

## 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, started in September 2022, and includes 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.

Families newly eligible for Flying Start will be contacted by their local authorities.

Phase 2 will focus on investing £26m to deliver the high-quality childcare element of Flying Start to even more two-year-olds during 2023-24 and 2024-25.

#### **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 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?**

Phase 2 will commence in April 2023. We will be offering the childcare element of Flying Start during this phase. £11.650 million will be invested in 2023/24 and £14.3 million in 2024/25. This investment will allow the reach of Flying Start childcare provision to expand significantly, supporting long-term, positive impacts on the lives of the most disadvantaged children and families across Wales.

We will receive regular feedback and intelligence from across the sector about how phases 1 and 2 are being delivered. This will help to inform the third and final phase of the expansion which we expect to commence from April 2025.

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

The primary objectives for expanding Flying Start to approximately 2,500 additional children and families are:

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

However, the provision of funded childcare places for two year olds may also enable parents to work or access training and education opportunities that may not have otherwise 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 (Q.7). In addition, those who work full time are able to have some of their childcare costs paid through this provision.

**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?**

As one of the overarching aims of this early years expansion programme is to tackle poverty and deprivation, Flying Start is a more appropriate vehicle for delivery. Research tells us that high-quality childcare produces greater longer-term benefits for our children and strongly influences their future life chances. The right childcare can

help tackle some of the more entrenched issues that result from living in deprivation, including low skills and poor health that will take time to overcome.

### **10. How will the extension of childcare to two 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 1 we aim to reach up to 2,500 additional children under four by increasing the Flying Start areas in every local authority in Wales.

By the end of phase 1, all parents and carers of children under the age of four 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.

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

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

### **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 is also 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 two year olds in Wales?**

In time, yes, however in Phase 1 of the expansion we aim to reach up to 2,500 additional children under four in specified areas in each local authority.

Phase 2 begins in April 2023. From that point a further £26 million will be made available for the expansion of Flying Start childcare.

#### **16. How will this offer (Phase 1) be rolled out, and when will it be available to everyone?**

The roll-out will be gradual.

The criteria for Phase 1 of the expansion is focussed on deprivation and increasing Welsh language provision (places and settings).

The first phase began in September 2022.

The second phase will begin in April 2023.

#### **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 in March 2022 and guidance for phase 2 has recently been shared with local authority partners.

#### **18. If I already use a specific provider for childcare, will I have to change to be able to access this Phase 1 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 (or be working towards the required qualification level).

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. 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 that all children should have a high-quality stimulating learning and care experience in any education and care setting they attend.

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).

**20. 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 two years olds is a step towards supporting more families with childcare costs.

**21. 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.

As stated above (point 19), 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.

## **22. Why is Phase 2 being labelled Flying Start when it is only the childcare element being offered?**

Flying Start is focused on supporting improved outcomes for children. Research shows that high quality childcare, like that provided by Flying Start, helps to deliver these positive outcomes. This is why we are focusing on childcare provision in Phase 2.

Flying Start will be able to offer a high-quality childcare environment, coupled with high quality staff. This will support improved outcomes for children.

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

In addition to this, Flying Start settings require staff to hold, or be working towards, higher level qualifications than staff in non-Flying Start settings. Phase 2 Flying Start childcare provision will require this.

## **23. If it is only the childcare element of Flying Start, won't this lead to confusion about what the difference is between this and the full Flying Start programme?**

We will ensure that communications with all stakeholders are clear about the distinction between the Phase 2 expansion and the core Flying Start programme. The existing Flying Start programme will continue to deliver successfully and make a huge difference to tens of thousands of families across Wales.

Focussing Phase 2 on providing Flying Start childcare means that we can extend high quality Flying Start childcare to an increased number of children and their families, right across Wales.

We will closely monitor outcomes and feedback from the first two phases of the expansion programme. The learning from the first two phases of the expansion will help to inform the final phase, Phase 3, which is due to be rolled out from April 2025.

## **24. What if childcare only provision leads to more referrals to other services but there is no additional funding for these services?**

Throughout the roll-out of the expansion of early years we will work closely with local authorities to identify issues such as this at an early stage.

We will work flexibly with local services to support them to meet any additional demands that arise.

## **25. What does this mean for the shape of Flying Start in the future?**

The expansion programme will mean that thousands more children will benefit from Flying Start services.

We will monitor outcomes and feedback from the first two phases of the expansion of early years provision.

This will help to inform the final phase, Phase 3, which is due to take place from April 2025.

## **26. Why aren't we taking a needs-based approach?**

Historically, Flying Start has been a geographically targeted programme which has 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.

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.

## **27. How will we count beneficiaries if we are not including health-visiting services?**

As part of Phase 1 expansion, we aim to collect the following specific data:

- The number of unique beneficiaries reached (this may not be a HV contact at least initially).
- The number of childcare places offered.
- The number of Welsh language [both Welsh Medium and Bilingual] childcare places requested.
- The number of Welsh language [both Welsh Medium and Bilingual] childcare places offered and taken up.

As the expansion rolls out, we will look at regularising data sets.

We will work closely with our partners in local authorities and the sector to develop an appropriate way of counting beneficiaries in Phase 2.

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

We know there are challenges in terms of capacity in the sector. We will be working closely with the sector to ensure they have the support they need 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.

There is a particular issue for the Welsh medium provision, where the challenges around recruitment and retention are significant. We will need to work closely with our partners and build on our existing programmes and initiatives to support and strengthen the expansion of Welsh medium provision, including developing the workforce, raising awareness, and creating new opportunities to access Welsh medium provision, while supporting more families to start their children's bilingual learning journey.

**29. 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 published their 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments at the end of September 2022 which 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.

In their plans, local authorities are required to demonstrate alignment with their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) and Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSA) as well as considering opportunities for promoting the benefits of multilingualism from an early age, helping parents make an informed choice about childcare provision, building on existing programmes and initiatives and working with other organisations such as Mentrau Iaith, Urdd, local primary schools, Family Information Service, including CWLWM members.

**30. How will you ensure that there are enough childcare places to support the expansion across Wales?**



We are making an additional £70 million available in capital funding to local authorities during the next three years. This is to enable them to develop new settings or to improve existing settings across the whole childcare sector so that additional childcare spaces can be created.

Local authorities will be able to submit applications to the Welsh Government for this purpose and we will be issuing guidance to them on the new process in the coming weeks.