

# Flintshire Early Years & Family Support Service



## PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

## PROJECT BRIEF

**Project:** Flying Start Expansion Phase 2  
Flintshire

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## Background

Flying Start is the Welsh Government targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

The core elements of the programme are drawn from a range of options that have been shown to influence positive outcomes for children and their families. These include:

- Funded quality, part-time childcare for 2–3-year olds.
- An enhanced Health Visiting service, *Midwifery and Safeguarding*
- Access to Parenting Programmes; and support for Early Language Development

In Flintshire approximately 1500 children under 4 are current beneficiaries of the programme with over 300 children aged 2-3 benefitting from funded childcare provision annually. The programme currently operates in the most deprived LSOAs (Lower super output areas) of Flintshire based on the [Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (WIMD), (as specified by Welsh Government).

## National Expansion Programme

The Welsh Government Programme of Work includes the expansion of 2–3-year-old funded childcare for all children. They have incorporated this into the Flying Start programme and are taking a phased approach. The Flying Start Expansion Programme will significantly extend childcare provision to support long-term, positive impacts on the lives of the most disadvantaged children and families across Wales, until it reaches a universal offer. 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. The Expansion Programme is being delivered through a phased approach, with Welsh Government specifying the number of children included in the expansion, for each phase and area within scope. There is focus on ensuring all children have access to quality Welsh Medium childcare provision with the expectation that an equal offer is made to all eligible children.

## Flintshire's Expansion Programme

The programme in Flintshire has been informed through a comprehensive needs analysis and assessment, with analysis conducted with NESTA Cymru. We have used the 2019 WIMD data to ensure we are reaching Flintshire's more deprived children as we enter Phase 2 expansion. We have incorporated a weighting system that also captures data from Children's Services and Free School Meal eligibility to ensure that we are taking on areas with children aged 2-3 who will benefit most from funded childcare sessions. This approach has provided an objective and evidence-based approach on the areas and sequencing of the expansion programme.

Consideration is also being given to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Flintshire, and the current capacity and availability of childcare places, and the needs to develop the Sector's availability and accessibility, whilst not impacting Local Authority programme including Flying Start, Flying Start Outreach, 3-4 year old childcare offer and Early Entitlement, and childcare funded through the Children and Communities Childcare and Play Grant.

## Phase 1 expansion

The initial phase (Phase 1) Expansion commenced in September 2022 when 2 LSOAs in Buckley were successfully brought into the full Flying Start service. This has enabled us to expand services in the Buckley area for childcare, health, speech and language and parenting. However, further phases have not included the four Flying Start elements and are only funding childcare expansion.

## Phase 2 expansion areas

Phase 2 commenced in April 2023. It is important to note that this phase (Phase 2) only includes the funded childcare element of the programme. £11.65 million will be invested nationally in 2023/24 and

14.3 million in 2024/25. For 2023/24, Flintshire have been given a target of 191 children to place in childcare with a total budget allocation of £840,648.

The following table sets out the areas for phase 2 expansion at a LSOA level:

	Phase 2a (1) or 2b (2)	FCC LSOA Rank order 2019	SSC Rank	Hub Rank	FSM Uptake Rank	Final Rank	Percentage of children aged under 4 in income deprived households in 2019	Estimated Avg # of Children
Mostyn (Flintshire)	1	5	10	15	12	6	43%	9
Saltney Mold Junction	1	18	14	19	3	13	31%	21
Buckley Bistre East 1	1	10	24	38	22	19	37%	15
Leeswood	1	20	19	22	25	21	30%	16
Ffynnongroyw	1	17	24	28	28	23	33%	14
Bagilt East	1	12	43	20	33	24	35%	21
Sealand 1	1	32	13	17	15	25	24%	16
Flint Coleshill 3	2	22	24	25	35	26	29%	18
Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor	2	22	19	30	38	27	29%	10
Mold East	2	36	33	14	40	29	22%	19
Aston 1	2	31	29	39	27	30	25%	13
Treuddyn	2	28	33	36	45	31	26%	14
Mold Broncoed 1	2	26	52	32	39	32	27%	10
Mold Broncoed 2	2	16	84	42	47	35	34%	8

