

Frequently Asked Questions

Phase One Expansion of Early Years Provision

1. What are the plans to meet the Programme for Government commitment to deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all 2 year olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision.?

The first phase of the expansion, due to start in September 2022, will include all four elements of Flying Start: funded part-time, high-quality childcare for 2 year olds; parenting support; enhanced health visitor support; and support for speech, language and communication.

During the first phase around 2,500 additional children (aged 0-4 years) will benefit from all four elements of Flying Start.

This is the first stage in meeting the commitment to '[Deliver a phased expansion of early years' provision to include all 2 year olds](#), with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision'. The commitment is set out in the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

Families newly eligible for Flying Start will be contacted by their local authorities over the summer. Plans for phase two of the expansion will be announced in the autumn.

2. Why should people take up the phase one offer?

Those eligible will receive 12.5 hours of funded, high-quality childcare per week for 39 weeks of the year. The Flying Start childcare workforce is qualified to support children's development and supplement the nurturing traditionally provided by parents/ carers.

Children under four and their families, living in the expansion areas, will be able to benefit from the enhanced health visiting programme and access to support from the highly trained Flying Start Speech, Language and Communication workforce, where needed.

Parents/ carers will also be able to take advantage of the programmes support packages to enhance their parenting skills in supporting their child's development, care and wellbeing.

3. Do you expect all beneficiaries in the first phase to receive all four components of Flying Start?

Yes, local authorities are expected to deliver all four elements of Flying Start during the first phase of the expansion though some transitional arrangements may be needed during phase one while the necessary systems are established and workforce recruited to support full Flying Start Services.

4. Why aren't you going to the most deprived communities?

Welsh Government expansion guidance has encouraged local authorities to target the expansion of Flying Start towards communities, in more deprived areas, that aren't already part of the Flying Start programme.

5. Why are all local authorities receiving additional funding to expand Flying Start in phase one when there are clearly different levels of deprivation across Wales?

We want every local authority to receive financial support to start to expand Flying Start provision as we work towards universal coverage. That way there is a fair and systematic roll out across Wales.

6. What are the plans for further roll out of the expansion to meet the Programme for Government commitment?

Officials are currently working with Ministers to finalise the approach to the next phase. As with phase 1, a collaborative planning exercise with stakeholders will take place. Plans for phase two will be announced in the autumn.

7. Is the purpose of the expanded Flying Start childcare provision designed to help parents into work?

The primary objectives for expanding Flying Start to 2500 additional children and families are:

- To ensure children get the best possible start in life.
- To tackle poverty and deprivation.
- To increase the provision of childcare services and of Welsh medium childcare places and settings.

However, the provision of funded childcare places for 2 year olds may also enable parents to work or access training and education opportunities that may not have otherwise have been possible.

8. What benefit is Flying Start childcare to full time working parents when it only amounts to 12.5 hours per week?

The main benefits are set out above. In addition those who work fulltime are able to have some of their childcare costs paid through this provision. See above

Flying Start Childcare

9. Why isn't the Childcare Offer for 3-4 year olds being used to meet the commitment to provide universal childcare for 2-year olds?

The Childcare Offer is restricted to working parents only. More information on the childcare offer can be found here: [Childcare Offer for Wales | Help With Childcare Costs Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

10. How will the extension of childcare to 2 year olds benefit a child/a family?

Research shows that children who attend quality early years settings are more independent, concentrate on their play for longer and, on entry to school, are more co-operative and better prepared for the challenges they meet.

In Welsh-medium early years settings, children have access to the added benefits that often come from being bilingual, such as an increased ability to focus, higher cognitive function and improved social and cultural relations. Children that are able to switch between languages, can often develop more flexible approaches to thinking through problems.

Children will benefit from spending time in a safe, nurturing environment with their peers.

11. Who is eligible?

During phase one we aim to reach up to 2,500 additional children under 4 by increasing the Flying Start areas in every local authority in Wales. By the end of phase one, all parents and carers of children under the age of 4 living in those areas will be eligible for Flying Start services (health visiting, speech and language and parenting support (where needed)) with those aged two to three eligible for Flying Start childcare. More detailed information about locations will be available by the end of summer 2022 and local authorities will contact eligible families.

When the childcare element is fully rolled out, all families in Wales with children aged two to three years old will be eligible. Information about this will be available later this year.

12. How do people apply for it/access it?

Families who live within the new Flying Start expansion areas will be notified by their local Flying Start teams.

The information about these areas will be available by the end of summer 2022.

13. How does this work with/compliment the childcare offer already in place?

The childcare available through Flying Start is for two to three year olds. It includes 12.5 hours a week, for 39 weeks of the year, of funded high quality childcare. It will be available in specified settings in the first phase of the expansion.

The [Childcare Offer](#) for Wales provides 30 hours a week of funded early education and childcare for eligible working parents of three and four year olds for up to 48 weeks a year. From September the Childcare Offer will also be available to some parents in education and training. During term time (39 weeks of the year) the Offer builds on the existing universal commitment to early education which provides all three and four year olds with a minimum of 10 hours per week of provision. For the remaining nine weeks the Offer funds 30 hours of childcare per week.

Flying Start and the Childcare Offer together form important aspects of our long-term vision for Early Childhood Education and Care across Wales.

14. Will my child automatically move to Early Education/the Childcare Offer when they turn three?

A child who is accessing Flying Start childcare will be able to transition (by way of an application) into the early education element of the Offer when they reach the relevant age. This is usually the term after their third birthday, however the exact timing differs between different local authorities.

Children of eligible working parents, and of some parents in education and training, will also be able to access the childcare element of the Childcare Offer from this point. More information can be found at [childcare-offer-for-wales-campaign](#)

15. Will funded childcare services be available to all parents/ carers of 2 year olds in Wales?

In time, yes, however in phase one of the expansion we aim to reach up to 2,500 additional children under four in specified areas in each local authority.

