



Joint Report of the Cabinet Members for Health & Wellbeing and Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

Cabinet – 14 December 2017

Expansion of the Childcare Offer for 3 and 4 Year Olds

Purpose:	To seek approval to extend the Childcare Offer to other wards across Swansea
Policy Framework:	Childcare Act 2006 Healthy City Strategy/ Early Years Plan. Foundation Phase Policy
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal, Education
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) the proposals for the expansion of the Childcare Offer to the Phase 1 reserve areas (as detailed in 3.1) be re-affirmed.2) the proposals to Welsh Government for the expansion of the Childcare Offer to a Phase 2 (as detailed in 3.5) be approved.3) full rollout to all areas follows Phase 2 in line with Welsh Government funding confirmation.4) the Director of People and Director of Place develop arrangements for the management of future capital funding opportunities.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Government's (WG) "Taking Wales Forward" Programme identified free childcare as one of its main pledges for the next 5 years.
- 1.2 The childcare offer provides working parents with 30 hours of government-funded childcare and early education for 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks of the year.
- 1.3 The childcare offer combines the successful minimum of 10 hours a week of Foundation Phase provision during term times, with additional childcare up to 20 hours. 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.
- 1.4 The government-funded childcare is available:
 - from the term following the child's third birthday and will continue until the child starts reception class in his/her primary school the September after their fourth birthday.
 - if all parents in the household work the equivalent of at least 16 hours at national living wage or national minimum wage, therefore earning at least £107 per week.
- 1.5 Swansea was selected as 1 of 7 Local Authorities to work with the Welsh Government to pilot the new Childcare offer prior to full national rollout in September 2020.
- 1.6 The Offer of 30 hours of free early education and childcare per week to 3 and 4 year olds has been piloted in 7 wards across Swansea since July 2017 as well as Gwynedd, Anglesey, Flintshire, Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf. Gwynedd and Anglesey have been working together on a joint project. Other local authority areas will be added as the work to pilot the scheme continues.
- 1.7 Testing the offer is allowing the Welsh Government and the Local Authority to make sure that lessons are learnt in relation to what works and what doesn't, building on experience and evidence to deliver for all working parents in Wales.
- 1.8 Welsh Government expect the Offer to:
 - be driven by parental choice
 - be flexible
 - provide an offer of provision through the medium of english and welsh
 - respond to geographical demands
 - provide high quality provision (e.g must be CSSIW registered, workforce etc)

- 1.9 The Welsh Government has committed to full rollout across Wales by the end of the current Assembly term in March 2020.
- 1.10 Across all 7 pilot LA areas Welsh Government has funding for 2,600 3 and 4 year olds during year 1. Swansea's proportional share of this is 258 children for the Autumn term.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1 In Swansea the Childcare Pilot went live in July 2017 across 7 wards that were approved in Cabinet in March 2017. The areas chosen fall into 2 categories:
1. Testing "all on one" sites – selection of wards with schools that provide the Foundation Phase as well as already registered CSSIW wrap around, after school and holiday childcare on site. These areas are Duvant, Penclawdd, Llangyfelach and West Cross.
 2. Testing wards with high levels of childcare providers/places in the wider community provided (via day nurseries, childminders, out of school childcare and playgroups etc) and low levels of school on site childcare. These areas are Morriston, Pontarddulais and Gorseinon.
- 2.2 In addition, the Cabinet Report identified a further 3 reserve wards should the Welsh Government target at a local and/or national level require additional areas in order to be achieved. The Wards identified were Llansamlet, Penlleger and Gowerton.
- 2.3 The Offer has been widely publicised and promoted, examples include staff attendance at school fetes (in the selected wards), letters to parents deemed eligible for the "Offer", development of publicity materials and leaflets, events via the Family Information Service and other community activities, delivery of several provider engagement events. A particular focus will be raising eligible parents awareness of the fact that they can access holiday care under the "Offer" as well as term time care.
- 2.4 To date 170 applications have been received and 133 applications have been processed and confirmed as eligible to receive the Offer. 64 CSSIW registered childcare settings have signed up to the Offer. According to Welsh Government there has been a 66% take-up of the Offer in Swansea, which compares favourably to the national average of 59%.
- 2.5 To date there have not been any known issues in relation to the lack of available childcare places.
- 2.6 Whilst no formal evaluation and customer feedback has been undertaken, some example of positive outcomes as a direct result of the "Offer" include:
- Anecdotal evidence suggesting that there is less reliance on informal childcare amongst parents currently eligible for the "Offer"

- Some parents being in a position to increase the number of hours their child/ren attend formal childcare.
- Evidence of WG initiatives dovetailing e.g Pace and the Childcare Offer.
- Eligible parents able to improve quality of living with the reduction of their childcare costs.
- 2 full day care settings in particular have reported that brand new children have accessed their settings.

2.7 In addition it should be noted that the Pilot has been a good example of effective collaborative working across a number of departments and sections within the Council as well as with a variety of external stakeholders.

2.8 Learning from the Pilot to date includes:

- The difficulty in widely promoting the “Offer” due to the fact that this is not available across the whole of Swansea, which makes it difficult, especially advertising via social media.
- The ever evolving nature of the “Offer”
- The importance of recognising the IT system as a “pilot”, as the system continually needs to respond to changing needs and demands.
- The “pilot” has focused on electoral wards as opposed to the geographical areas/communities which has been difficult in terms of promoting the Offer.
- The difficulty in achieving any firm conclusions in respect of outcomes due to the small scale of the “pilot”.

