.</p> <p><u>Welsh Medium</u> No. Insufficient supply of places remains in one school already P/T only and across County Borough as a whole.</p>	<p><u>English Medium</u> No. Insufficient supply of places due to nursery capacity issues in Cyfarthfa Park &amp; Twynrodyn Primary Schools. Risks to future pupil numbers in both schools as nursery capacity below their Pupil Admission Number. Both schools require FPN2 places to potentially be part-time based on overall capacity in school.</p> <p><u>Welsh Medium</u> No. Current insufficient supply of places exacerbated. Risks to future pupil numbers in Ysgol Santes Tudful as nursery capacity below Pupil Admission Number. Risk to overall numbers accessing WM education.</p>	<p><u>English Medium</u> A &amp; B both provide sufficient provision of nursery education places subject to parental choice. Both cover LDP growth.</p> <p>C does not provide a sufficient supply of places and CPP and Twyn both require FPN2 places to be managed either part-time or full-time based on overall capacity in school.</p> <p><u>Welsh Medium</u> No scenario provides a sufficient supply of WM places. More places in schools and potentially REPs required.</p>
<b>Sufficient Nursery Education – Quality/Impact</b>	<p>Good quality nursery education provision is available across the County Borough in schools and REPs.</p> <p>Delayed access to nursery education by one or two terms can</p>	<p>An additional 55 children would have been allocated an FPN1 place i.e. the number with delayed access would reduce from 97 to 42.</p>	<p>161 children would have delayed access compared to 97 currently.</p> <p>Up to 33 pupils (17 EM, 16 WM) unable to access first preference</p>	<p>The benefits to the 55 children no longer delayed (B) by one or two terms need to be weighed against the loss to 188 disadvantaged children no longer able to access full-</p>

SCENARIO	Status Quo	Part-Time only	Part-Time FPN1 & Full-Time FPN2	Conclusion
	A	B	C	
	impact school readiness and educational attainment.	Research advises that more hours in formal group ECEC is associated with higher levels of pro-social behaviour, self-regulation and lower level of peer problems. Therefore P/T only would affect 469 children but may have a comparative detrimental impact on the 188 not eligible to access top up childcare via the 30 hours childcare offer, potentially further increasing the gap to their peers when they start primary school in Reception class.	schools for FPN2 are at risk of missing out on any nursery place, subject to parents choosing an alternative school or choosing EM instead of WM.	time ECEC for an academic year in comparison to their peers (A)  C has a significantly negative impact compared to the status quo (A) and Scenario B due to capacity constraints in CPP, Twynrodyn and Ysgol Santes Tudful.
<b>Impact on Childcare Sufficiency</b>	<p>The childcare sector is able to meet the demand for children accessing nursery education, including demand for the 30hr childcare offer.</p> <p>There is currently a shortfall in wrap around places available. Current plans are in place to help address this.</p> <p>There is a shortfall in Welsh Medium childcare identified by the CSA 2017.</p>	<p>The additional demand for childcare is expected to be met by the childcare places developed to support the implementation of the 30hr childcare offer.</p> <p>However, the demand for wrap around places would increase exacerbating the current shortfall.</p> <p>The additional demand for WM childcare places would exacerbate the current shortfall.</p>	<p>The childcare sector can meet the likely demand which is expected to be less overall than in the status quo. More parents accessing full-time places (FPN2) and more accessing no places (FPN1) both result in overall reduction in demand for childcare.</p> <p>Reduced demand for wrap around places.</p> <p>Reduced demand for WM childcare places.</p>	<p>The childcare sector is expected to be able to provide sufficient supply of places to meet overall demand under all three scenarios.</p> <p>However, there is currently a shortfall of both WM and wrap around places which would be exacerbated under Scenario B.</p> <p>The Childcare Offer and WM Capital Grant programmes begin to address the issues within Scenario A.</p>
<b>Impact on Child Poverty</b>	The current nursery education provision supports parents to access work and	There are 188 families with full-time access not eligible for the 30	An overall net positive impact of 58 families improving their	B provides a significantly more challenging position than A

SCENARIO	Status Quo	Part-Time only	Part-Time FPN1 & Full-Time FPN2	Conclusion
	A	B	C	
	<p>potentially has a positive impact on childhood poverty.</p> <p>Families from deprived areas are less likely to be affected by delays to access an FPN1 place than those who are not, and more likely to live near to a local school offering F/T provision in September.</p>	<p>hours childcare offer. A move to part-time only risks reducing employment levels and may result in more families falling into poverty. These children may be disadvantaged compared to their peer group who access 30 hours ECEC through the childcare offer.</p> <p>Parental engagement suggests 50% may work less with up to half of these considering giving up work altogether. P/T nursery children are not eligible for school transport or free school meals. This may result in barriers to access (transport) and disadvantage (no FSM) for children already living in deprivation.</p>	<p>employability opportunities.</p> <p>(some families access full-time instead of part-time with others experiencing delays to access by 1 to 2 terms)</p> <p>Families in deprivation are more likely to experience delays than currently but would not be disproportionately affected compared to those not living in deprivation. These same families delayed would benefit from full-time FPN2 instead of part-time, so there would be delayed benefits to the family in terms of employment opportunities.</p>	<p>due to the potential negative impact on employment levels (206 families may work less) and also the number of children living in deprivation (188) who would be further disadvantaged compared to their peers due to a lack of access to 30 hours of ECEC.</p> <p>C provides a mixed picture as overall supports more employment than A but also a more challenging position re delays to access for families in deprivation.</p>
<b>Impact on Children in Need</b>	<p>100% of Children in Need (CiN) eligible for a nursery education place during 2017-18 were allocated a place the term after their third birthday. Some accessed an alternative to their first preference.</p>	<p>100% of CiN eligible for a nursery education place would have been allocated a place the term after their third birthday.</p> <p>No additional risk identified from CiN accessing P/T places rather than F/T.</p> <p>Potential unquantified risk that a part-time place of between 3 – 5 terms</p>	<p>There would be a very slightly different profile than currently in terms of part-time or full-time places accessed by CiN but no change to the accessibility of places to 100% of CiN as per the status quo arrangements.</p>	<p>Each Scenario would provide sufficient places without delay to CiN based on the 17/18 data set.</p> <p>Clearly profile will vary year on year.</p> <p>B provides the least risk to delayed access and C the most but all can be managed within available places due to the small cohort.</p>