16. How will this offer be rolled out, and when will it be available to everyone?

The roll-out will be gradual.

The criteria for phase one of the expansion is focussed on deprivation and increasing Welsh language provision (places and settings).

The first phase will begin from September 2022 and plans for the next phase of the expansion will be announced in the autumn.

17. Which providers will offer the scheme?

Existing Flying Start childcare providers will be supported to expand their reach, with work ongoing to encourage new providers, including childminders and those who specialise in Welsh-medium provision, to offer Flying Start childcare places.

We published guidance for local authorities to support the expansion of early years provision at in March 2022.

18. If I already use a specific provider for childcare, will I have to change to be able to access this provision?

If your provider is already delivering Flying Start childcare places you may be able to access childcare through them – the provider has to be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and meet the Flying Start standards. If you live in a new Flying Start area but use a childcare provider that is not yet registered to deliver Flying Start childcare, you may need to change provider to access childcare through Flying Start.

If a parent/carer lives in a Flying Start area there will be a list of registered Flying Start childcare settings which can be found by contacting the Family Information Service: [Find your local Family Information Service | GOV.WALES](#) here.

19. When will I find out if my childcare provider will be part of this scheme?

The information will be available by the end of summer 2022 and can be found by contacting the Family Information Service: [Find your local Family Information Service | GOV.WALES](#) here.

20. Why is the Welsh Government only supporting families once their child turns two and why isn't there any support for when maternity leave ends?

We launched our vision for a holistic Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system in Wales in October 2019. Our aim is to increase access to ECEC provision in Wales over the next 10 years, to ensure more children and families can benefit from access to funded provision before statutory school age.

We will be producing an ECEC action plan later this year which will lay out the roadmap for the next 10 years and how we will ensure that the childcare and early years sector is supported to meet the ambitious aims of ECEC. ,

The first step of expanding provision is the work underway to broaden the Childcare Offer to support access to childcare for the parents/carers of three and four year olds who are in education or training. This was set out in our [written statement](#) issued on 2 March 2022.

The next step is the phased expansion of funded part time, high quality childcare through Flying Start for children aged two to three; with the Childcare Offer offering provision to eligible families for those aged three and four.

All children in Wales are currently entitled to a minimum of 10 hours of early education provision from the term after their third birthday until they start full time education. The Childcare Offer builds on this existing universal early education provision, offering additional hours of childcare for working parents during the school term time (39 weeks of the year).

21. Given the wider implications of financial stress for families in Wales, does this scheme go far enough?

There are a number of ways families can be supported with the costs of childcare, including some UK Government schemes. The [Childcare Choices](#) website has more information about help which may be available, for example through Tax Free Childcare or Universal Credit.

The phased expansion of funded part-time provision for 2 years olds is a step towards supporting more families with childcare costs.

22. Will there be further changes to the childcare offer/provision in Wales?

There are other changes in the short term with the Childcare Offer being expanded to parents in education and training. This expansion will initially focus on parents enrolled on Further and Higher Education courses. Welsh Government are currently developing plans for implementation of this extension.

In 2019 Welsh Government launched our vision for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which will reform the provision of early education, and care in Wales to ensure that every child gets the best possible start in life. This is our long term approach to childcare provision in Wales.

We are embarking on a ten year journey to adopt an (ECEC) approach for children aged 0 to 5. This will involve ensuring our provision in education and childcare is focused on the holistic development of children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs to support well-being and lifelong learning.

Our ECEC vision will remove the artificial divide between education and care settings, ensuring all settings which deliver ECEC contribute to a child's well-being and development on an equal basis.

A principle of ECEC is to provide parents with access and choice, to ensure that Provision of support is flexible and responsive to individual circumstances.

23. Are the staff in Flying Start settings more highly qualified than staff in non-Flying Start settings?

All childcare workers must attain specific qualifications to work in this important sector. All settings must meet the [National Minimum Standards](#).

Flying Start settings require more staff to hold higher level qualifications than staff in non Flying Start settings. These requirements are set out in the Social Care Wales's List of Required Qualifications to work within the Early Years and Childcare Sector in Wales - [Qualification framework for social care and regulated childcare in Wales | Social Care Wales](#)

24. How will you ensure the childcare workforce can cope with the extra demand for services?

We know there are challenges. We will need to bolster the workforce to meet the new demand for services.

We will continue our investment in the workforce, supporting opportunities for training and upskilling and funding Cwlwm partners to provide the support settings may need to recruit and retain practitioners.

We will need to expand gradually and strengthen the workforce across all sectors – childcare, health visiting and speech, language and communication, parenting and local authority.

There is a particular issue for the Welsh medium provision, where the challenges around recruitment and retention are significant. We'll need to ensure more Welsh education settings are able to deliver childcare, while supporting more families to start their children's bilingual learning journey.

25. How will you promote the Welsh language and ensure that there are sufficient Welsh-medium settings?

Local authorities already promote Welsh language provision and work with a range of partners to deliver Welsh-medium and bilingual childcare. Local authorities need to plan for an increase in Welsh-medium school and childcare places and settings as part of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) and any expansion will need to align with the Flying Start programme.

Local authorities have recently submitted their 10-year WESPs, setting out how, collectively, they propose to meet the expected increase of 30% in learners accessing Welsh-medium education by 2031/32. Planning, as well as promotion of Welsh-medium early years provision, forms an important part of any local authority plan. Local authorities will be publishing their 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments by the end of September 2022 which will show how provision of childcare sufficiency aligns with the WESPs– both to support the growth of Welsh-

medium childcare and education provision and to facilitate a seamless transition from Welsh-medium childcare into Welsh-medium education.