

## **Flying Start guidance 2009-10**

### **Introduction**

1. The first of the Assembly Government's seven Core Aims for children and young people, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a commitment to ensure that all children have a flying start in life. International research demonstrates the potential short and long term economic paybacks for early years investment. This has been summarised in the National Audit Office's report "A Literature review of the Impact of Early years provision on young children, with emphasis given to children from disadvantaged backgrounds", which in turn draws on the EPPE<sup>1</sup> long term study into the effectiveness of pre-school services and the similar EPPNI<sup>2</sup> study in Northern Ireland.
2. A public consultation on the Assembly Government's proposals for Flying Start took place between November 2005 and February 2006. Guidance was developed in the light of consultation responses and is updated here for the 2009-10 financial year.
3. Flying Start is to be a specific grant to local authorities initially until the financial year 2010-2011 that will aim to make a decisive difference to the life chances of children aged under 4 in the areas in which it runs. It is to be complementary to Cymorth early years funding and the Foundation Phase. It will also contribute to achieving the standards in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.
4. It should be led by the Children and Young People's partnerships. While Children and Young People's partnerships should be responsible for the overall direction and management of the programme, they may delegate aspects of the task or make other partnership arrangements. This document uses "the partnership" to refer to whatever arrangements are made. Whatever the arrangements, it will be critical to success that Flying Start is developed on the basis of partnership working, mutual awareness between the disciplines and professions involved, clear arrangements for information sharing, and on the basis of an engagement with the communities targeted that is empowering of the parents locally. Active links must be made between local health, social care and education professionals.
5. Partnerships are supported in their practice by a new Partnership Support Unit within the Welsh Local Government Association. This unit also supports the implementation of the Children Act 2004.
6. In the long term the aim is to bear down on the number of people with very poor skills that probably contributes to the relatively high levels of income inequality found in Britain. A high skills economy is critical to achieve

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<sup>1</sup> Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (E. Melhuish and others)

<sup>2</sup> Pre-School Experience and Social / Behavioural Development at the Start of Primary School, Northern Ireland (E Melhuish and others)

sustainable growth and investment in the early years is one of the most cost effective ways to achieve this. In the medium term significant savings can be made through earlier identification of needs; through the avoidance of reception into the care system; and through the avoidance of other crisis remedial systems such as youth offending teams or substance misuse services.

7. In order to deliver these social and economic benefits the focus must be tangible outcomes for the child, with support for parents and community.
8. The evidence suggests the following as the key measurable outcomes for children which Flying Start must target:
  - Language development
  - Cognitive development
  - Social and emotional development
  - Physical health
  - Early identification of high needs
9. There is wide evidence that early language development is the most critical factor to deliver the personal, social and economic benefits above.
10. Additionally child well-being is clearly related to the nature of the household, and living in a household where no adults work has consistently been shown to be associated with poorer outcomes for children. The provision of childcare can remove barriers for some parents from work, but in this programme the needs of children will be the central focus.
11. Flying Start may potentially have different impacts for different racial groups – for example, if a black or ethnic minority community is more or less likely to take up services which are offered. Partnerships should reflect carefully on their practice to seek to ensure proactively that race equality is achieved, and that these communities are engaged within consultations or forums set up around the programme. Partnerships should ensure that the programme does not create indirect discrimination nor a worsening of relations with particular racial groups. Partnerships should consider whether monitoring of beneficiaries is appropriate to gather evidence of the impact on ethnic minority communities.

### **Selecting Flying Start target areas**

12. The research evidence on early years suggests that only by investing intensively can a decisive impact be made on children's outcomes. This means that the funds available now can only reach a minority of children in the age group. Given that there is also evidence that multiple deprivation itself impacts on these outcomes, the funding must target such deprivation.

13. The funding is to be targeted on the catchment areas of schools selected by the local partnerships. This approach carries the following advantages:

- It will be understood by parents
- It will provide for exact definitions of the target areas
- It will enable links to be established between this programme and other family support services
- It will facilitate measurement of the impact of the programme, because many children benefiting from Flying Start will move up to the neighbourhood school
- It can be a catalyst to the schools becoming community focused.

14. However, there may be cases where school catchment areas are an imperfect fit with local geographies of deprivation. While school catchment areas remain the preferred approach, partnerships may put forward adjustments to target school catchment areas for the agreement of the Assembly Government. Areas should be defined in terms of postcodes and/or Lower Super Output Areas.

15. We want Flying Start to invest more than £2,100 per targeted child per annum by the 2010-11 year. It is important that Flying Start should build on the foundations of the Cymorth investment for this age group (Sure Start programmes) where these are consistent with Flying Start or can be altered to be so. We have assumed that half this existing investment can fit in this way, and are now giving an indication that there will be a budget transfer for the 2010-11 year and subsequent years of £7M from Cymorth to Flying Start. With this budget we anticipate that the selected school catchments should encompass approximately 17,600 children aged 0-3 (that is, under 4 years of age).