SCENARIO	Status Quo	Part-Time only	Part-Time FPN1 & Full-Time FPN2	Conclusion
	A	B	C	
		increases barriers to access a place for CiN due to increased parental commitment required to maintain the place.		Under scenario B consideration would need to be given to managing additional risks around barriers to accessing places offered.

- 5.19 This analysis shows that there is no single scenario, which provides an optimal position against each of the duties.
- 5.20 However, due to a lack of overall capacity, in three schools in particular (Cyfarthfa Park, Twynyrodyn and Ysgol Santes Tudful) the research report makes fundamentally clear that implementing Scenario C (part-time FPN1 and full-time FPN2) across all schools in the County Borough is not currently viable and would increase the current access issues significantly compared to the status quo.
- 5.21 In terms of employment and child poverty, Scenario C has the potential to have the highest positive impact over the long-term if the access delays caused by capacity issues in those schools could be resolved.
- 5.22 Long-term solutions are required to increase capacity in these schools if the local authority wishes to pursue a strategic approach to nursery education in line with Scenario C and this may be a long term aim to consider if sufficiency can be met in the short to medium term, which is the statutory duty.
- 5.23 It is worth restating this point i.e. the Council's statutory duty with respect to nursery education is to secure a sufficient provision for the County Borough. Both Scenario A and Scenario B have the potential to provide sufficient English Medium nursey education although it is clear that additional Welsh Medium places are needed in order to address the overall requirement for sufficient provision.
- 5.24 No firm recommendation regarding which scenario to take forward as part of a solution to address sufficient nursery education places, across both English and Welsh Medium sectors, has been provided by the research report as the brief was to provide the evidence base to support decision making by Council.
- 5.25 The following section therefore presents a considered evaluation of the evidence and recommends an approach to delivering sufficient nursery education provision.
- 5.26 Sufficient Nursery Education (English Medium Places) – Scenario A or B?

Drawing from the analysis detailed in the table shown in 5.11 and the research report key considerations appear to be as follows:

*Nursery Education Places/Quality & Impact*

- a. Both scenarios provide sufficient places overall, subject to parental choice, and sufficient places to cover LDP growth to 2031, but there would be less capacity

issues in individual schools under Scenario B and a significant increase on overall available places for long-term future proofing, although most of these would remain surplus. However, Scenario B does not resolve the capacity issues in Cyfarthfa Park Primary, which is already part-time only.

- b. The benefits to the 55 children no longer delayed (under Scenario B) by one or two terms need to be weighed against the loss to 188 disadvantaged children no longer able to access full-time ECEC for an academic year in comparison to their peers (Scenario A) who are eligible through the 30 hr childcare offer.

#### *Childcare Sufficiency*

- c. The current shortfall in wrap around and childcare places would be exacerbated under Scenario B. The Childcare Offer Capital Grant programme begins to address the shortfall with the current arrangements and further work would be required to address the additional demand for wrap around places if all nursery education was part-time only.

#### *Child Poverty*

- d. Scenario B provides a significantly more challenging position than Scenario A due to the potential negative impact on employment levels (206 families may work less) and also the number of children living in deprivation (188) who would be further disadvantaged compared to their peers due to a lack of access to 30 hours of ECEC.
- e. Part-time only provision may result in increased barriers to access (no school transport) and further disadvantage (no FSM) for children already living in deprivation.

#### *Children in Need (CiN)*

- f. Scenario B provides the least risk to delayed access as there are more places across most schools, however no issues are present in the current arrangements under Scenario A. However, under Scenario B consideration would need to be given to managing additional risks around barriers to accessing places (see e.) that have been offered to children who are disadvantaged and at the edge of care.

### 5.27 Conclusion

On balance, given the demographic of the County Borough, and the potential negative impact on employment levels and on children already disadvantaged, a change of nursery education provision to Scenario B i.e. part-time only is potentially detrimental to the children and families of the County Borough, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and currently living in deprivation. It should also be recognised that under Scenario B critical demand hot spots would remain unresolved and additional wrap around childcare places, over and above those planned, would be required to satisfy those eligible for the childcare offer, just to limit the negative impacts to those who would remain ineligible.

The main weaknesses identified in Scenario A, the status quo arrangements, can be addressed through the opportunities that have been identified in the research report. i.e. educating parents to accept alternative education places rather than wait for a

delayed place; the local authority using its statutory powers and planning of school places strategies to determine the provision of full and part-time places; and the local authority delivering on its plans to provide additional wrap around childcare.

## 6.0 SECURING SUFFICIENT NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION – IMPROVING THE STATUS QUO ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 This section considers the status quo arrangements in more detail so as to identify the improvements necessary to be able to secure a sufficient provision of nursery education.

