

Meeting of:	<b>Cabinet</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 20 March 2025</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	<b>Renewal of the Flying Start Commissioned Childcare Contracts</b>
Purpose of Report:	To seek authority to renew the childcare contracts for Flying Start commissioned childcare providers and network childminders.
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member, Social Care and Health
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Director of Social Services Head of Children and Young People Services Head of Finance Legal Services Flying Start Manager
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b>          Flying Start is a Welsh Government grant funded Early Years programme that has been delivering services to families in the highest areas of deprivation since 2006/7.</p> <p>There are four core elements of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive Health Visiting</li> <li>• Access to Parenting Support</li> <li>• High Quality Childcare</li> <li>• Speech, Language and Communication</li> </ul> <p>Welsh Government fund Flying Start to provide 12.5 hours per week, 39 weeks per year for children aged 2-3 years to access childcare. To support a variety of family circumstances, Flying Start in the Vale of Glamorgan deliver this element via childminders, commissioned childcare providers, Flying Start employed childcare and approved settings. This Cabinet report relates to the element: High Quality Childcare.</p>	

- The purpose of this report is to seek authority to renew the Flying Start childcare contracts for two commissioned childcare providers – Gibbonsdown Children’s Centre and their Welsh setting Dechrau Dysgu. Authority is also sought to approve the renewal of up to 10 network childminders.
- The contract is to be awarded for two years initially, with an option to extend for up to a further two years in negotiation with the providers subject to the ongoing award of the Flying Start grant by Welsh Government.
- The contracts are envisaged to commence in April 2025.

## **Recommendations**

- 1.** That Cabinet authorises the Director of Social Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health to renew the childcare contracts for Gibbonsdown Children’s Centre, Dechrau Dysgu and the Flying Start network childminders.
- 2.** That Cabinet authorises the Director of Social Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health to award the contract(s) for this service for an initial period of two years with an option to extend for up to a further two years, following the completion of the tender process.
- 3.** That Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services to prepare, complete and execute a contract with the childcare and childminding providers.
- 4.** That use of the urgency procedure set out at Section 15.14 of the Council’s Constitution be granted in order that contracts commence in April 2025.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1.** To enable the Directorate to continue to deliver high quality childcare within the Vale of Glamorgan, in a cost-effective way that meets the requirements of Welsh Government Flying Start Guidance and the required standards of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).
- 2.** To ensure the service is in place for the next two years with the potential to extend it for a further two years if required.
- 3.** To ensure the appropriate authority and documentation are in place to renew the contracts.
- 4.** To ensure that contracts can begin from the start of April 2025.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1** The Flying Start programme in the Vale of Glamorgan is a Welsh Government initiative, providing families with children aged 0-3 years with a range of intensive prevention services.
- 1.2** The provision of high-quality childcare for children from 2-3 years of age is the centrepiece of the service delivered under the Flying Start initiative. The quality childcare provision focuses on children living in disadvantaged communities and aims to improve their outcomes in preparation for school and in the long term.
- 1.3** One of the overarching priorities of the Flying Start initiative is that ‘all children should have a good start in life, including good early years services and support for parents or carers.’ The Welsh Government has committed to continued support for the Flying Start childcare programme since September 2022 by delivering a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds, referred to locally as the 2-year-old childcare offer. Phase 3 childcare expansion is due to

commence April 2025 with additional funding announced to support the roll out of childcare. We are expecting this to be announced imminently.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** The Flying Start programme in the Vale of Glamorgan is a Welsh Government initiative, providing families with children aged 0-3 years with a range of intensive prevention services.
- 2.2** The provision of high-quality childcare for children from 2-3 years of age is the centrepiece of the service delivered under the Flying Start initiative. The quality childcare provision focuses on children living in disadvantaged communities and aims to improve their outcomes in preparation for school and in the long term.
- 2.3** One of the overarching priorities of the Flying Start initiative is that 'all children should have a good start in life, including good early years services and support for parents or carers.' The Welsh Government has committed to continued support for the Flying Start childcare programme since September 2022 by delivering a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds, referred to locally as the 2-year-old childcare offer. Phase 3 childcare expansion is due to commence April 2025 with additional funding announced to support the roll out of childcare in February 2025.
- 2.4** The established childcare setting, Gibbonsdown Children Centre has been supporting the Flying Start and 2 year old offer since 2007. Gibbonsdown Children's Centre opened a Welsh Medium childcare setting within Ysgol Gwaun y Nant and has been delivering childcare through the medium of Welsh since 2016. Both settings are within the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) geographical area Gibbonsdown 2 and provide support for children eligible for Flying Start childcare as well as supporting children under the 2-year-old childcare offer.
- 2.5** Gibbonsdown Children's Centre has a contract in place which is due for renewal, and currently Flying Start commission the setting to provide a minimum of 40 places for Flying Start Childcare. Dechrau Dysgu's contract is to provide a minimum of four places through the medium of Welsh. However, where demand increases for Welsh medium, Flying Start can increase the places on an ad hoc basis if capacity allows within the setting. This will be at the set rate for the setting, as provided by Flying Start.
- 2.6** Flying Start network childminders are integral in enabling Flying Start to meet the needs of parent/carers working or accessing training/education. Childminders are able to provide a more flexible offer to families and the 12.5-hour funding per week is able to be used over full days instead of sessional care. There are currently eight childminders within the Flying Start network.
- 2.7** Quality childcare contributes to the acquisition of skills and abilities, socialisation, and the ability to play and concentrate. These are crucial, not only to a child's subsequent ability to learn, but also to participate effectively in groups, whether in the classroom, the labour market or society. Research suggests that quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) leads to improvements in children's

development in later years, such as enhanced language skills; better educational performance in mathematics and reading; and an increase in positive behaviour/outcomes.

