



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

15th January 2025

Report of the Head of Early Years, Inclusion & Partnerships – Hayley Lervy

Matter: for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Expansion of Flying Start Childcare – Phase 3

Purpose of the Report:

To seek Members' approval for the implementation of Phase 3 of the Welsh Government's expansion of Flying Start funded childcare for 2-3 year olds in Neath Port Talbot.

Executive Summary:

Following Welsh Government's announcement of a phased expansion to Flying Start, Members approved a Phase one plan in July 2022. Expansion of Flying Start Childcare Phase 2 was agreed by members in January 2023.

Phase 3 will focus on a continued phased roll out of the part time high quality childcare element of Flying Start to two-year-olds, from April 2025, working towards a universal offer for funded Flying Start childcare for all two-year-olds within the 6 years of the plan timeline.

The report seeks Members' approval for the year by year roll out of Phase 3, in identified areas of Neath Port Talbot working towards a full local authority coverage.

Background:

Following Welsh Government's announcement of a phased expansion to Flying Start, Members approved a Phase one plan in July 2022. Expansion of Flying Start Childcare Phase 2 was agreed by members in January 2023, covering 2 financial years 2023/24 – 2024/25. As of September 2024, Phase 2 expansion has seen 447 additional children benefit from Flying Start childcare, exceeding our Neath Port Talbot targets.

Phase 3 will focus on a continued phased roll out of the part time high quality childcare element of Flying Start to two-year-olds, from April 2025, working towards a universal offer for funded Flying Start childcare for all two-year olds within the 6 years of the plan timeline.

Phase 3 guidance, inline with previous Phase 2 guidance, advises that expansion areas should be identified using WIMD and DWP data provided by Welsh Government to indicate which LSOAs to include as part of the next phase, along with other local data and knowledge. This data has been considered, with additional relevant local information from early years referrals for support, HMRC Child Benefit data and multi-agency professional community caseload intelligence.

Expanding Welsh language early years childcare provision continues to be one of the overarching aims of the expansion.

Welsh Government suggests that Neath Port Talbot have a target of an additional 472 children to reach within the timescale of the plan. To ensure we reach all two-year-olds, and allow for variation in data, the plan uses 600 as a target.

Funding levels for expansion Phase 3 are yet to be announced.

There is an expectation that around 25% of the targeted number of children should be considered under the “outreach” element of the programme, allowing children outside of the eligibility areas to access the programme subject to need and outreach criteria.

Year(s)	Timescale	Number of expansion children	Estimated number of outreach children	Total Number of two-year-olds to reach
Year 1a	April 2025 – September 2025	75	25	100
Year 1b	October 2025 – March 2026	75	25	100
Year 2	April 2026 – March 2027	150	50	200
Year 3 - 6	April 2027 – March 2030	200	-	200 (ALL)

Welsh Government capital funding is also hoped to be made available in order to improve quality and capacity of existing childcare settings, or for the development of new settings to address gaps in provision. Plans for this will be presented to Members in a later report.

Proposed Phase 3 Plan

Using the dataset provided by Welsh Government and localised intelligence, the following areas have been identified for expansion from Year 1 initially, with the plan detailing a plan to reach universal funded Flying Start childcare for all two-year-olds before 2030.

Year 1: Phase 3 2025/26 (April 2025 – March 2026)

Target: 150 children, up to 50 outreach

LSOA Name	Previous FS	NOTES	Est. 2-yr-olds	Expansion phase
Sandfields East 1	YES (Partial)	Take in remaining	20	3a
Ystalyfera 1		Phase 3 - Outreach priority	25	3a
Bryn and Cwmavon 4		Phase 3 - Outreach priority	25	3b
Seven Sisters		Phase 3 - Outreach priority	30	3b
Neath South 2	YES (partial)	take in remaining (HV)	30	3a
Trebanos			20	3a
Total additional children:			150	

Year 2: Phase 3 2026/27 (April 2026 – March 2027)

Target: 150 children, up to 50 outreach

Further details regarding Year 2 are currently under development, and will be dependent on Childcare Sufficiency Audit updates, capital investments and applications, and further childcare scoping within current sector for capacity. Community needs data from panel referrals, Flying Start outreach data and patterns identified by health partners will be reflected in plans for year 2 of phase 3 expansion.