6.2 The following table details key strengths and weaknesses of the current provision of nursery education.

**Table 4: Scenario A (status quo) – Strengths & Weaknesses**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><b>Sufficient Nursery Education Places/Quality</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Good quality nursery education provision is available across the County Borough in schools and REPs.</li> <li>2. Approximately 99% of children eligible for FPN2 each September access a place and 100% of applications are placed successfully. This totalled 629 children in September 2018 and 705 children in September 2019.</li> <li>3. 96% of parents access their first preference place each September, the other 4% had selected an alternative place the previous January/April.</li> <li>4. There are enough FPN1 places within each cluster of schools in January/April to meet the demand for English Medium (EM) places subject to parents choosing to accept an alternative place to their first preference.</li> <li>5. There is also some additional capacity within the EM REPs for demand in January/April.</li> <li>6. The current available supply of places is enough to cover the potential additional demand arising from the growth in pupil numbers expected as a consequence of the updated LDP 2016-2031.</li> </ol> <p><b>Sufficiency of Childcare</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. The additional demand for childcare places expected following the implementation of the 30 hr childcare offer is sufficiently provided for within the current supply of childcare places (with the exception of wrap around places).</li> </ol>	<p><b>Sufficient Nursery Education Places/Quality</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 21.5% of EM applications for FPN1 in January/April are not placed in school with parents choosing to wait for their 1st preference rather than accept an alternative place in school (18/19 19.3%).</li> <li>2. 37.5% of WM applications for FPN1 in January/April are not placed (18/19 55.4%) with parents having no alternative place in school. There are no places available across either WM school at all in April.</li> <li>3. Not all families consider the location of the REP a viable alternative to their first preference school. Despite the shortage of WM places in schools places remain unoccupied in the WM Rep.</li> <li>4. 5% of parents responding to the questionnaire stated they either weren't aware they could apply for a FPN1 place in January / April or were confused as to when and how applications could be made. Some parents in the focus group also stated they were unaware of the three REPs providing equivalent quality nursery education to schools.</li> <li>5. Research shows delayed access to nursery education by one or two terms can impact school readiness and educational attainment.</li> <li>6. 11% of parents who have children with ALN were delayed access to their 1<sup>st</sup> preference schools in April due to capacity issues.</li> <li>7. The decision to provide part or full time nursery education is at the discretion of each individual school and some parents are not</li> </ol>

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><b>Child Poverty</b></p> <p>8. Children from deprived areas are almost twice less likely to be affected by delays to access a FPN1 place than those who are not. (24% of those delayed are from Flying Start areas compared to 46% of the cohort who are from FS areas)</p> <p>9. Children from deprived areas are also more likely to accept an alternative place to their first preference than those who are not.</p> <p>10. 14 of the 18 FS children with delayed access to a FPN1 place in school had accessible alternatives within walking distances, sometimes in the catchment school.</p> <p>11. With 100% intake of FPN2 each September (80% full-time) and 76% intake of FPN1 each Jan/Apr (88% part-time) the current nursery education provision supports parents/carers to access work and has the potential to have a positive impact on childhood poverty.</p> <p><b>Children in Need</b></p> <p>12. 100% of Children in Need (CiN) eligible for a nursery education place during 2017-18 were allocated a place the term after their third birthday.</p>	<p>informed in a timely manner.</p> <p>8. The current mixed economy across both FPN1 and FPN2 is considered inequitable by some parents; particularly as some 3 year olds can access f/t in January whilst others cannot even access p/t in April.</p> <p>9. One cause of schools accepting f/t places in January instead of p/t places in April is that the April intake are not currently funded until September.</p> <p><b>Sufficiency of Childcare</b></p> <p>10. There are currently insufficient wrap around childcare places to support all parents planning to access the 30 hrs childcare offer to top up their nursery education provision.</p> <p><b>Child Poverty</b></p> <p>11. 4 of the 18 FS children with delayed access to a FPN1 place in school did not have accessible alternatives within walking distances. Each of these applied in April and would have had access if their 1<sup>st</sup> preference school only offered part-time FPN1 in January.</p> <p>12. The detrimental impact of delayed access to nursery education on school readiness and educational attainment/well-being can be more significant for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>

### Sufficient Nursery Education Provision - English Medium Places

- 6.3 During 2017/2018 the number with delayed entry to English Medium nursery education places in a school was 73 and this reduced to 54 in 2018/2019. However, in April 2018 there were 20 children accessing an English Medium nursery education place in a REP (April 2019, 14) but it's not clear how many of these had been refused entry to their first preference place in school and how many were choosing REPs as their first preference, as this data is not currently recorded.
- 6.4 Therefore, the actual number with delayed entry to English Medium nursery education places was between 53 and 73 in 2017/2018 and this reduced to between 40 and 54 in 2018/2019. As a % of the English Medium cohort seeking FPN1 places this is between 17% and 21% in 2017/2018, reducing to between 14% and 19% in 2018/2019.
- 6.5 The following table shows how many surplus places remained in schools, or otherwise, in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

**Table 5: Surplus Capacity / (Shortfall) in English Medium Schools 2017/18 and 2018/19**

School	Surplus Capacity/ (Shortfall)	Surplus Capacity/ (Shortfall)
	Based on 2017/2018 applications (Headcount)	Based on 2018/2019 applications (Headcount)
ABERCANAID PRIMARY SCHOOL	0	8
BEDLINOG PRIMARY SCHOOL	13	18
CAEDRAW PRIMARY SCHOOL	39	13
CYFARTHFA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL	- 17	- 10
DOWLAIS PRIMARY SCHOOL	10	15
EDWARDSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL	28	9
GELLIFAELOG PRIMARY SCHOOL	- 13	6
GOETRE PRIMARY NURSERY SCHOOL	23	14
GWAUNFARREN PRIMARY SCHOOL	14	0
HEOLGERRIG PRIMARY SCHOOL	- 4	- 10
PANTYSCALLOG PRIMARY SCHOOL	0	0
TRELEWIS PRIMARY SCHOOL	18	- 6
TROEDYRHIW PRIMARY SCHOOL	16	24
TWYNYRODYN PRIMARY SCHOOL	- 25	11
YNYSOWEN PRIMARY SCHOOL	-4	- 9
YSGOL COED-Y-DDERWEN	8	16
YSGOL Y GRAIG	0	0
<b>English Medium Surplus</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>99</b>

6.6 As Table 5 shows despite there being between 53 and 73 children with delayed access in 2017/2018 and between 40 and 54 with delayed access in 2018/2019 there remained more than enough places unallocated in schools to cover these places with surplus over. There also remained approximately 15 to 21 education places unallocated in REPs over this period. This is in comparison to higher numbers that accessed in previous years.

