



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Expansion of Early Years Provision – Phase 2 Guidance for Local Authorities

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Section One: Strategic Direction

A number of policy drivers have led to the expansion of early years provision.

Earlier this year, in March 2022, the Children and Young People's Plan¹ was published which sets out what Welsh Government (we) will do to support children and young people who are growing up, living and working in Wales. One of the seven overarching priorities is "All children should have the best start in life, including good early years services and support for parents or carers. They should be supported at home, in childcare and in schools, and when they move between these places."

In 2019, we launched our vision for a holistic Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system in Wales². We are embarking on a ten year journey to adopt an ECEC approach for children aged 0-5. This will involve ensuring our provision for 0-5 year olds is focused on the holistic development of children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs to support well-being and lifelong learning. One of the fundamental aims of this approach is to ensure as many children as possible can access high quality provision in Wales.

Welsh Government continues to build on our current early years programmes with the aim of creating a more joined-up, responsive system that puts the unique needs of each child at its heart. This is being led by the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme³, a co-construction programme involving pathfinder Public Service Boards across Wales. The programme is testing a more coherent, integrated and focused approach to the early years, to ensure that children from all backgrounds have the best start in life.

Our updated Programme for Government commits us to continue our support for our flagship Flying Start programme and, in line with the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, we have extended this commitment to **deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.**

We are taking a three-phased approach to the expansion:

1. Phase 1 of the expansion of Flying Start, was launched in September 2022 and included all four elements of the programme: enhanced Health Visiting; support for speech, language and communication; parenting support; and high quality childcare. We intend to deliver Flying Start provision to a further 2,500 children under the age of four during this phase. This will increase the number of beneficiaries to 38,500 each year.

¹ [Children and young people's plan | GOV.WALES](#)

² [Written Statement: Launch of Early Childhood Education and Care \(ECEC\) approach \(24 October 2019\) | GOV.WALES](#)

³ [Evaluation of the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme \(gov.wales\)](#)

2. Phase 2 will focus on a phased roll out of the part time, high quality childcare element of Flying Start to 2-3 year olds, from April 2023.
3. Phase 3 will scope what may be required to move to universal Flying Start for all children across Wales.

In order to progress **Phase 2**, clear and consistent guidance is required to ensure that local authorities have the information and direction needed to inform expansion plans that reflect the following **high level priorities**:

- maximise child development outcomes to support the best start in life, particularly for our most disadvantaged children;
- address inequality and alleviating some of the impacts of deprivation;
- support and strengthen Welsh medium provision; and
- address gaps in the availability of provision.

Section Two: Criteria for Targeting Expansion in Phase 2

The purpose of this guidance is to help local authorities develop expansion plans in readiness for the roll out of Flying Start childcare in new areas from April 2023. Historically, Flying Start has been a geographically targeted programme which used income benefit data, a proxy indicator for poverty, to target areas with the highest proportions of children aged 0-3 living in income benefit households.

These areas have been identified using the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD), data from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs and are broken down by Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs).

This high-level approach to targeting remains fit for purpose, is transparent and is based on a robust evidence base which shows why a particular area is in scope of expansion plans and, conversely, why others are not.

It was acknowledged in the guidance for Phase 1, that the fourth priority, addressing gaps in current provision, was, by definition, likely to identify places where more time will be required to make provision available because some capital investment may be required, and infrastructure development can take time. We suggested in the guidance for Phase 1 that an element of intelligence/data gathering should be used. You should demonstrate in your plans for Phase 2 how you are using this intelligence.

In allocating additional funding to expand the provision of the childcare element of Flying Start in Wales we are effectively increasing the 'footprint' of the programme nationally. Understanding where geographically targeted Flying Start services will be moving into at local authority level is a priority and this will need to be clearly outlined in local expansion delivery plans.

Additional Funding and Targets

You will receive indicative revenue allocations, which are ring-fenced for expansion purposes only, as part of your Children and Communities Grant (CCG) award letters for 2023-24 and you will be expected to deliver services to an additional number of children based on a sum of £4,400 per child.

For example – if your indicative ring-fenced revenue allocation for expansion is £600,000 you will be expected to work to a target of 136 additional children receiving Flying Start childcare ($600,000/4,400 = 136$).

Individual local authority allocations will follow the existing Flying Start formula which means each local authority will receive the same proportionate split of the expansion money as they received for Flying Start prior to the introduction of the CCG. Local authorities will be required to submit detailed expansion plans and final allocations will be subject to endorsement by the Welsh Government.

Expansion Areas - The Methodology

In order to identify your expansion areas, you will need to use the WIMD and DWP information provided to you by the Welsh Government. This information is the most up to date that is available and will give you an indication of which LSOAs in your local authorities, currently without Flying Start services, are now in scope of the expansion during Phase 2.

