

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 14 February 2017
Report Subject	New Child Care Offer
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services) and Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children sought bids from all 22 Local Authorities to become early adopters of a pilot free child care scheme. Early adopters will work with the Welsh Government to develop a model for the national roll out of the programme.

Flintshire's bid to become an early adopter and to pilot the scheme was successful, and was selected as one of only six authorities across Wales. The offer will be **piloted from September 2017** in Gwynedd, Anglesey, **Flintshire**, Swansea, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda CynonTaf.

The Childcare Offer will, by the end of the current Welsh Assembly in 2021, provide working parents with 30 hours of government-funded childcare and early education for 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks of the year. This includes 10 weeks within the school holiday period, with the aim of supporting families with quality flexible and affordable childcare. It will also support economic regeneration and reduce pressures on family income and helping parents to participate in work reducing a family's risk of poverty.

The Offer also supports the wellbeing of children through positive and rich childhood experiences. The provision of high-quality early education and childcare is central to the Welsh Government's 'Building a Brighter Future', the 10 Year Plan which sets out the Government's commitment to improve the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members endorse Flintshire as an early implementer of the offer, maximizing the opportunity of a grant worth £1.552 million, supporting the full roll out of the scheme across Flintshire, benefitting up to 441 three to four year olds and their families.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	THE CHILDCARE OFFER FOR WALES
1.01	The Childcare offer will, by the end of the current Welsh Assembly in 2021, aim to provide working parents with 30 hours of government-funded childcare and early education for 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks of the year. This includes 10 weeks within the school holiday period.
1.02	<p>The new childcare offer will combine the successful Foundation Phase provision during term times, with additional childcare. During the weeks of the year when the Foundation Phase is not provided, qualifying children will receive 30 hours of childcare, supporting working families with the costs of holiday care.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Child's date of birth: 21 December 2014 – they will be 3 on 21 December 2017. This entitles the child to attend Foundation Phase education for a minimum of 10 hours per week, from the term after their 3rd birthday (January 2018 – July 2018).</p> <p>Providing the child's parent is a 'working parent' and satisfies the eligibility criteria the child can also receive up to 30 hours childcare during the term time. This may be at the same childcare setting or an alternative arrangement with a registered childcare setting.</p>
1.03	The Welsh Government want the offer to be as clear and easy to access as possible, for parents and child care providers.
1.04	The scheme must also allow parents to continue to choose the provider that best suit their circumstances; as long as the provider is registered with CSSIW and therefore meet the national minimum standard for registered childcare.
1.05	The Welsh Government will be looking closely at the availability and accessibility of childcare in different parts of Wales and seeing if it matches what parents need. They will also be looking at the childcare issues and barriers facing parents and providers and what can be done to overcome them.
1.06	<p>The pilots of the scheme will seek to test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How accessible and easy it is for parents to access the offer; ➤ How accessible and easy it is for providers to provide the offer; ➤ How the offer fits alongside Flying Start and the Early Years Foundation Phase
1.07	The pilot will also provide an opportunity to identify any issues that may surface for parents, local authorities and child care settings as a result of providing and testing the offer and how these issues can be addressed.

1.08	During the lead in period, we will be undertaking Childcare Sufficiency Assessments across Flintshire, gathering data from a number of sources including the Family Information Service, Flying Start and Early Entitlement. A variety of other settings, which could offer parental choice and variety of childcare / education provision including playgroups, private day care, child minders and others which will be consulted.
1.09	We will seek to provide the opportunity to 441 children in Year 1 (September 2017 – September 2018) building on an initial cohort of 75 to 100.
1.10	We will need to be ascertain that there are enough providers and setting to take up the 441 children, so a detailed piece of work is taking place at the moment in relation to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, this will help us form a view on the achievability of the scheme.
1.11	A Grant Offer letter will be issued to the Authority to include funding for a planning stage December 2016 – March 2017, following Welsh Governments consideration of our drafted plan.
1.12	<p>The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children made an Oral Statement in Plenary 10 November 2016:</p> <p>“Testing the offer will allow us to make sure we learn what works and what doesn’t, building on experience and evidence to deliver for all working parents in Wales.”</p> <p>“Delivering this commitment will be challenging and I don’t underestimate what needs to be done. The barriers childcare can present to parents supporting their families as they wish, must be addressed head-on.</p> <p>“It makes no sense for parents to be earning less than their childcare costs. It makes no sense to have to turn down a promotion, or a better job, losing opportunities to improve your family’s circumstances, just because you can’t access childcare when and where you need it. We want parents to have employment choices.”</p>
1.13	<p>NEXT STEPS</p> <p>This is a complex development and will require a skilled and knowledgeable coordinator to lead this innovative pilot, reporting directly the Early Years and Family Support Manager and the Flintshire Steering Group.</p>
1.14	The recruitment process is underway. The post holder will oversee effective planning and project implementation. They will work alongside key partners, produce monitoring reports to assess progress towards the agreed project pathway.
1.15	It will take time to establish adequate systems for managing data collection and evaluation to monitor performance and impact, completing relevant reports to government, steering group and wider partners.
1.16	The first Flintshire Steering Group meeting was held on 12 January 2017 to scope the local project; with representation from Flying Start, Family Information Service and Early Entitlement, and then membership will be

	widened to include the Childcare Development Group members.
1.17	Attached in the appendices is some additional information that could be handed to parents which may help them understand the programme. The Family Information Service, Flying Start and Early Entitlement can also be contact for advice and information.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no immediate financial implications for Flintshire County Council resulting from the 'the Offer' as it is a grant funded programme by the Welsh Government. The grant is administered by the local authority as the accountable body.
2.02	In preparation for the pilots we will be reviewing information on local rates of pay for the different types of childcare. This is to inform the rates of pay during early implementation. This is being collected for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
2.03	The programme will require detailed costings for administration. This needs to be realistic and proportionate. Welsh Government will consider the requirements and this will inform the amount of funding allocated in the grant letter for this current year 2016/17.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	There has been a period of consultation by Welsh Government. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has been undertaken locally. Further consultations will be conducted as the implementation develops.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>Risks to the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of skilled project manager. • In mitigation we undertake a wide reaching recruitment campaign. • Not having sufficient childcare settings to meet the need of 441 children. • In mitigation there is a phased approach to the implementation, early indications are that Flintshire will have sufficient available of good child care.
4.02	The aim of 'the Offer' is to mitigate against the effects of poverty on outcomes for children. The provision of high-quality early education and childcare is central to the Welsh Government's 'Building a Brighter Future', the 10 Year Plan which sets out the Government's commitment to improve the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales.

4.03	The Offer aims to reduce inequalities as detailed in the Welsh Government's 'Building a Brighter Future'. It is a programme of universal, targeted offer which will be implemented on an incremental basis.
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Flintshire Current Early Entitlement Offer - Extract from Information Leaflet.
5.02	The 3-4 Year Childcare Care Offer - Narrative for Parents and Guardians.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. Contact Officer: Gail Bennett, Early Years Manager Telephone: 01244 551052 E-mail: gail.bennett@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>The Childcare Offer': 30 hours of funded childcare for 3 and 4 year olds, in working families for 48 weeks a year.</p> <p>Working parents: both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), with each parent earning, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW). Some of this is still to be defined as the work develops.</p> <p>Foundation Phase: the statutory curriculum for all 3 to 7 year olds in Wales, in both maintained and non-maintained settings.</p> <p>CSSIW: Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.</p> <p>Childcare Sufficiency Assessments: A report that brings together a range of different data and information to develop a picture of the current childcare market and to identify whether there are any gaps in supply.</p>