6.7 As noted previously, location is an important factor for parents when selecting a nursery place. Table 6 below analyses the available places across each cluster of schools' catchment area, as this provides a reasonableness test for accessibility of alternative places.

**Table 6: Geographical Distribution of Demand (English Medium)**

School	Surplus Capacity/ (Shortfall) by Secondary school catchments		
	Based on 2018/2019 applications (Headcount)		
	Afon Taf	Pen Y Dre	Cyfarthfa
ABERCANAID PRIMARY SCHOOL	8		
BEDLINOG PRIMARY SCHOOL	18		
CAEDRAW PRIMARY SCHOOL			13
CYFARTHFA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL			-10
DOWLAIS PRIMARY SCHOOL		15	
EDWARDSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL	9		



GELLIFAELOG PRIMARY SCHOOL		6	
GOETRE PRIMARY NURSERY SCHOOL		14	
GWAUNFARREN PRIMARY SCHOOL		0	
HEOLGERRIG PRIMARY SCHOOL			-10
PANTYSCALLOG PRIMARY SCHOOL		0	
TRELEWIS PRIMARY SCHOOL	-6		
TROEDYRHIW PRIMARY SCHOOL	24		
TWYNYRODYN PRIMARY SCHOOL			11
YNYSOWEN PRIMARY SCHOOL	-9		
YSGOL COED-Y-DDERWEN			16
YSGOL Y GRAIG		0	
<b>TOTAL Surplus / (Shortfall)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2017/2018 Surplus / (Shortfall)</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>

- 6.8 As can be seen from Table 6 enough places were provided within the cluster catchment of schools to meet the demands of parents for places within the area. These places are reasonably accessible for those parents unable to access their first preference FPN1 place in a school. However, as evidenced by the parental engagement, parents would usually rather wait for their first preference school so that they can choose a place for the duration of their child's education rather than just for FPN1 / FPN2 and potentially have to move their child to access their first preference school from FPN2 / Reception.
- 6.9 A lack of transport can be a barrier to accessing an alternative place if parents consider the distance to travel to be inconvenient or unreasonable, particularly if they have other children already attending their preferred school setting. However, no parental responses provided indicated any particular issue with access to transport for families that were delayed access to their preferred setting.
- 6.10 In order to explore this in more depth, and the impact that poverty may be having on accessing alternative places, the accessibility of nursery education to families living in Flying Start areas has been considered and particularly the reasonableness of accessing alternative placements.
- 6.11 Approximately 46% of the pre-nursery applicants in January and April 2018 were from Flying Start (FS) areas. Of the 97 children delayed access to an FPN1 place in school, 23 were FS, making up only 24% of those delayed. Further, data for parents refused a first preference who did choose to take an alternative place in a school shows that 15% of families from FS areas took up an alternative place compared to 7% of families from non-FS areas.
- 6.12 This data indicates that families from FS areas are less likely to be delayed than those from non-FS areas and of those that are delayed, families from FS areas are more likely to choose an alternative FPN1 place than those from non-FS areas. This supports the research analysis that those impacted by delays are less likely to be living in areas of deprivation/poverty.

- 6.13 Of the 22 children living in FS areas that did have delayed access to a nursery place in school, 17 applied to English Medium schools. The following table analyses the options these 17 families choosing EM had about accessing an alternative place to their first preference in January/April 2018.

**Table 7: Accessibility of alternative FPN1 places for children from FS areas**

<b>Accessibility of Alternative School Places</b>	<b>No pupils</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Preference schools</b>	<b>Alternative Schools (Nearest)</b>
Space in Catchment school	4	Gellifaelog 4	Dowlais 2 Gwaunfarren 2
<b>Walking Distance to next nearest school*</b>			
Less than 1 mile*	5	Gellifaelog 3 Twyynyrodyn 2	Gwaunfarren 3 Caedraw 2
Between 1 and 1.5 miles*	2	Heolgerrig 1 Twyynyrodyn 1	Coed Y Dderwen 1 Caedraw 1
Between 1.5 and 2 miles*	2	Ynysowen 2	Troedyrhiw 1 Edwardsville 1
➤ 2 miles (above statutory walking distance)	4	Ynysowen 4	Troedyrhiw 3 Edwardsville 1
<b>TOTAL children</b>	<b>17</b>		

\*at least one school with available places could be accessed within these walking distances and usually more were accessible within the 2 mile distance.

- 6.14 The 17 children were unable to access the following four schools as first preferences; Gellifaelog (7), Heolgerrig (1), Twynyrodyn (3) and Ynysowen (6). The table shows that only four of the 17 children had no alternative places available within a walking distance from their home. Each of these children applied for Ynysowen Primary as a first preference in April but the school had no FPN1 intake due to having taken in full-time FPN1 places in January.
- 6.15 In 2018/2019 a similar pattern emerges between children applying from FS and non FS areas. 51% of all applicants for FPN1 places were from FS areas, but only 30% of those delayed were from FS areas, a total of 22 children. Therefore again, children from FS areas are less likely to be delayed than children from non FS areas and a higher % of children from FS areas who are refused access to their first preference accept alternative places than those from non FS areas.
- 6.16 Of the 22 children from FS areas who were delayed access to their first preference schools in 2018/2019, 15 applied to EM schools. Of these five did have space in their catchment school, five had space in their next nearest school between 1 and 1.5 miles away (1<sup>st</sup> Preference schools; Heolgerrig (2) Trelewis (3)) and four had space in their next nearest school between 1.5 and 2 miles away (1<sup>st</sup> Preference schools; Ynysowen (2) and Trelewis (2)).