Other sources of information, combined with your local knowledge of your local authority areas, remain crucial in ensuring services reach those families most in need of support within the broad geographic areas prescribed. You may have already started working in some of these areas through the Early Years Transformation Programme and can build on this as part of the expansion programme. Other sources of information may include, but are not restricted to:

- Free School Meals data;
- Social Services data; and
- Health board data.

Expanding to whole LSOA areas should remain the 'default' position when it comes to expanding the footprint of Flying Start but, as in previous years, if there are clear, objective and legitimate reasons for you to exclude certain sections of a LSOA then you should feel able to do so.

Please note: We recognise that there may be gaps in the existing coverage of Flying Start in your local authorities which you may feel should be addressed as part of expansion plans. Where this is the case, we would expect you to explore all possible avenues of using your existing funding allocations to address these anomalies. Continuing to expand the footprint of Flying Start to new LSOAs is the focus of the Phase 2 expansion.

Increasing Welsh Language Provision

As set out in the Phase 1 guidance, expanding Welsh language early years childcare provision has been set as one of the overarching aims of the expansion. We expect to see an increase in Welsh medium places and settings through the phase 2 expansion. Phase 2 expansion plans will need to demonstrate how local authorities will continue to support this and will need to provide specific detail on the following priorities:

- increasing the number of Welsh medium places; and
- increasing Welsh medium settings in the local authority area.

Plans for increasing Welsh medium provision will need a strategic approach to target resources effectively and to ensure that outcomes reflect the policy aims. To achieve the objective of supporting and strengthening Welsh Language provision, local authorities will need to develop Welsh Medium settings and activity that supports the aim of expanding Welsh language early years provision. The Welsh Government will

consider the approach outlined in individual expansion plans on a case by case basis.

We know Welsh language early years services and language acquisition work best where there is a clear pathway into primary education and beyond. However, we also know that by establishing Welsh language services in areas where they have not historically been prevalent, we can support the creation of new opportunities to access Welsh language provision. While the creation of new Welsh medium childcare provision is an aim of the phase two expansion, supporting activity could also include:

- establishing/ building on existing Ti a Fi provision;
- aligning childcare provision with existing and proposed Welsh medium education provision;
- supporting English settings to offer bilingual provision and bilingual settings to offer Welsh language provision and promoting Welsh across all settings (see Annex for further information on Welsh Language categories);
- a focus on workforce development, including upskilling the workforce and promoting career opportunities and college and school placements in Welsh medium settings;
- spot purchasing of childcare places and identify opportunities for offering sessional Welsh medium provision within English or bilingual settings to extend reach and access;
- support and guidance to parents who wish to parent bilingually; and
- build capacity and support the establishment of new settings, including CIW registration.

You should refer to the 'Language Categories' from our childcare statutory guidance. They are set out in the Annex for ease of reference. It is important that Phase 2 plans take account of these factors in conjunction with your local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA), the provision of existing Cylch Meithrin, and other existing Welsh medium early years services, to ensure resources are aligned to support this overarching aim.

Funding of around £1 million per annum is being provided to Mudiad Meithrin to enable them to set up the new cylchoedd, taking account of all the requirements from sourcing locations and premises, recruiting management committees, recruiting and training staff and supporting cylchoedd to become sustainable. A commitment has been made to open a further 60 Cylch Meithrin over this Senedd term. We will be using the intelligence provided by you to inform this Welsh medium expansion work.

The Cwlwm partnership have funding to support this ambition.

If there is a Welsh in Education Planning Forum⁴ within your local authority, it would be useful to consult with them as it is likely that they will be able to help inform and align the work of strengthening Welsh medium provision in your area.

Promoting the Benefits of Multilingualism

Promoting the benefits of speaking more than one language from an early age is important in helping parents make an informed choice about childcare provision. In your plan you need to explain how you will seek to promote the benefits of speaking more than one language from an early age⁵, for example, through Ti a Fi sessions/ pre-school playgroups, parenting groups, antenatal classes, family courses, promotional campaigns, building on existing initiatives and working with other organisations such as Mentrau Iaith, Urdd, local primary schools, Family Information Service, including CWLWM members to promote the advantages and benefits of multilingualism.

Outreach

You are expected to deliver 75% of your expansion via the geographical targeting methodology outlined above. As part of your plans for Phase 2, up to 25% of your expansion can be achieved via Flying Start Outreach in order to give you the flexibility to reach families living outside of existing or new Flying Start areas and in order to reach disadvantaged families living in more rural areas.

This has the benefit of enabling childcare provision to reach disadvantaged families living in more rural areas and support expansion of Welsh medium provision.

The Flying Start Outreach policy remains unchanged.

Barriers to Expansion

In Phase 1 it was recognised there may be occasions when the methodology outlined in the guidance document led you to identify parts of your local authority where Flying Start services should operate as part of the expanded footprint of the programme but where delivering crucial elements of the programme was not possible during Phase 1.

For example, for Phase 1, it may have been unviable to expand into any new area that did not have childcare provision situated either within it or within a sensible walking distance of it (approximately 15 minutes on foot). Establishing new provision may not have been a realistic ambition to enable the delivery of Flying Start childcare services within the timescales of Phase 1.