Phase 2 Potential further areas for expansion (if anticipated take up is low, the areas below will be considered)

LSOA Code	LSOA Name	FCC LSOA Rank order 2019
W01000305	Holywell East	26
W01000260	Buckley Bistre East 2	28
W01000277	Connah's Quay Golftyn 3	32
W01000283	Connah's Quay Wepre	36
W01000334	Shotton East	36
W01000265	Buckley Mountain 2	36
W01000308	Hope 2	36
W01000299	Gwernaffield	36
W01000281	Connah's Quay South 3	42
W01000255	Broughton North East	42
W01000330	Saltney Stonebridge 1	45
W01000298	Gronant	45

### Staffing & Recruitment

- The existing Flying Start Childcare Advisory Teachers team, with support from colleagues have completed all planning and preparatory work.
- There is an opportunity to build on our current co-production bringing all childcare elements together, and the Early Years Support Team (Childcare Offer, Early Entitlement administration and Childcare Development employees) will implement the expansion with the support of Flying Start team.
- The funding covers a small allocation for staffing and administration – this will be used for new Childcare Placement Officer posts to support the development of the childcare sector and placing

children to appropriate childcare, taking into consideration child and parent needs e.g. vulnerability, development need, additional support need, Welsh language.

- A further bid has been submitted to Welsh Government to request further funding to increase the staffing capacity in Family Information Services, from 2 – 3 FTE (full time equivalent) staff to incorporate Welsh medium outreach development work with families as discussed with colleagues in Education (Vicky Barlow) and to support the WESP and Welsh Language Strategy.
  - Dedicated function to improve access to quality information regarding Welsh medium childcare and early education pathways aligning with Flintshire's 10 year plan as outlined in the WESP.
  - Liaising with the Welsh in Education Team to develop outreach work to raise awareness of the benefits of Welsh medium childcare & education before parents choose a setting.
  - Designated link with Mudiad Meithrin to coordinate informal Welsh Medium groups such as Ti a Fi and dissemination of promotional material.
  - Designated link for settings wishing to improve the Welsh language skills of staff – liaison with Early Entitlement & Childcare development team to signpost to quality training.

### Capital Investment

- Welsh Government have committed to investment over 3 years, nationally of £70 Million. Flintshire Early Years are currently working with the Early Years Childcare Development Partnership and Education colleagues to develop a capital plan to maximise the programme, support areas of need and consider the longer-term impact and sustainability, and a pathway between childcare and education.
- Priority will be given to new areas of Flying Start expansion and gaps in Welsh medium provision.
- Business cases for development can include new or existing provision.
- The Small Capital grant supports the development and improvement of the indoor and outdoor childcare facilities/provisions to accommodate the 2-3 year olds. This will continue to build upon small capital investment over the past few years for the 3-4 year old childcare, and will continue to be panelled through the multi-agency panel consisting of early years, education and health colleagues.

### Benefits

1. **Children:** To improve outcomes for children and improve their skills and potential by receiving funded quality childcare provision. There is growing evidence that the Covid 19 pandemic has negatively impacted young children's development.
2. **Childcare sector:** who will receive guaranteed long-term income for childcare providers, who have been struggling financially due to increased costs.
3. **Childcare sector:** improving setting quality and practitioner skills via the Implementation of Flying Start quality guidance and early years training and support e.g. safeguarding.
4. **Phased rollout:** this ensures the most deprived areas in Flintshire benefit first from the funding and allows time to grow the Sector, including in-house provision and models of operation.
5. **Support for families with young children:** families already or considering paying for childcare will benefit from the added value
6. **Educational outcomes:** Quality childcare for 2–3-year-olds can benefit children most where income deprivation is a factor in parenting skills and a child can increase their readiness for school and learning, influencing their longer term outcomes.
7. **Employment:** roles within growing settings and those required within EYFS to support this programme will provide long term employment opportunities in Flintshire. The longer term aim is to ensure that all children have the best start in life and become adults who reach their potential and contribute to society, proving a return on early investment.
8. **Early Intervention:** Through the opportunity of training and different models of operation there will be significant opportunity to identify needs early and provide proportionate services in the

aim to prevent needs escalating, when this can be prevented through effective identification, and early support.