- 6.17 Only one child from a FS area did not have any space available within the statutory walking distances and this child applied for a place in Ynysowen April 2019 but there was no space due to full-time FPN1 places being offered in January 2019.
- 6.18 If Ynysowen had offered part-time FPN1 places in both January 2018 and 2019 then there would have been sufficient space for all of the prospective intakes in April 2018 and 2019.
- 6.19 This analysis of nursery education access in FS areas supports the conclusion that, **subject to ensuring all FPN1 places are part-time, sufficient English Medium nursery education places are provided by the local authority across the County Borough that are reasonably accessible to all parents.**
- 6.20 Voluntary aided (VA) schools are their own admission authority and therefore the admission arrangements operated by these schools are outside of the local authority's direct control. However, in order to provide a complete analysis of the position across the County Borough of the available supply and demand for nursery education places, it is helpful to consider whether there are any oversubscription pressures / surplus capacity within the VA schools, and how this contributes to the overall provision across the County Borough.
- 6.21 The following table shows the surplus or shortfall in places across the Voluntary Aided schools

**Table 8: Surplus Capacity / (Shortfall) of places in Voluntary Aided Schools 2017/18 and 2018/19**

VA Primary Schools	Total Places Available (FTE)	Total Places Allocated (FTE)	Pupils Not Allocated (Headcount)	Surplus Capacity / (Shortfall)  Based on 2017/18 applications (Headcount)
2017/2018	68	77.5	0	1
2018/2019	68	72.5	0	0

\*Please note that some schools are able to accommodate more than their nursery capacity in any given year through their own infant class arrangements

As can be seen from Table 8 above, no pupils were refused entry to a nursery education place in a VA school during 2017/2018 and only one surplus part-time FPN1 place remained across the sector. In 2018/2019 there was a similar position with no schools refusing applications for reasons of space and no surplus places remaining across the sector. The provision of nursery education across the VA sector is therefore currently able to meet demand levels and no significant issues are arising that are having an impact, either positively or negatively, on the available supply of places across the County Borough.

- 6.22 The current provision of FPN2 places across English Medium community schools is also full-time in all bar two schools; Caedraw and Cyfarthfa Park. Discussions with Caedraw indicate that they are considering offering full-time provision from September 2020 and the school's capacity allows for this.

- 6.23 Cyfarthfa Park along with Twynyrodyn, were identified in the Scenario C analysis as the only two schools that could not systematically accommodate full-time FPN2 followed by part-time FPN1 because the nursery capacity is smaller than the school's pupil admission number (PAN).
- 6.24 The following table illustrates this systematic planning of school places issue caused by nursery education capacity being smaller than the school's Pupil Admission Number (PAN)

**Table 9: Nursery Education Places v School's Pupil Admission Number (PAN)**

School	Total Nursery Education Places Available (FTE)	Pupil Admission Number (PAN)	(Shortfall) in FTE nursery education places
CYFARTHFA PARK	31	52	-21
TWYNYRODYN	34	50	-16

In order to manage applications to nursery education in any school then at the very least the local authority wants to ensure that all children applying for FPN2 in September (up to the school's PAN) should be allocated a place, as this helps the school to secure a prospective Reception cohort for the following year. If both of these schools received FPN2 applications in line with their PAN then there would be significant numbers of children (16 in Twynyrodyn and 21 in Cyfarthfa) unable to access any nursery education at all in these schools.

- 6.25 As stated previously, a place in Nursery does not guarantee parents a place in Reception due to there being a separate application and admissions process; however, a school's ability to make a nursery education offer to all prospective Reception children the following year is vitally important in securing the appropriate intake to manage the school efficiently.
- 6.26 This is a fundamental planning of school places issue, which means that a systematic offer of full-time, year on year would put both schools at risk in terms of future numbers coming into the school for Reception, with implications for surplus places across the school and financial sustainability.
- 6.27 Twynyrodyn are currently able to offer full-time FPN2 places as the overall numbers in the school have been falling recently and the children applying to the school can all be accommodated. However, this is not a sustainable position and needs to be managed by the local authority in liaison with the school to ensure that the nursery education admission arrangements support the overall pupil numbers in the school.
- 6.28 This position has been reviewed for academic year 2020/2021 and Twynyrodyn will be able to support full-time FPN2 places in September 2020. This position requires annual review since as the school numbers increase in capacity the nursery education offer will need to return to part-time FPN2.
- 6.29 The following proposed nursery education offer for 2020/2021 will therefore allow the local authority to supply sufficient English Medium nursery education places for the County Borough.

**Table 10a: Proposed Nursery Education Offer 20/21 – English Medium**

Primary School	Nursery Places (FPN1)	Nursery Places (FPN2)	Total Places Available (FTE)
	Jan/Apr Intake Part-time only	September intake Full-time or Part-time	
ABERCANAID	Part-time	Full-time	37
BEDLINO	Part-time	Full-time	26
CAEDRAW	Part-time	Full-time	33
CYFARTHFA PARK	Part-time	Part-time	31
DOWLAIS	Part-time	Full-time	34
EDWARDSVILLE	Part-time	Full-time	70
GELLIFAELOG	Part-time	Full-time	35
GOETRE PRIMARY	Part-time	Full-time	83
GWAUNFARREN	Part-time	Full-time	42
HEOLGERRIG	Part-time	Full-time	34
PANTYSCALLOG	Part-time	Full-time	41
TRELEWIS	Part-time	Full-time	41
TROEDYRHIW	Part-time	Full-time	40
TWYNYRODYN	Part-time	Full-time	31
YNYSOWEN	Part-time	Full-time	45
YSGOL COED-Y-DDERWEN	Part-time	Full-time	37
YSGOL Y GRAIG	Part-time	Full-time	30
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>690</b>

Each school will accept FPN1 applications in January and April, subject to capacity limits as determined by the local authority. Where first preference applications cannot be accommodated parents/carers will be offered a reasonable alternative nursery education place in school and advised about the option of taking up a place in a REP.