⁴ See page 27 of Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans for further details - [guidance-welsh-in-education-strategic-plan.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁵ Please be aware of the [Race Equality Action Plan for Wales – An Anti-Racist Wales](#)

For Phase 2 you will need to revisit those areas and demonstrate how you are making progress towards offering Flying Start childcare services. If making further progress is still not viable, these areas will need to be prioritised in the future.

We appreciate that some local authorities may find it challenging to meet their new targets via the methodology outlined in this guidance (geographic targeting based on areas of relative deprivation). Where this is the case a greater proportion of delivery via Flying Start Outreach can be agreed as part of your plans for Phase 2. This will need to be agreed with the Welsh Government on a case by case basis.

Section 3: Flying Start Childcare in Expansion Areas

In Phase 2, we are expanding the part time, high quality childcare element of Flying Start to new families and communities in Wales. Flying Start childcare is often the most tangible and recognisable element of the programme which incorporates private, maintained and third sector provision across the sector. “Flying Start – Quality Childcare Guidance” is currently being updated (and will be shared as soon as it is available) and this offers local authorities the flexibility to determine the exact make up of their Flying Start childcare provision. This Flying Start guidance should be followed and the provision of childcare services in your expansion areas should mirror the services being offered within more established Flying Start areas in your local authority, as far as this is practicable.

We expect to see increases in Welsh medium, English medium and bilingual places and settings. We recognise that there will be transitional arrangements to take account of in relation to the workforce capacity and other logistical challenges. We will need to agree sensible and pragmatic arrangements with local authorities. These arrangements will be agreed on a case by case basis to recognise unique local challenges and will need to be clearly outlined in local authority expansion plans. Service relaxations may include:

- A fixed-term relaxation of the enhanced quality elements of Flying Start childcare, including the qualifications. However, we would expect all childcare settings to be able to demonstrate that they are working towards the higher qualifications required within two years.

You will need to consider how these transitional arrangements can be phased out as soon as possible. This will need to form part of your Phase 2 plan.

Local authorities will need to ensure that any services developed as part of your expansion plans are coordinated with other key services in your area, such as Families First and the childcare offer. In addition, please support new childcare staff to access Speech, Language and Communication training in accordance with the national pathway⁶.

Working with local childcare providers is a pragmatic solution to ensure provision is ready for the target date for roll out and enables us to ensure growth is sustainable for the sector. Furthermore, we know that when a wide range of providers are engaged in the provision of Flying Start we can start to raise the standard of childcare for all, which aligns with our wider vision for ECEC in Wales.

⁶ [All Wales speech, language and communication \(SLC\) Training pathway english \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/all-wales-speech-language-and-communication-slc-training-pathway-english)

Section Four: Reporting Requirements

In the first instance you will be expected to report against the new targets, set as part of the expansion of Flying Start, separately from both the core delivery that contributes to the national target of 36,000 children per year and the reporting on Phase 1. We will want to know numbers of offers and take-up and whether the places are English medium, Welsh medium or bilingual as a minimum based on the recognised definitions of Language Categories set out in the Annex. This will enable us to monitor the delivery of the Phase 2 expansion effectively.

Discussions with the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Service (KAS) are underway about the best way of collecting expansion data. We will be in touch with you in due course to discuss the approach.

Section Five: What you need to do next

Please note that your plans need to be returned to Welsh Government no later than 13 January 2023.

A copy of the 2018 WIMD and DWP data will be provided to help you to identify your expansion areas and we will share this with you as soon as it is available.

Please contact your [Account Manager](#) if you have any queries in relation to this guidance or the information requested in the planning template.

Annex

Language Categories

1. Welsh Medium Setting

Welsh is the main day to day language of the setting. Welsh is the language of all activities, and is the language of communication with all children and young people. It is also the language of the setting's administration. The setting communicates with parents either in Welsh or in both Welsh and English according to parental preference. Children from all language backgrounds are welcomed into the provision.

2. Welsh Medium and English Medium Setting

Both Welsh and English are used side by side as languages within the setting and has full bilingual elements. Welsh and English are used as languages of communication with the children and young people and both languages are used for activities. Both languages are used for the setting's administration. The setting communicates with parents either in Welsh or in Welsh and English according to parental preference.

3. English Medium Setting with some bilingual elements

English is the main day to day language of the setting with some bilingual elements. English is the language of the majority of activities, and is the main language of communication with all children and young people. The Welsh element is provided through the introduction of some Welsh to all children and young people through the use of greetings, songs, stories and games. The proportion of Welsh used varies according to the linguistic ability of the staff. English is the language of the setting's administration. The setting communicates with parents in English.

4. English Medium Setting

English is the day to day language of the setting. English is the language of all activities, and is the language of communication with all children and young people. It is also the language of the setting's administration. The setting communicates with parents in English