16. The funding will be distributed using the existing Cymorth formula – this in turn is based on research into patterns of demand for children's social services undertaken jointly with the WLGA. The formula also includes a small lump sum element equal for all authorities recognising the management costs that each authority will have to cover. Indicative funding allocations for each local authority for 2009-10 have already been announced. No changes are proposed within the Assembly Government's draft budget for 2009-10. Partnerships should choose the most deprived community school catchments within the local authority, demonstrating that the cap on the population encompassed is not exceeded. Partnerships should evidence how free school meal eligibility information, the Index of Multiple Deprivation or other relevant factors have been used in selecting the catchment areas.

17. If partnerships consider that the allocation is insufficient to deliver the entitlement to the maximum number of children at Annex A, then the number of school catchment areas should be reduced. Any practical difficulties in selecting the most appropriate catchment areas may be

discussed with the Assembly Government.

18. If the evaluation of this programme establishes that its intended benefits are being realised, there will be a powerful base of evidence in Wales to support making these services available to many more communities.
19. One of the challenges for the programme is to ensure that a high proportion of the families with greatest needs in the area are reached. It will be critical in setting out a plan that partnerships -demonstrate how they will engage with these families, and the Assembly Government will give particular attention to this in assessing plans. Partnerships should ensure that a person is identified as the champion for practice in reaching and engaging these families. At the same time, the Assembly Government will promote training and seminars to assist practitioners in meeting this challenge.

### **The Flying Start entitlement**

20. This guidance defines an entitlement that all families in the local target areas should be able to access. The main elements of the programme will be prescriptive, drawing on a menu generated from a range of options that have demonstrated effectiveness. This means that while there can be an element of local discretion as to the balance between elements, and the precise approaches locally, families in the target areas must be able to see all elements of this entitlement, and all investments must be based on well evaluated methods of work. It may be that due to barriers such as staffing or premises, the full entitlement at the quality required may take time to build up, and some elements of the entitlement may be in place before others. It will be acceptable for some services to be based outside the target area as a means of delivering the entitlement to families within the area. While Flying Start funds may be used for purposes which complement the entitlement, the core entitlement must take priority. Examples of complementary activity include the funding of health teams with a mix of skills, midwifery, parenting support which acts as a gateway to the parenting programmes detailed below, and funds for early years and play workforce development.

21. The following sections detail each element in the entitlement.

#### Quality part-time childcare for 2 year olds

22. Detailed guidance on this aspect of the programme is at Annex B.
23. Childcare provision for the under-twos may also be provided where particular need exists from difficulties with parenting or involvement in employment or training. Such childcare may be individual or centre-based, and part-time or full-time depending on need, but will need to be highly targeted.

## Health visiting

24. In England, the National Evaluation of Sure Start indicated that Sure Start local programmes with health leadership had more success. It was believed that this is because health visitors are a trusted service amongst disadvantaged communities and have perhaps the best chance to include those families that are most challenging to engage.
25. For this reason health visitors and midwives, working within a multi disciplinary partnership approach are to be a core part of the Flying Start entitlement.
26. First time parents must be a high priority and caseloads in Flying Start areas must be lower than average. In assessing parents on a universal basis, health visitors should then make judgements to provide additional support where there is evidence of higher need or risk.
27. The support offered might include:-
  - Good antenatal support to include parent craft, language and play.
  - Promoting positive parenting skills for example using the “Incredible Years” programme.
  - Assessing child development, putting in place an appropriate intervention to address need.
  - Therapeutic touch e.g. baby massage.
  - Public Health activity eg infant nutrition, maternal mental health, immunisations, dental health.
28. The support may be offered in a family or group context.
29. It will be especially important that health visitors promote the other elements within the programme to families and provide referral to other agencies where appropriate. Health visitors should maintain contact with the leaders of the childcare settings, or childminders, who are part of Flying Start.
30. There should be one health visitor full time equivalent per 110 children aged 0-3 in the target areas, together with management and administrative support. Other health professionals should not be counted into this ratio.
31. The Assembly Government is commissioning a survey of research findings to amplify further the guidance on good quality health visiting within disadvantaged areas.

## Parenting programmes

32. Communities that Care have reviewed parenting programmes in use within Wales and more widely. They have examined especially whether there is evidence of improved outcomes for children when the programmes are used with the Flying Start age group. Their report is at annex C. At the

end of this report they categorise parenting programmes into three groups, labelled A, B and C.