3. Expansion

3.1 A Welsh Government letter dated 30 October 2017 has been received in which invites the Council to extend the Offer to its reserve areas: Llansamlet, Penlleagaer and Gowerton.

3.2 In addition Officers have been approached by Assembly Officials in relation to a further Phase 2 expansion.

3.3 Capital funding for the Childcare Offer of £60million over 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 has been included in the Welsh Government’s draft budget. It is understood that business cases for the capital funding will be invited in the New Year with an expectation of linkages with other capital funds such as the 21st Century Schools and Flying Start etc.

3.4 The commitment is for the Offer to be available to all areas across Wales by the end of the current Assembly term. An implementation plan will be developed as soon as further details are known in relation to the Welsh Government’s plans to achieve the full rollout. In addition, arrangements will be developed to respond to opportunities to access capital funding for the Offer.

- 3.5 It is proposed that the remaining stages of expansion adopt a geographical approach. Phase 2 proposals have been identified following an analysis of the current pilot areas and the need to link surrounding Wards to reflect whole communities. The North West area of Swansea has been identified for Phase 2 as particular difficulties have occurred during the Pilot in relation to families identifying themselves as living in Gorseinon however not being in the actual electoral ward and have therefore not been eligible. In addition the proposed cluster of wards for Phase 2 provides the opportunity to include Penderry which is not only of the most deprived areas in Wales however also enables linkages between employability programmes and a newly established childcare facility in the area. It is therefore proposed that the following areas are submitted to Welsh Government as Swansea's Phase 2 expansion:

Penderry, Kingsbridge, Upper Loughor Lower Loughor, Penyrheol, Cockett.

- 3.6 It will be necessary to await confirmation from Welsh Government prior to implementation. As such it is not yet known when implementation of Phase 2 will begin.

4. Risks and Issues

- 4.1 That it is difficult to estimate the eligibility and take-up which could result in Swansea not maximising or exceeding the available budget.
Mitigation: This is a Welsh Government commitment. It has already been flagged up with Welsh Government as an issue and forms part of the cost modelling and monitoring that Welsh Government Officials are undertaking at every stage of the rollout of the Offer.
- 4.2 That providers and schools may not want to sign up to the scheme and its requirements. *Response: The scheme is about parental choice and early dialogue with relevant schools and providers will be beneficial. To date this has not been an issue as there has been a high level of positivity.*
- 4.3 That families not living in a year one pilot area will feel aggrieved.
Response: There is a WG commitment to rollout across Wales within the next 2 years.
- 4.4 That there is insufficient childcare in the right place, in the right language and at the right time to meet parental demand. *Response: This will continue to be monitored via feedback and also intelligence gathered. Consideration will also be given to any opportunities arising from Welsh Government Capital funding.*
- 4.5 That parents choose the 20 hours childcare and decide not to take up the Foundation Phase offer. *Response: The pilot will be important for the*

future development of the scheme and early education in Swansea. To date this has not been a significant factor.

- 4.6 Capacity within the Early Intervention Services to administer and manage the Offer robustly as it expands. *Response: Subject to confirmation of its continuity, full use of the administration grant from WG will be made as soon as it is clear what the demands will be when operating at a greater scale.*

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Informing WG of Swansea's expansion proposals and awaiting confirmation that these can be implemented and levels of resourcing that will be received.
- 5.2 Collaborating with colleagues in Education and IT relating to the plan for expansion so that systems reflect any new areas.
- 5.3 Informing key stakeholders of any approved plans for expansion.
- 5.4 Engaging and involving key stakeholders such as schools and childcare providers on a phase by phase basis.
- 5.5 Informing parents / carers in the new areas.
- 5.6 Seeking formal feedback from existing parents/carers and providers as well as feeding into the national evaluation.
- 5.6 Ensuring sufficient capacity to manage the Offer as it is rolled out Swansea wide.
- 5.7 Developing capital business cases to respond to identified demands/pressures.
- 5.8 Implementing processes for the management of the Additional Learning Needs element.

6. Equality and Engagement Implications

- 6.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment report was drafted at the beginning of the pilot and continues to be updated - please see background paper). Consultation and engagement (in an accessible way) continues throughout the process and the EIA will continue to demonstrate further developments.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 To date funding from WG has been received for the Pilot as separate elements i) funding for the administration of the Pilot ii) funding to fully

cover the payment to providers for the 20 hours childcare iii) funding in relation to supporting children with additional learning needs.

- 7.2 No formal financial documentation has been received from WG at this stage for expansion however any WG approved areas will be subject to the standard national fee per hour per child. The purpose of this Report is to seek approval to the proposed plan for expansion in order to enable planning to continue.
- 7.3 No formal details have been received in relation to the Capital Funding for the Childcare Offer.

8. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare for working parents in their area. In addition the Education (Nursery Education and Early Years Development and Childcare Plans (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2005 place a duty for Local Authorities to provide a free part time, good quality education place the term following a child's third Birthday. This initiative will assist in meeting this duty.
- 7.2 No formal contractual documentation has been sent from Welsh Government at this stage. This will be scrutinised by the legal department when it is received.

Background Papers: EIA Screening Form

Appendices: None