- 2.8** Children who attend quality early years settings are more independent, concentrate on their play for longer and, on entry to school, are more co-operative and better prepared for the challenges they meet [Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) (2003); Schweinhart et al (1993), Love et al (2005)]. One of the findings of the EPPE study is that high quality pre-school care is linked to better intellectual attainment and improved social relationships. The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE) findings, published in 2014, further emphasises the significance of high-quality pre-school experiences and the longitudinal impacts these experiences can have on educational attainment.
- 2.9** A focus on high quality provision should therefore underpin all aspects of Flying Start childcare. Flying Start childcare should not only aim to be of the highest quality but should strive to be the benchmark for quality childcare throughout Wales.
- 2.10** There are three key measures of quality in a successful Flying Start childcare setting:
- Enabling Adults
  - Engaging Experiences; and
  - Effective Environments.
- 2.11** Enabling adults, effective environments and engaging experiences all contribute to the provision of quality childcare and provide the foundations on which all future development will be built.
- 2.12** Flying Start is based on the following expectations:
- Staff working with young children should be suitably trained and qualified, understand how children develop and learn, and be sensitive and responsive to their needs and feelings.
  - The role of the adult within the setting is to support and enrich children's learning, rather than to direct it.
  - Children need a caring, stimulating environment.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 ("the 2015 Act") requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities, and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 3.2** To make sure we are all working towards the same purpose, the 2015 Act places seven well-being goals on the Council. The 2015 Act makes it clear the listed

public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two, these being:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

**3.3** By embedding the five ways of working, the Council is working in a more sustainable way. The Council aims to meet these as detailed below:

#### **Long Term**

**3.4** The Council's commitment to providing the service within the Flying Start Childcare scheme represents a focus on the long-term wellbeing of children, by promoting and fostering a culture of independence.

**3.5** The delivery of the Flying Start Scheme aims to support the Welsh Government's commitment to provide high quality childcare, which supports children's development and school readiness as well as enabling more parents to access education or training or who are on the edge of work.

#### **Taking an Integrated Approach**

**3.6** The Council expects that the childcare providers will continue to build upon existing relationships with other professionals and agencies to avoid duplication and to maximise positive outcomes.

**3.7** There is an opportunity for teams across the Council to work closely and in an integrated manner to achieve the delivery of Welsh Government's commitment to expand Flying Start provision in the Vale of Glamorgan.

#### **Involving People**

**3.8** Each parent using the service is supported to participate in decisions affecting their children and be involved in planning, reviewing, and designing services. This ensures they are safe; have a say; experience new activities and feel involved, secure, and confident in the service provided to them.

**3.9** Parents will continue to have their voice heard regarding the delivery of childcare services through our established parent forum.

#### **Collaborating with Others**

**3.10** Service provision is not effective without collaboration with the parents using the service but also partner organisations. The Flying Start scheme has and will continue to involve collaboration with internal officers across Directorates of the Council, third sector organisations and the successful childcare provider.

#### **Prevention**

**3.11** The aim of Flying Start is to improve outcomes for children in the most deprived communities across Wales. Targeted investment is used to offer free, part-time,

high-quality childcare for 2-3 year olds; enhanced health visitor support; parenting programmes; and early language development, thus aiming to reduce the demand for additional services. There is evidence to show a good start in life leads to better outcomes in later life.

#### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** In December 2020, the Climate Change Committee published its progress report “Reducing Carbon Emissions in Wales”. This is the first report on Wales’ progress towards meeting its emission reduction targets, as required under Article 45 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- 4.2** The progress report and advice recognise the actions taken in Wales to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - including achieving some of the highest national recycling rates in the world, taking a proactive role in supporting the large-scale deployment of renewable energy generation, and integrating responses to the climate and nature emergency throughout its priorities for the reconstruction of the economy following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.3** The established childcare settings are housed within the highest areas of deprivation and will continue to encourage those who use the facilities to commute via active travel, being a local childcare provision for local people. The facility will engage with staff, parents, and care givers to use alternative modes of transport to reduce the environmental impact.

#### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

##### **Financial**

- 5.1** The Flying Start childcare contracts will be based on a set amount of funding. The current hourly rate is £6, however there is an intention to increase funding in line with cost of living and the Childcare Offer for Wales, to £6.40ph from April 2025. The proposed contract amount for each setting will be awarded as:
- Gibbonsdown Children’s Centre - £124,800 – 40 spaces
  - Dechrau Dysgu - £12,480 – 4 spaces
  - Childminders - £200 per child per week (12.5 hours per week)

##### **Employment**

- 5.2** The process of monitoring the services will be undertaken by staff within the Social Services Directorate, making appropriate use of corporate expertise and processes in areas such as procurement, finance and HR where required.

##### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3** These will be renewal of current contracts with commissioned providers and all staff are employed via the providers; therefore, TUPE and considerations will not apply.

- 5.4** The review of all working arrangements between the Council and other agencies will ensure that services are provided through robust contracts that fully reflect the responsibilities of the Council and the provider.

## **6. Background Papers**

[Phased expansion of Early Years Provision | GOV.WALES](#)

[Flying Start childcare: guidance \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)