## Challenges

1. **Flying Start Childcare:** currently provided by existing open market childcare settings, with the exception of Garden City, an inhouse provision – in some area's settings may not be sustainable in the long term due to rising staffing and utility costs, and the expectations required when childcare providers are registered for certain programmes which require more than the National Minimum Standards for Childcare.
2. **Capital Investment:** Timescales are up to 3 years and allocation does not cover all areas required– some children are likely to miss out on funded places.
3. **Capacity:** Although the funding allocation does allow for staffing costs there will be impact on existing Flying Start services due to the requirements for verifying the quality and qualifications of expansion settings on an ongoing basis. The model will need to be reviewed and research shows that it is childcare quality that provides the biggest impact on children, not childcare itself. There is no evidence that children benefit from attending settings that are not of high quality ([EPPSE, 2015](#)).
4. **Quality:** Many settings do not meet the quality standards stipulated within the Flying Start Guidance. Although we are permitted to temporarily relax some expectations of new providers it will require a concerted effort to ensure settings meet targets within timescales, and to develop a model of self-assessment, planning and action that ensure the quality is consistent and sustainable.
5. **Workforce capacity:** Pressure on exiting employees to deliver this scheme on top of business as usual commitments will impact other services.

## Risks

### **Risk 1: Childcare sufficiency**

Some areas have no or limited childcare available for 2-year-olds. Specifically, there is limited provision in rural areas e.g., Mostyn, Fynnongroyw, Trewlawnyd and Gwaenysgor. This is supported in the analysis and report from Nesta Cymru. We are working to promote and develop provision in these areas, but this will require investment, a willingness for providers to establish childcare settings, including potential capital development, and time before we are able to ensure childcare sufficiency in these areas and this may lead to complaints from parents/carers wishing immediate access to provision within their community.

As an interim mitigation, eligible families from these areas will be able to access childcare in other areas whilst the local infrastructure is developed. However, this will need to be closely monitored by the staff to ensure capacity and local impacts in areas of limited places e.g. Flint, Bagillt.

### ***Actions to mitigate risks:***

- To enable parents in rural communities to access childcare, we promote all EY grants/schemes including Flying Start expansion through FCC and FISF media platforms and outreach work.
- We signpost parents/carers to their nearest childcare providers, make available FISF information packs, promote the expansion through volunteer Parents Champions and Family Workers.
- Enable opportunities for childcare providers to obtain a vehicle to transport children from rural areas to the nearest childcare providers to increase access and take up the offer. This can be achieved through a Small Capital Grant.
- Currently, training funding is available to applicants who want to become a childminder (pre-registration cost including accredited training, quality start pack, PACEY (Professional Association for

Childcare and Early Years) membership fee). There may be opportunity to build up childminder networks. This will also support the anti-poverty agenda.

- PACEY is commissioned to provide pre-registration email and telephone support to potential applicants who want to become a childminder in Flintshire. Once registered, childminders are supported by FCC Childcare Development Workers.
- The Small Capital grant supports the development and improvement of the indoor and outdoor childcare facilities/provisions to make it developmentally appropriate for 2–3-year-olds.
- Partnership work with CWLWM to support the expansion and development of childcare provision.
- Early Entitlement and Flying Start will continue to work closely together to support transition for children. The Phase 2 proposed areas offer Early Entitlement provision within non-maintained settings (playgroups and private day nurseries) and schools. Regular meetings will be scheduled to consider each proposed area and future areas as Flying Start childcare expands further. The meetings will consider pathways between Flying Start, Early Entitlement and Schools and how these can be made as easy and accessible as possible.

### **Risk 2: workforce recruitment**

- Given the pace of the prescribed timelines for the expansion, and associated targets for children supported, we will need to proceed with recruitment to the grant funded posts. Corporate support for the processes aligned to the development and recruitment to these new posts will be critical to deliver the expansion at pace.

#### ***Actions to mitigate risks:***

- A review of the current working models is under way, subject to corporate processes e.g. Job Evaluation to implement the expansion across teams, and meet the Purpose of the programme and funding.
- The funding covers a small allocation for staffing and administration – some of this will be used for new Childcare Placement Officer posts which is in early stage of the process.
- Family Information Services officer role to incorporate Welsh medium outreach development work with families as agreed with education (Vicky Barlow), subject to the approval of the recent submission to Welsh Government.

