

**JOINT EDUCATION & YOUTH AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting	Thursday 24 th May 2018
Report Subject	Childcare Offer for Wales, Flintshire
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services; and Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services); and Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the 30 Hour Childcare Offer for Wales is to mitigate against the effects of poverty on outcomes for children and reduce inequalities. 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.

This report provides an update on the funded Childcare Offer for Wales in Flintshire.

It provides an update on the following:

- All Flintshire Childcare Offer
- Latest update figures of the Childcare Offer for Wales, Flintshire
- Development and rollout of the online Childcare Offer for Wales, Flintshire Provider Portal.
- Partnership with other Authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members scrutinise and endorse the progress made to full roll out of the Childcare Offer in Flintshire.
2	Members endorse the proposed cross-county delivery plan.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	The Welsh Government undertakes by the end of the current Welsh Assembly in 2021 to provide working parents with up to 30 hours of government-funded childcare and early education for 3 and 4 year olds for up to 48 weeks of the year. This includes up to 9 weeks of up to 30 hours funded childcare within the school holiday period, with the aim of supporting families with quality, flexible and affordable care. It will also support economic regeneration and reduce pressures on family income and help parents to participate in work, reducing a family's risk of poverty. It is also helping to sustain and remodel the childcare sector.
1.02	The development and delivery of the Offer is a joint partnership between Early Years and Family Support (Social Services), Early Entitlement and Nursery Provision (Education and Youth).
1.03	The Offer supports the wellbeing of children through positive and rich childhood experiences.
1.04	Financially the Offer can make a real difference to a family, of up to £5,535 per annum. Many parents have confirmed a return to work or an increase in working hours as a result of being in receipt of this Offer.
1.05	<u>Progress in Developing and Delivering the Childcare Offer for Wales, Flintshire</u> Since September 2017, Flintshire has been working with Welsh Government and six other local authorities across Wales to deliver the childcare offer through a phased approach. The Offer was initially tested within Bagillt, Broughton and Buckley as well as taking in a number of wards that also offered the Flying Start programme. There were two further expansions agreed with Welsh Government in November 2017 and January 2018. In November, the Offer was expanded to the whole of Holywell, Connah's Quay, and Flint and in January the areas of Higher Kinnerton, Hope and Caergwrle were added.
1.06	In March it was agreed with Welsh Government that the Offer could be rolled out to cover the whole of Flintshire from 1 May 2018. Applications were opened from 9 April for a May start. This has resulted in considerable take up across Flintshire. As of the 14 May 2018, the number of applications received is 853. Also, 177 childcare providers have registered to provide childcare through the Childcare Offer, with 31 of

	<p>these providers based across local borders including Cheshire, Wrexham, and Denbighshire.</p>
1.07	<p>To assist providers to administer the Offer, an online Childcare Offer Provider Portal was launched April 2018. The Portal was developed in-house between the Childcare Team and IT Services. The portal provides a secure platform for completing and submitting claim forms and monitoring information to the Childcare Offer Team and it also speeds up payment to the provider. Positive feedback about the online portal from providers has been received. Providers think the system is easy to use and helps them in the management and administration of their setting. Payments are made directly to settings based upon 'booked' hours. Submission of actual used hours is provided at the end of the month to enable a comparison of used hours against booked hours to ensure value for money.</p>
1.08	<p>The Welsh Government would like to expand the programme of early implementation, enabling the testing of the offer in as many authorities as possible before full roll-out.</p> <p>One of the possibilities being explored is that Flintshire will be the 'delivery authority' for the childcare offer on behalf of both Wrexham County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council. The Minister for Children and Social Care has agreed this approach and Flintshire has been asked to begin the formal arrangements to enable this to happen. It is anticipated delivery will begin in parts of Wrexham from September 2018 and in parts of Denbighshire from April 2019. This will need to include formal agreements between the authorities in line with internal processes. A business case has been provided to Welsh Government which is currently under consideration with an anticipated response in early June.</p> <p>Welsh Government has approached Flintshire to undertake this cross-border role because of the success of its delivery of the Childcare Offer and the very good systems that have been developed.</p>
1.09	<p>Under the model proposed above Flintshire would be responsible for: processing applications from parents across all three counties, determining their eligibility, agreeing terms with childcare providers and processing payments to them.</p> <p>It will be necessary to further develop the IT systems to expand the potential for other authorities to use the Flintshire developed system, with appropriate service level agreements. Through partnership with IT Services, three options have been provided to the Welsh Government for consideration.</p> <p>It is expected Wrexham and Denbighshire will be responsible for publicising the offer to parents and childcare providers within their communities, training their Family Information Service to deal with enquiries on the offer and to provide Flintshire with any information required. Separate grants will be provided to facilitate this when formal arrangements are agreed between Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire.</p>

