

# CABINET CYNGOR GWYNEDD

## Report to a meeting of the Cabinet

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	25 April 2023
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Elin Walker Jones
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Catrin Thomas Assistant Head Supporting Families
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<b>Title of Item:</b>	Flying Start and the Childcare and Early Years Programmes.

### 1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1. Accept the grant offer to expand the Flying Start Programme in the county.
- 1.2. Delegate the right to the Head of Children and Supporting Families, in consultation with the Head of Finance, to prepare and submit individual business cases to the Welsh Government for the Childcare and Early Years Capital Program and accept grant offer on behalf of the Council.

### 2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1. To seek Cabinet approval for the direction to the expansion of the Flying Start Programme, and approval to submit business cases to the Welsh Government to secure capital funding to deliver the expansion of Flying Start and wider childcare provision in the county

### 3. THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 3.1. The Welsh Government announced, as part of the collaboration agreement, their aim to gradually expand the early years provision to include all 2-year-old children, placing particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.
- 3.2. The Government will achieve this aim in the first place by extending the Flying Start programme.
- 3.3. The Flying Start Programme is already available in 6 communities in Gwynedd. It supports families with children aged

0-4 by offering an intensive health visitor service; family support; language and speech support; and 12.5 hours of free childcare for children aged 2 years.

3.4. The communities that are currently part of the Flying Start programme are: -

- Marchog 1 and 2 – Maesgeirchen, Bangor
- Peblig and Cadnant – Caernarfon
- Gerlan, Ogwen 01, Ogwen 2 and parts of Tregarth - Bethesda
- Talysarn, Llanllyfni, Clynnog Fawr and parts of Penygroes
- Diffwys and Maenofferen, Bowydd and Rhiw - Blaenau Ffestiniog
- Dolgellau South

3.5. The expansion of Flying Start is to take place gradually. The Early Years' Service has implemented the 1st phase of the expansion since September 2022 to include additional areas of Tregarth and Bethesda, and Blaenau Ffestiniog. An additional 73 children will benefit from the 1st stage. These families will receive all the support of the Flying Start Programme.

3.6. The 2nd stage of the expansion of Flying Start is limited to the expansion of the childcare element only and does not include the expansion of language and speech support, family support or additional health visitors.

3.7. The childcare element means that more 2-year-old children will get 12.5 hours of free childcare for 39 weeks of the year.

3.8. In accordance with the Welsh Government's guidelines for Stage 2 of the expansion, which is to target the areas with the highest levels of child poverty according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, we have identified the following as the expansion areas (LSOA)

- Hendre (Bangor)
- Penygroes
- Pwllheli South
- Barmouth 2
- Hirael and Garth 2 (Bangor)
- Porthmadog - Tremadog
- Bala
- Teigl (Blaenau Ffestiniog)
- Seiont 1 (Caernarfon)
- Dewi (Bangor)

3.9. In addition to the areas above we have identified the following communities as having high levels of deprivation among families and children under 4. Support can be expanded to these areas through outreach arrangements under the current core programme; namely

- Llanbedr, Llandderfel and Llanuwchllyn,
- Deiniolen

- 3.10. By accepting the grant offer for the 2nd Stage of the expansion we will be able to support an additional 143 children during 2023-24.
- 3.11. This gradual expansion will lead to the creation of a universal childcare offer for all 2-year-olds in 2025.
- 3.12. In addition to expanding the Flying Start Programme, the Welsh Government has also announced the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme.
- 3.13. Based on our Flying Start expansion, the conclusions of the childcare sufficiency assessment, and the availability of the Childcare Offer for 3–4-year-olds, we have identified areas where investment is needed to increase and create new childcare places and settings.
- 3.14. We have submitted a list of priority areas to the Welsh Government, and it includes the following communities: -
- Penygroes
  - Pwllheli
  - Hirael Bangor
  - Hendre Bangor
  - Deiniolen
  - Pen Llŷn
  - Penrhyndeudraeth
- 3.15. During 2023-24 we will be able to apply for a capital grant for investment in these areas. There is no guarantee of the grant, or of the success of any individual business case at this point. Each individual business case will have to evidence the need, meet the guidelines of the capital programme, and demonstrate the ability to deliver and complete within the schedule of the program.
- 3.16. Although the capital programme will help us create more childcare spaces in the county, the challenges of recruiting workers to the sector, the sufficiency and sustainability of some of the providers are a challenge as we try to expand the childcare provision.
- 3.17. Taking advantage of these two early years programmes will contribute towards the Priority areas of "Gwynedd Tomorrow" and "Gwynedd Gymraeg" in the Council's Plan by giving children the best possible start in life; and increases the number of Welsh-medium early education and childcare settings.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 4.1. Formally accept the grant offer to continue with the expansion of the Flying Start programme by 30 April 2023.
- 4.2. Move to commission 2-year-old childcare provision in the targeted areas during 2023-24.

4.3. Prepare and present a business case for the Capital Programme during 2023-24.

**5. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

5.1. Monitoring Officer:

*“No observations to add in relation to propriety”.*

5.2. Chief Finance Officer:

*“I have no objection to the decision sought. As the report makes clear, the proposed grant will give Cyngor Gwynedd the opportunity to expand the Flying Start programme. I can confirm that Finance officers will support the Children and Supporting Families Department in administering any grant money we receive for the programme. We will also contribute to the process of developing the application for capital funding.”*