33. Programmes in Group A are eligible for funding from the Flying Start funding stream.
34. Group B programmes may be funded if they would fill a gap in current service delivery and there are no local examples of programmes in Group A to build upon.
35. Group C, except as described below should not be eligible for Flying Start Funding for the time being. Although they may be effective programmes, there is insufficient convincing evidence from rigorous research studies to confirm their effectiveness. In addition, most of these programmes have no system in place for ensuring programme fidelity if the programme is rolled out.
36. A case may be made to the Assembly Government for funding programmes in Group C if they are part of a jointly-funded research programme, in which academic partners work with local practitioners to evaluate their effectiveness, using controlled research designs, and if there are already experienced trainers and materials available.

#### Basic Skills

37. The early years are critical to the Assembly Government's strategy to improve the level of basic literacy and numeracy skills in our communities, working in conjunction with the Basic Skills Agency. In each local authority, the Assembly Government has supported the funding of a Language and Play (LAP) Officer, working to a LAP Steering Group. LAP is a six week programme for parents/ carers and their children aged 0-3. The key feature which underpins the success of LAP is that parents and children learn together through play and fun activities. Parents feel welcome, valued and significant. The impact on parents' confidence, sense of wellbeing and ability to cope is strongest in settings that provide support for parents with social/emotional and mental health problems – where parenting/health and basic skills support are offered with sensitivity and purpose.
38. Every family in a Flying Start area should therefore have access to a Language and Play programme if it is not already in place, and Flying Start should build on existing LAP arrangements. Representation or other communication structures should be put in place to ensure that the partnership maintains close contact with the LAP Steering Group. The experience of LAP workers should be drawn upon in developing strategies that gain the trust of parents in Flying Start services.
39. Public libraries should be supported to develop outreach services to Flying Start areas. This task may be taken by the local Bookstart co-ordinator,

Language and Play co-ordinator or by a new officer.

40. The Flying Start allocations to partnerships should be used to fund this entitlement where it does not already exist.

#### Information sharing and referral

41. All the practitioners within Flying Start, be they midwives, health visitors, childcare providers, social care professionals, language and play co-ordinators or others should see themselves as a team. They should be aware of each others' role and encourage families to make use of all the services on offer. A shared location can help with the sense of being a team. Partnerships should consider the formation of one or more Flying Start local forums to engage parents and other local stakeholders in the development of the programme.
42. Flying Start services must also work in conjunction with the policy frameworks for children with additional needs, such as the planned pilots of a Common Assessment Framework. They should be inclusive of disabled children. Flying Start should develop information sharing protocols with partner services, using the Welsh Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information. Some Flying Start services, such as the health visiting and parenting programme elements, may be able to direct greater investment towards families with additional needs or higher risks.
43. Flying Start funding however may not be able to fund additional specialist services for children with high needs if this puts the core entitlement in jeopardy. Referral to such services may be the best approach. In some cases Cymorth may fund investments that are complementary to Flying Start but outside the Flying Start menu of services, where these are also consistent with Cymorth guidance.

#### **The school within the Flying Start target area**

44. Flying Start is an area based programme, not a school based programme. Nevertheless, in line with the Community Focused Schools Initiative, there will be - advantages where the school at the centre of each catchment area is a hub for activity. For example:
- Governing bodies may choose to set up and manage quality childcare settings for two year olds where the Partnership agrees.
  - They may choose to establish close links with voluntary sector providers of the childcare, through the Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association or Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.
  - Under-used space may provide a base for the practitioners delivering home based services, such as health visiting or a childminding network.
  - They may be a base for information services, including satellites to the local authority Children's Information Service, and information on income maximisation through advice services on benefit take up and debt.

- They may take an active role in the evaluation of Flying Start, through the assessment of children moving from Flying Start childcare settings into school.
45. This approach does not mean that parents who might wish their children to attend Welsh medium or faith schools, which may have wide catchment areas, are in any way excluded from the programme. The choice of school made by a parent will not affect their eligibility for the Flying Start Scheme.
46. Welsh medium provision and provision sensitive to the needs of ethnic minority communities should be an integral part of the programme, and some school catchments will be in Welsh speaking communities. Language transmission through the family as well as learning Welsh through childcare and education providers are key priorities in Iaith Pawb: the national action plan for a bilingual Wales. In particular, the Twf project communicates the proven benefits of bilingualism and encourages parents to pass on or teach Welsh to their children.
47. Flying Start funding should be used to provide a bursary to enable children in Flying Start areas to access Welsh medium childcare, where this reflects parental choice and there is no realistic prospect of such childcare within the target area. However, the childcare settings attended must be of the quality set out within the childcare guidance if children in the target area are to be supported to attend it. If this is not possible immediately, the setting should agree an action plan with the partnership to move to the quality requirement.