	<p>These grants will continue to be paid on a claims basis to ensure that the childcare element is fully funded by the Welsh Government.</p>
1.10	<p>With regards to the strategic roll-out of the Childcare Offer across the whole of Wales, Welsh Government wishes to make the process as uniform as possible and to achieve maximum value for money. The administration of the process has been driven by the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the process for applying for the offer should be as uniform as possible for parents; • the process for payments to childcare providers should be as straightforward as possible, particularly so if they are delivering childcare for parents from more than one local authority; • reducing the duplication of effort in developing systems and processes; • building on existing best practice and reducing the differences in approach across Wales; and • achieving economies of scale. <p>Welsh Government are in discussions with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) about the longer-term development of an on-line application process for parents to apply for the Childcare Offer and be checked for eligibility. This would also have the potential for childcare providers to receive payment. Using HMRC would minimise the cost to Welsh Government in the full roll out of the Childcare Offer.</p>

3.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
3.01	<p>There are no immediate financial implications for Flintshire County Council resulting from the 'the Offer' as this is a fully grant funded programme by the Welsh Government. The grant is administered by the local authority as the accountable body.</p> <p>Should in the future Welsh Government decide to end the scheme there may be some redundancy costs or reallocation of grants to cover posts.</p>
3.02	<p>The Welsh Government provided a budget for the administration of the offer locally for 2016/17 and has provided a budget for a further 18 months from April 2018. This is a separate grant to the payments to settings. There will also be a separate grant for working on behalf of Denbighshire and Wrexham.</p>
3.03	<p>The delivery of the Childcare Offer for Wales in Flintshire is largely digitally based. As such, traditional printing costs associated the application, processing, promoting and publicising the Childcare Offer are minimal, although a small budget associated with this activity is still required.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	Locally, the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment continues to be completed annually, the results of which are used to plan to ensure sufficient childcare is available in all parts of Flintshire to meet demand for childcare and Foundation Phase education.
4.02	Regular provider events and 'surgeries' continue to be held by the Childcare Offer Team to ensure existing and new providers are kept up-to-date with the latest developments of the Offer and to ensure providers have an opportunity to feedback their experiences of the Offer to the Childcare Offer Team.
4.03	The Childcare Offer Advisory Group continues to meet regularly to support the development and delivery of the Offer in Flintshire. The Advisory group consists of representatives of CWLWM and Officers of the County.
4.04	The Welsh Government has commissioned NatCen Social Research (in partnership with Arad Research) to gather the views of settings who provide the offer and parents who receive the Offer. In May a letter and / or email containing a survey link and unique access code was sent to parents inviting parents complete a short 15 minute online survey. The information collected will help to improve early education and childcare in Wales.

5.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
5.01	<p>Risks to the project:</p> <p>Not having sufficient registered childcare settings to provide places for all eligible children in Flintshire and to meet the demand for other programmes including Flying Start and Foundation Phase education.</p> <p>There was originally concern that there would be a shortage of childcare provision during school holidays. To date, this concern has not been realised, although it will be continually monitored.</p> <p>Both situations are monitored.</p>

6.00	APPENDICES
6.01	None.

7.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
7.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gail Bennett Early Years and Family Support Manager</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 703953</p> <p>E-mail: gail.bennett@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>The Childcare Offer for Wales: 30 hours of funded childcare and education 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>CIW: Care 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> <p>Cwlwm: 'Cwlwm' is made up of five organisations with Mudiad Meithrin as the lead organisation. 'Cwlwm' organisations are Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, Mudiad Meithrin, National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru), PACEY Cymru and Wales Pre-School Providers Association (Wales PPA).</p>