A total of 640 FTE applications were received in 2018/2019 which leaves a surplus of 100 part-time places available for FPN1 across the County Borough, over and above the demand requirements.

6.30 These proposed arrangements for 2020/2021 only vary slightly from the current arrangements in 2019/2020 as follows:

- FPN2 – Caedraw offered part-time places to children rising 4 in September 2019
  - FPN1 – Ynysowen and Troedyrhiw are both offering full-time places to children rising 3 in January 2020.
- 6.31 All part-time places will be for a minimum of 2.5 hours education per day, 12.5 hours per week and all full-time places will be for a minimum of five hours education per day, 25 hours per week. The total contact time for full-time places will be at least 30 hours per week factoring in breaks.
- 6.32 The offer of FPN2 in Twynyrodyn will be reviewed annually and will be published as part of the Nursery Admission Arrangements within the annual School Admission Policy document.
- 6.33 All three primary VA schools currently offer part-time FPN1 places. Previously, St Aloysius only operated one admission round each year in September but they have amended their policy recently to allow access to part-time FPN1 children each January and April. All three schools also offer full-time FPN2 places.
- 6.34 This position across VA schools is consistent with the proposed nursery education offer across all English Medium schools as detailed in Table 10a above, and is aligned to the local authority's provision of sufficient English Medium nursery education places for the County Borough.
- 6.35 It should be noted that, despite the proposed nursery education offer for 2020/2021 detailed above securing sufficient nursery education provision for the County Borough, parental choice will continue to mean that not all eligible three year olds applying for an FPN1 place will access a place. Some parents will continue to choose to wait for an FPN2 place in their preferred school.
- 6.36 Council may wish to pursue a strategic approach to nursery education, that goes above and beyond this statutory duty, in order to help ensure that all three year olds whose parents want a place, do in fact access nursery education the term after their third birthday.
- 6.37 If this is the case, then increasing the availability of wrap-around childcare places offered in schools, will help to optimise the impact that the 30 hour childcare offer has supporting families to access FPN1 places in alternative schools. This is since parents will be more likely to accept an alternative part-time FPN1 place if it is supported by wrap around childcare that incentivises the taking up of the place as it becomes a full-time ECEC place.
- 6.38 The Childcare Offer Capital Grant that will deliver co-located wrap around childcare facilities in some schools (Ysgol Y Graig, Dowlais, and Bedlinog by April 2021 and Goetre by April 2023) will help to address some of these issues and make the FPN1 places offered by these schools more attractive as alternatives.
- 6.39 Further mapping needs to be undertaken, and options considered, to ensure that where schools have a shortfall of first preference FPN1 places, parents can access an alternative FPN1 school place supported by wrap around childcare.

- 6.40 Additionally, increasing the number of non-maintained REP places near to schools that have capacity issues in January/April would provide parents with more choice regarding accessing a part-time FPN1 place without needing to access an alternative school place.
- 6.41 This may increase the likelihood that parents would choose an FPN1 place whilst waiting to access an FPN2 place in their preferred school setting and would therefore help reduce the impact that delayed access to nursery education can have on three year olds.
- 6.42 However, further work needs to be undertaken to incentivise childcare settings to register as formal nursery education providers, particularly since the funding for nursery education places provided to REPs of £7.60 per hour per day is significantly less than any of; Flying Start fees, childcare offers fees, private fees.
- 6.43 The funding provided to REPs is based on the AWPU funding provided to schools for nursery education places, however this AWPU funding is for pupils only and does not include anything for fixed costs and overheads as schools are funded for these elements separately.
- 6.44 To ensure equity, nursery education funding for places in REPs could be considered to include an additional element as a contribution towards fixed costs/overheads of the setting. In addition, if the rate is to attract existing childcare settings to register places for nursery education the funding rate needs to be more considerate to the market fees for places in these settings and the additional work and expectation on settings due to Estyn registration and inspection.
- 6.45 Specific financial and other modelling is required to consider what an appropriate funding rate should be. Consideration needs to be given to how much extra this would cost the Council, and how many extra places and where should be targeted in order to support more FPN1 places being accessed in REPs where first preferences places are no longer available in school.

#### Sufficient Nursery Education Provision - Welsh Medium Places

- 6.46 During 2017/2018 the number with delayed entry to Welsh Medium nursery education places in a school was 24 and this increased to 36 in 2018/2019. However, in April 2018 there were 11 children accessing a Welsh Medium nursery education place in a REP and again 11 in April 2019.
- 6.47 Therefore, the actual number with delayed entry to Welsh Medium nursery education places was between 13 and 24 in 2017/2018 and between 25 and 36 in 2018/2019. As a percentage of the WM cohort seeking FPN1 places this is between 20% and 38% in 2017/2018, increasing to between 38% and 55% in 2018/2019.
- 6.48 Despite there being up to 24 children delayed access to WM nursery education in 2017/2018 and up to 36 in 2018/2019 and despite neither WM school having an intake in April 2018 or April 2019 there remained approximately 12 WM FPN1 places unallocated in the Cylch Meithrin REP in the ICC Pentrebach. This is since not all families consider the location of the WM REP a viable alternative to their first preference school.