Year 3 – 6: Phase 3 (April 2027 – March 2031)

Target: Universal by March 2031 (200 children)

Any remaining outreach will be taken in.

Availability of Childcare

Due to the larger expansion footprint reflected over phase 2a and 2b plans, a county wide approach was taken to engage new and additional providers with the Flying Start programme. This approach has enabled Phase 3 planning to now work with 49 Flying Start childcare providers across Neath Port Talbot.

Welsh Medium Provision

In supporting access to Welsh medium provision, since Phase 2 , 2 additional Welsh or bilingual settings have opened:

- Canolfan Plant Tregelles – YGG Tregelles
- Cylch Trebanws – YGG Trebanws

During year 1, 3 further Welsh or bilingual settings are due to open:

- Canolfan Plant Gerddi Victoria – Neath Central
- Relocation and increase in registered numbers for Cylch Blaendulais (new capital build in progress)
- Cylch Cwmavon (new capital build in progress)

These new settings will be used to offer and encourage Welsh language childcare to Flying Start families.

Additionally, work is ongoing through the Early Years & Childcare Team to improve the offer of Welsh through English medium settings through an awards based Welsh language quality assurance scheme, the “Welsh Award for Childcare”, which includes support, access to training and drop-in Welsh language acquisition sessions.

Financial Impacts:

Funding will be awarded by Welsh Government for Phase 3 and as such there are no financial implications for the Council.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below:

Any impact that has been identified is positive through the offer of funded childcare for two-year-olds children in some of the county's most disadvantaged areas.

The expansion has been based on robust data provided from Welsh Government, with the expansion of Flying Start childcare built into a Welsh Government commitment for Flying Start childcare for two-year-olds to be universally available within the timescale of the plan, using a phased roll out approach. All areas of NPT should see the offer within this timescale.

The Flying Start expansion programme provides increased access, via outreach support where necessary, to additional areas of NPT. These areas have been selected based on robust data from WG as well as supporting data from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022.

Specific support will be available for children with additional learning needs (ALN) and/or a disability to access their funded childcare place.

Positive impacts are also anticipated with opportunities to use and promote the Welsh language with additional Welsh language or bilingual childcare being made available.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

We would anticipate positive impacts for valley communities through the expansion of early years provision, through the Phase 3 plan, working toward a universal offer of funded childcare for two-year-olds.

Workforce Impacts:

No impacts.

Legal Impacts:

No impacts.

Risk Management Impacts:

No impacts

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Scrutiny Observations:

The item was considered at the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the 5th December 2024. Members were complimentary regarding the work being undertaken by the service to support the childcare sector in Neath Port Talbot. Members acknowledged that it would take time develop the infrastructure to implement the Phase 3 plan to expand Flying Start childcare for two-year-olds.

Members supported the report recommendation.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members give approval to:
Progress with Phase 3 plan to expand Flying Start childcare for two-year-olds.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that the Council can commence its offer of funded childcare through the expansion of early years provision from April 2025.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision will be implemented after the 3 day call in period.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – NPT Phase 3 Flying Start Childcare Plan
Appendix 2 - First Stage Screening IIA – Expansion of Flying Start Childcare Phase 3

List of Background Papers:

ESW Report – January 2023 - Expansion of Flying Start Childcare Phase 2

Cabinet Report – 28th July 2022 – Flying Start Phase 1 Expansion Plan

WG Expansion of Early Years Provision – Phase 2

WG Expansion Data - WIMD and DWP

Officer Contact:

Hayley Lervy – Head of Early Years, Inclusion & Partnerships – h.lervy@npt.gov.uk

Sarah Griffiths – Co-ordinator for Early Years & Partnerships – s.griffiths4@npt.gov.uk

Lisa Clement-Jones – Flying Start & Early Years Manager – l.clement-jones@npt.gov.uk