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Regeneration Wales
Adfywio Cymru

Improving Childcare Services in Wrexham

Case Study

In March 2013, the [Vibrant and Viable Places framework](#) for Wales set out a vision that everybody in Wales should live in well-connected vibrant, viable and sustainable communities with a strong local economy and good quality of life. It established 3 national outcomes to underpin regeneration policy in Wales which are Prosperous Communities, Learning Communities and Healthy Communities.

This framework, together with other national policies and programmes identify that the provision of affordable childcare is essential to delivering on these outcomes.

The Childcare Act (2006) also places a duty on Local Authorities to:

“take the lead role in facilitating the childcare market to ensure accessible high quality childcare that meets the needs of working parents; in particular those on low incomes, those with disabled children, or those who wish their child to attend Welsh medium provision”

In order to fulfil this duty, Local Authorities must produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every 3 years. This assessment identifies gaps in the provision of childcare, and sets out clear actions on how to close them. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for Wrexham carried out for the 2011-2014 period identified a number of issues which required action over the 3 year period.

It identified that, compared with the rest of Wales, childcare in Wrexham was more expensive, yet family incomes were slightly lower than average. It also identified that there was a shortage of flexible childcare provision, which was a problem for shift workers, weekend working and parents who commute distances to work.

In addition to this, 76.3% of women of working age were in employment or were self-employed in 2009, compared with 67.2% in Wales. This evidence is widely regarded as a crucial indicator of childcare demand in an area.¹

The number of specialist childcare centres for disabled children was low, and there was an imbalance between the proportion of the population who spoke Welsh and the provision of childcare services available through the medium of Welsh.

It was also acknowledged that in some of the most deprived parts of Wrexham, there was limited availability of childcare, and there was evidence of market failure, particularly relating to more flexible provision. It was also recognised that more work was required to communicate with hard to reach groups, who would benefit from improved access to information and services.

The assessment concluded that:

“resources needed to be targeted to the more deprived communities, in conjunction with key initiative and projects aimed at supporting parents and encouraging them back into training or employment, which will assist parents to participate and contribute to the local economy, help to raise their children out of poverty and in some cases break the cycle of deprivation”

In 2013, Wrexham successfully bid for funding under the Welsh Governments Vibrant and Viable programme, after setting out a business case for delivering a series of projects to regenerate the town centre as well as improve housing and services in some of Wrexham’s most deprived communities. The Local Authority was granted £10.594M from Welsh Government for a 3 year capital programme.



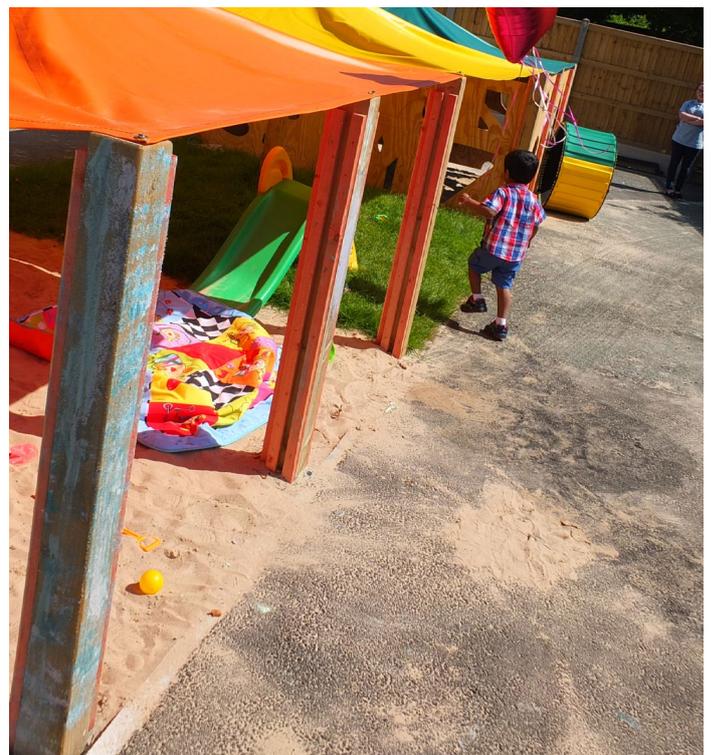
‘Sprouts’ Childcare Facility

In June 2015, the Sprouts childcare facility was [formally opened by the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths AM](#). The project was aimed at improving the provision of childcare services in Wrexham town centre, and to address some of the gaps identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Report.

A total of £155,000 had been allocated from the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme for physical improvements to be made to a property on the edge of the town centre, and make the building a customised and suitably adapted structure which could help deliver

a high standard of childcare, placed conveniently in the town, and which would help serve a deprived part of Wrexham.