- 6.49 However, even if parents took up all available WM REP places there would remain a shortfall of between 13 and 24 places in 2018/2019.
- 6.50 Of the children delayed access to their first preference WM school in 2017/2018, 21% were from FS areas and in 2018/2019 this reduced to 17% and therefore the majority of children affected by delayed access to WM nursery education are from non FS areas. However, none of these children have access to any alternative WM FPN1 places in school whether living in a FS area or not.
- 6.51 It is clear that **the supply of accessible Welsh Medium nursery education places across the County Borough is not sufficient and additional places are required either in schools, REPs or both**. Due to limitations of space in the existing WM schools and there only being a single WM REP, additional WM places need to be provided by increasing the capacity in the current WM schools, and also from increasing the availability of WM places in alternative locations across the County Borough.
- 6.52 There are current plans to increase the supply of Welsh Medium primary school education places across the County Borough as follows:
- i. Two additional infants classrooms in Ysgol Santes Tudful (WG RICS Capital Grant – new standalone builds) by April 2020
  - ii. Two additional mainstream classrooms in Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug (WG WM Capital Grant – reconfiguration and refurbishment) by September 2022
  - iii. Seedling third WM primary school in north of County Borough (WG WM Capital Grant - reconfiguration and refurbishment), provisionally between September 2021 and September 2024 and establish co-located WM childcare setting,
- Note, these plans have not been developed to explicitly address a shortfall of WM nursery education places but rather to help grow primary education places 3-11 in line with the local authority's Welsh Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 in support of Cymraeg 2050.
- 6.53 However, the delivery of these plans will improve access to FPN1 provision over the medium term and should ensure that sufficient nursery education places are provided overall when the new Welsh Medium school is fully established on its permanent site, provisionally from September 2024 onwards.
- 6.54 The local authority's provision of WM nursery education places is not currently sufficient and requires regular review in line with the delivery of the above plans outlined in 6.52 including the consideration of additional REP provision.
- 6.55 The proposed plans are fully funded by WG with respect to capital costs and the revenue implications for the additional classrooms in YST and YRG have already been factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 6.56 However, the revenue implications for the third WM seedling school have not yet been factored into the Council's budget from September 2021 onwards, and additional funding of approximately £60k in financial year 2021/2022 rising to approximately £140k in 2024/25 is required to enable this project to be delivered.
- 6.57 The following table details the proposed nursery education offer for 2020/2021 consistent with the current arrangements.



**Table 10b: Proposed Nursery Education Offer 20/21 – Welsh Medium**

Primary School	Nursery Places (FPN1)	Nursery Places (FPN2)	Total Places (FTE)
	Jan/Apr Intake Part-time only	Sep intake Full-time or Part-time	
YSGOL RHYD Y GRUG	Part-time	Full-time	37
YSGOL SANTES TUDFUL	Part-time	Part-time	58
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>95</b>

Both schools will accept FPN1 applications in January and April, subject to capacity limits as determined by the local authority. These proposed arrangements for 2020/2021 maintain the current arrangements across the WM sector but do not meet the requirements of sufficient provision. Where 1<sup>st</sup> preference applications cannot be accommodated parents/carers will be offered a reasonable alternative where possible and advised about the option of taking up a place in a REP.

However, additional WM nursery education provision is required to meet the needs of the county borough and the local authority are progressing plans to address this over the next two to five years.

6.58 All part-time places will be for a minimum of 2.5 hours education per day, 12.5 hours per week and all full-time places will be for a minimum of five hours education per day, 25 hours per week. The total contact time for full-time places will be at least 30 hours per week factoring in breaks.

#### 6.59 Status Quo Arrangements – Addressing Other Weaknesses

The other main weaknesses that have been identified in the status quo arrangements are not required to be addressed in order to secure sufficient provision of nursery education but rather to ensure that this provision is delivered as efficiently as possible and is as accessible as possible to parents to maximise uptake.

The local authority through the opportunities listed below can address these weaknesses:

- i. Provide parents/carers with clear timescales and advance notice regarding the determined availability of places prior to the admission round.
- ii. Ensure parents/carers are aware of the availability of part-time nursery education places in non-maintained settings and the equivalent quality of education provided by schools and settings.
- iii. Support and encourage all families who cannot access their preferred place for nursery education (FPN1) to identify and consider alternative options in either school, or a non-maintained setting, rather than waiting one to two terms for an FPN2 place in their preferred school setting.
- iv. Provide parents/carers with clear advice/guidance and support regarding options for re-application to their 1st preference school at the appropriate time i.e. either for FPN2 or Reception so that this is not a barrier to parents choosing to access an FPN1 place.

- v. Capture date to identify how many children accessing nursery education via REPs were refused entry to 1<sup>st</sup> preference places in schools.

## **7.0 NURSERY EDUCATION ADMISSIONS POLICY**

- 7.1 The Nursery Education Admissions Policy is published annually as part of the overall Annual School Admissions Policy.
- 7.2 The following nursery education provision is proposed to be offered for 2020/2021:

### **English Medium**

- All FPN1 places will be part-time and will be for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day.
- All FPN2 places will be full-time except in Cyfarthfa Park Primary, which will offer part-time places.
- All full-time places will be a minimum of five hours per day.
- All nursery education places will be offered by the local authority, on behalf of schools, subject to capacity limits as determined by the local authority.
- Twynyrodyn Primary's offer of full-time FPN2 places will be reviewed annually

### **Welsh Medium**

- All FPN1 places will be part-time and will be for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day.
- FPN2 places will be full-time in Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug and part-time in Ysgol Santes Tudful.
- All full-time places will be a minimum of five hours per day.
- All nursery education places will be offered by the local authority, on behalf of schools, subject to capacity limits as determined by the local authority.

- 7.3 The nursery education admissions policy will be reviewed annually as part of the annual arrangement for consulting on the Schools Admissions Policy and any changes will be reflected as they arise e.g. revising Twynyrodyn Primary's FPN2 offer and provision of additional WM places as per plans in 6.52.
- 7.4 Although, not able to directly control nursery education admissions offered by VA schools, the local authority is able to influence the offer made by VA schools in order to be consistent with the position across community schools as nursery education places in all schools are maintained through local authority delegated funding to schools.
- 7.5 The current delegated arrangements require schools to receive funding in line with the Nursery Education Admissions Policy and therefore the following funding arrangements are proposed
- All FPN1 places in both January and April to be funded as part-time only i.e. 50% of a full-time place.
  - FPN2 places to be funded as either full-time or part-time to match the actual offer made by the local authority (see 7.2) or in the case of voluntary aided schools, the offer made by each individual schools governing body.

