

Appendix 5 Welsh Government Childcare Offer Core script

Update on testing the childcare offer in Wales

One of the concerns working parents raise time and again is the cost of childcare, and the impact that has on them, their finances and their quality of life. The Childcare offer will 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.

Since early summer, the Welsh Government has been talking to parents. They've received feedback from more than 1,500 parents so far and held focus groups at workplaces and in communities across Wales. While this engagement will continue through till the spring, so far it's clear parents want childcare to be less of a drain on family income, available at times and in places which make it easier for them to work; and more accessible, with support for their children's needs.

Which areas will be testing the offer?

Six Local Authorities have been chosen to work with the Welsh Government to pilot the new Childcare offer.

Projects offering 30 hours of free early education and childcare per week to 3 and 4 year olds will be piloted from September 2017 in specified locations within Gwynedd, Anglesey, Flintshire, Swansea, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf. Gwynedd and Anglesey will be working together on a joint project. Other early adopter areas will be added as the work to pilot the scheme continues.

Testing the offer will allow the Welsh Government to make sure they learn what works and what doesn't, building on experience and evidence to deliver for all working parents in Wales.

How were these areas chosen?

All local authorities in Wales were given the opportunity to register an expression of interest in becoming an early implementer of the offer.

Each expression of interest was assessed in terms of their alignment with the purpose of the childcare offer, their innovation in overcoming potential barriers to delivery and their understanding and knowledge of their local childcare sector. There was also an aim to achieve a balance between rural and urban communities and achieving a good geographical spread across Wales to fully test the offer within the budget available.

What will the Pilot's test?

They will test capacity, take up, cost and fit with the Early Years Foundation Phase, amongst other things.

What about the other local authorities?

The Welsh Government will continue to work with the remaining local authorities so that they are in the best possible position to implement the offer in full by 2020. They have a wealth of experience and knowledge which is vital to inform and advise the government on innovation and further implementation of the offer.

All eligible working parents in Wales will receive the childcare offer at some point, but it is good practice to test different parts of the offer across a range of diverse social and conditions. The early implementer authorities that have been chosen to provide a good geographical spread

across Wales and represent a mix of communities. This allows us to test the delivery of the offer under diverse conditions, learn more, and ensure the offer works for everybody in the long term.

When will the offer be rolled out across Wales?

The Welsh Government will begin to deliver the childcare offer with early implementer local authorities from September 2017. They will review and assess the detail of the offer in light of the lessons we learn with the early implementers. They will also commission a formal independent evaluation. They expect the government-funded childcare offer to be fully available across Wales from September 2020.

Is the early years Foundation Phase part of the childcare offer?

Yes, 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.

Will the childcare offer start the same time as the early years Foundation Phase?

Yes, children of eligible working parents will receive government-funded childcare from the term following the child's third birthday. The government-funded childcare will continue until the child starts reception class in his or her primary school the September after their fourth birthday. This aligns with the Early Years Foundation Phase.

Which childcare providers will be able to deliver the offer?

The plan is to work with the sector to ensure that the offer provides as much flexibility as possible. However, informal childcare, such as that provided by grandparents or siblings, will not be paid for by the Government. CSSIW regulate and inspect to improve childcare in Wales and ensure that childcare services meet the quality standards the public expects. The government-funded childcare will only be delivered through childcare providers that are registered with CSSIW.

What about Welsh language childcare provision?

The Welsh Government want to make Welsh medium childcare a more attractive option for those who have not previously considered it; and to ensure sufficient provision for children requiring additional support to learn and develop.

Is there enough childcare to meet the demand in these areas?

It will vary from place to place and this is one of the things we are looking to test. The Welsh Government are confident, however, that the offer will stimulate the market locally and provision will increase where it needs to. Local authorities have a good track-record of engagement with childcare providers. They will be able to direct parents, through the local Family Information Service, to providers with surplus places. The Welsh Government also provides local authorities with an Out of School Childcare Grant which they can use to build capacity in areas where it is needed.

Where can I find out more about the childcare offer?

Visit the Welsh Government webpage where you can find out more about the childcare offer and answer some short questions.

www.gov.wales/talkchildcare www.llyw.cymru/trafodgofalplant

You can also contact the Welsh Government at any time with your views:

e-mail: TalkChildCare@wales.gsi.gov.uk TrafodGofalPlant@cymru.gsi.gov.uk

Post: Childcare Offer Team

Welsh Government Cathays Park - 2nd Floor North Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Social media look for the hashtag to join in the conversation online
#TalkChildcare #TrafodGofalPlant

Other ways of feeding in your views:

Family Information Service: The Family Information Service (FIS) is the first point of contact for advice and information on local services for families and carers. There is a FIS in every local authority. The FIS provide free, impartial help, support and advice on a range of family issues including on childcare, help with costs of childcare, and leisure services.

<http://tinyurl.com/fiswales1>

Family Point: Family Point provides local and national support, information and news for families. familypoint.cymru pwyntteulu.cymru

Childcare Sufficiency Assessments: You will also have the opportunity to feed in your views about the current availability through the next round of Childcare Sufficiency Assessments. The findings, and your feedback, will help to inform the childcare offer in Wales. Contact your local Family Information Service to find out more and feed in your thoughts