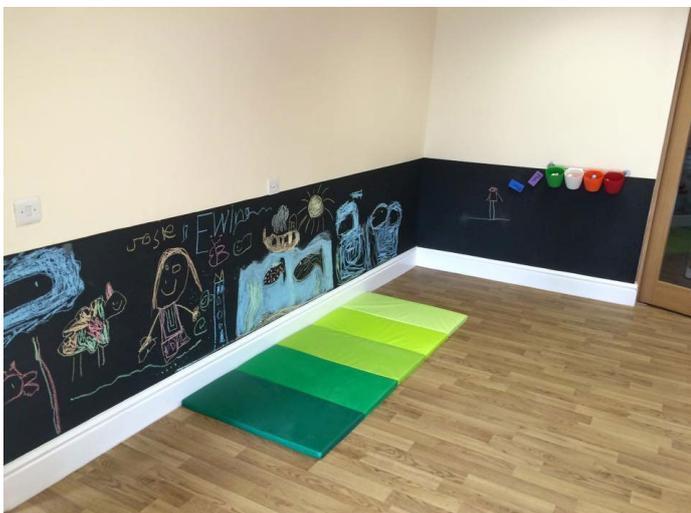
Upon completion the nursery includes an adventure play area and modern internal education space (also accessible by wheelchair), which currently is able to accommodate up to 40 children aged between 0 – 13. During the week, the nursery is open from between 6.30am to 6.30pm, and on Saturdays between 8.00am and 6.00pm, therefore providing some more flexibility for working parents. It currently employs 6 members of staff who are qualified to provide care, learning and development for children. There are also 3 Apprentices and support is also provided for 4 traineeships.



The nursery also seeks to address the gap in Welsh language childcare provision, and welsh-speaking staff members have been hired to address the shortage. Sprout's marketing and promotion is bilingual, and it is hoped that it will attract welsh speaking families to the nursery.

As the project develops, the facility hopes to add wider community benefits in the form of social and economic contributions, such as training schemes, which include paediatric first aid and food hygiene. A service which provides a 'bank' of trained staff which can be deployed to nurseries in the area where there is a shortage is also being considered.

During the school holidays, the nursery staff organise a full timetable of activities for the target age ranges, which also helps parents ensure adequate care and education is provided out of term time.



Wrexham Family Information Service

The Sprouts project forms one element of a more comprehensive strategy to improve early years education, as well as to support working families in the county. Wrexham County Borough Council also provides a Family Information Service which provides free support and guidance on all aspect of childcare, children and you people's service.²

Projects such as Sprouts have helped create a more streamlined childcare service for the county, which helps prepare children for early years education, as well as supporting parents to secure employment. The nursery is also hoping to support wider Welsh Government tackling poverty initiatives, such as [Flying Start](#), whereby free, part time childcare is provided for 2-3 year olds who live in Wales' most deprived communities, and is also seeking to secure Early Education funding, based on parental demand.

This project - funded through Vibrant and Viable places - has successfully demonstrated the ability for capital regeneration funding in Wales to join up and add value to other government policy areas, and in this case to support the strategic goals of the [Welsh Government Early Years and Childcare Plan](#).

Additional Notes

The Vibrant and Viable Places programme is designed to aid communities within the top 10% of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Wrexham has been granted £10.594 million; the fourth highest grant. In applying for a share of the VVP grant, Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) outlined nine regeneration projects to the Welsh Government (Table 1). These are seen as crucial projects which will tackle the current social and economic problems that face the Wrexham area.

References

1. Wrexham Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Summary Report 2011 – 2014. Wrexham Community Strategy. http://wwwtest.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/education/cypp/110421_Final_English_CSA_Summary.pdf
2. Sprouts Childcare website www.sproutschildcare.co.uk

Table 1:

The nine regeneration projects outlined by Wrexham council in the bid for VVP funding

| Regeneration Projects | Description |
|---|--|
| Redefining Wrexham town centre | Masterplan for town centre regeneration under the Local Development plan 2013-2028 |
| Affordable housing/Independent living | Development of older persons accommodation and social home improvements |
| Empty properties into homes | Refurbishing empty residential and commercial properties into homes of Welsh Government standard |
| Energy company obligation | Home efficiency improvements throughout Caia Park and Communities First Hightown cluster |
| South West Wrexham housing renewal area | Housing renewal grants and selected houses by the Local Authority for a Group Repair scheme |
| Improvement of standards in the private rental sector | Property Improvement Loans of up to £25,000 - owner occupied or privately rented |
| Markets redevelopment | Job creation from market investment in Wrexham town centre |
| Skills/Employability development programme | Skilled advisor assessment of local business management followed by suggested improvements |
| Affordable Childcare | Improved service of town centre childcare businesses. Partnership between local training providers and Caia Park social enterprise |
| | (Wrexham County Borough Council, 2013) |

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