### **Risk 3: Welsh medium targets**

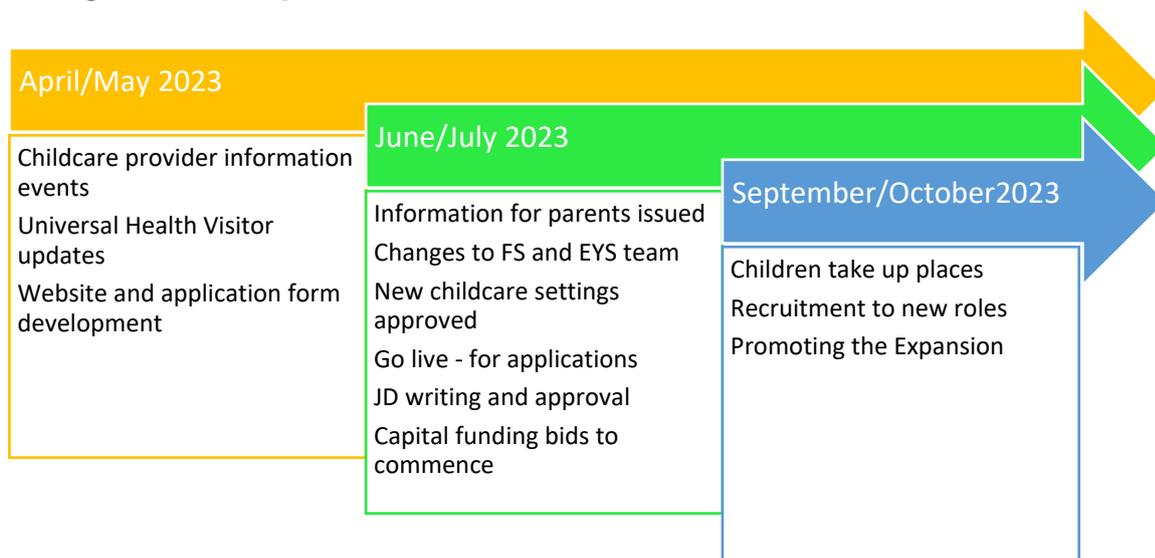
In Flintshire, all eligible children have an offer of Welsh medium setting. Even with a comprehensive active offer fewer than 5% of parents choose Welsh medium childcare. In terms of reporting and potentially published statistics that these targets are unlikely to be met without additional funding, communication, and clear Welsh medium education pathways for all children in Flintshire.

#### ***Actions to mitigate risks:***

- Mudiad Meithrin had advised that all Welsh Medium providers who are supported by them would be expected to become FS registered providers, to meet the phased expansion of 2-3 year old childcare. The 7 Welsh Medium Mudiad Meithrin playgroups within Flintshire already provide Early Entitlement education which makes transition of Flying Start children, 2-3 year old, and Childcare Offer to Early Entitlement in these settings straight forward.
- 6 of the Welsh Medium settings are based within Flintshire Welsh Medium schools or on their grounds which helps their smooth transition through the different phases of their Welsh Medium childcare and education.
- 2 Welsh Medium schools are due to be considered within the next phase of WG Early Years Large Capital Grant offer. This grant will be used to develop childcare provision at both school sites which will support the smooth transition of children from childcare to education in line with wider WESP objectives. It is recommended that all school expansions and improvements and childcare capital are aligned to ensure needs are met across the childcare/education.

- We continue to work together with Mudiad Meithrin to support WESP objectives by commissioning the organisation to support Welsh Medium settings in Flintshire. Early Years are a member of the WESP Partnership.

- **Planning and next steps**



### Recommendations

- i) Members endorse and support the approved Phase 2 expansion plan (previously presented to COT) and feel informed about expansion areas and the multi-agency planning and delivery processes with childcare partners, universal health colleagues and education colleagues to enable effective multi-agency planning and responses.
- ii) Members agree to provide oversight of the expansion programme.

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