## 8.0 NURSERY EDUCATION STRATEGY

- 8.1 Securing sufficient provision for the County Borough is the statutory duty, and is the Council's first priority and the main purpose of this report.
- 8.2 The statutory duty to secure sufficient nursery education provision will be met as detailed in 7.2 for English Medium places, whilst for Welsh Medium places the local authority will work towards securing sufficient provision through delivery of the plans outlined in 6.52.
- 8.3 The additional revenue costs arising from implementing sufficient nursery education in the English Medium sector have been detailed in the financial implications section 9.1 below. The additional revenue costs arising from working towards securing sufficient Welsh Medium places are also detailed in the financial implications section 9.3 below.
- 8.4 However, this section also considers the long-term strategic aims for FPN1 and FPN2 places across the County Borough as these may go above and beyond the statutory duty. e.g. if one of the strategic aims for nursery education is to ensure that all eligible three year olds whose parents want an FPN1 place do actually access one, then more will need to be done to provide extra choice to parents take up alternative places to their first preference schools.
- 8.5 Strategic Aim for FPN1

Due to the research evidence in support of the importance of children accessing nursery education at the earliest opportunity, the local authority has the aspiration that all eligible three year olds, whose parents want a place, do actually take up an FPN1 place. To address this, the current barriers to parents accessing FPN1 places in alternative schools would need to be addressed in some of the following ways:

- I. Take forward the opportunities identified in 6.59 so that more parents are encouraged and assisted to accept alternative FPN1 places in schools.
- II. Incentivise parents to take up FPN1 places in alternative schools through provision of more wrap around childcare places, particularly in those schools that are alternative options for parents that cannot access their 1<sup>st</sup> preference.
- III. Increase the number of non-maintained REP places near to schools that have capacity issues for FPN1 places, as this will provide parents with more choice regarding accessing an FPN1 place without needing to access an alternative school place.
- IV. Potential for capital works in schools with capacity issues for FPN1 places.

### 8.6 Strategic Aim for FPN2 places

There are currently only two schools (Cyfarthfa Park Primary and Ysgol Santes Tudful) unable to provide full-time FPN2 places. A third (Twynyrodyn Community Primary) can only do so whilst there are surplus places in the school, which is subject to review annually.

Addressing the capacity constraints in these schools would remove the issues and risks presented in the Scenario C analysis, as detailed in 5.18 and 5.19 above.

This would enable the local authority to pursue nursery education provision over the long-term in line with Scenario C, which subject to the availability of places, has the potential to meet the requirements of nursery education sufficiency and provide the most beneficial outcomes against the other statutory duties considered (childcare sufficiency, employment and child poverty, children in need).

Therefore, to address this long-term strategic aim, the following needs to be considered and scoped:

- i. Potential for capital works in Cyfarthfa Park Primary and Twynyrodyn Community Primary schools in order to increase capacity of nursery education provision to provide full-time FPN2, whilst maintaining FPN1 access.
- ii. Long-term plans for Cyfarthfa Park Primary to be considered for inclusion in the Band C 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme 2026 onwards.
- iii. Long-term planning of school places strategy for Twynyrodyn Community Primary and other neighbouring schools to optimise available places for nursery education through primary education.
- iv. The potential to provide full-time FPN2 places in all WM schools across the County Borough following the establishment of a third WM school on permanent premises, whilst maintaining FPN1 access.

8.7 There will also be additional revenue costs over the long term to implement these strategic aims i.e. full take up of part-time FPN1 places, consideration of revised REP rates and additional REP places, full-time provision across all FPN2, and further reports will be required, as proposals are developed over the medium to long term that address these aims.

8.8 A three yearly update will be provided to Council on the sufficiency of nursery education provision across the County Borough, as well as any progress against the delivery of the strategic aims.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 To deliver the proposed nursery education provision for 2020/2021, and secure sufficient provision of English Medium nursery education will cost an estimated £15,000 per annum. This is a net cost position due to funding April FPN1 places offset by savings to January FPN1 places no longer being full-time.

9.2 These costs will be met as part of the overall Individual Schools Budget delegated to schools for 2020/2021 and included in the Council's MTFP.

9.3 To deliver on plans for a third WM Primary school to be set up from September 2021 requires an estimated £60k to be set aside within the MTFP in 2021/2022 rising to an estimated £140k in financial year 2024/2025.

## 10.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
<b>1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives</b>	3 of 4	0 of 4	1 of 4
<b>2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term</li> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Involvement</li> </ul>	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
<b>3. Protected Characteristics</b> <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	5 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
<b>4. Biodiversity</b>	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p>The main positive impacts through the delivery of the proposals included in this report are that children will have increased opportunities to access nursery education at the earliest opportunity with positive impacts on their wellbeing and development. Also, parents/carers will be able to make informed plans regarding work, education/training and other opportunities or commitments and have access to education and childcare options that support their family's needs. This will have clear positive impacts upon Best Start to Life, Working Life and Living Well as well as supporting the local authority's aim to deliver services in line with the sustainable development principle.</p> <p>The proposals impact positively against the following protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Pregnancy / Maternity, Religion / Belief and Welsh Language.</p> <p>No negative impacts have been identified.</p>			

**SUE WALKER**  
**CHIEF OFFICER, LEARNING**

**COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Nursery Sufficiency & 30 Hrs Childcare Offer Scrutiny Committee Report	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2018	INTRANET
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No