

# Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

**ELLS(2)-12-06(p3)**

**Date: 20 September 2006**

**Venue: Committee Room 3, The Senedd**

**Title: Flying Start and Foundation Phase**

## **Purpose**

This paper is to provide the Committee with an overview of progress in implementing the Flying Start and Foundation Phase programmes for children aged 0 to 7 years of age.

## **Summary**

The Committee is asked to consider this paper as a basis for discussion. Following a full consultation between February and May 2003, which attracted overwhelming support for its introduction, the Foundation Phase Pilot commenced in September 2004 in 41 schools/settings; it will continue until the statutory rollout starts in September 2008. The Pilot has therefore completed two years and covers pupils aged 3 to 6. From September 2006 the full age range (3 to 7) will be covered by the Pilot schools/settings.

A public consultation on Flying Start took place between December 2005 and February 2006 and, after consideration of the responses, guidance was issued to local authorities in June 2006.

## **Background**

One of the Assembly Government's Core Aims for children and young people is that they should all receive a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development. The Flying Start initiative, providing high quality services to children aged 0-3 in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, and the Foundation Phase, for all children aged 3-7, both take this core aim forward, founded on the international evidence of effective practice.

## **Flying Start**

Flying Start is based on experience from the evaluations of Cymorth in Wales and Sure Start in England, as well as international evidence. Within the areas concerned, children and families will be entitled to a set menu of well-evaluated services. The aim is to target 16,000 children aged 0-3 in order to ensure that, taken with existing Cymorth grant investments, more than ?2,000 is available per

child per annum. This is a more intense level of investment than in Sure Start local programmes elsewhere in the UK.

The core Flying Start services are free high quality part-time childcare for two year olds; health visiting with smaller caseloads; parenting programmes; and language and play programmes.

Welsh medium provision and provision sensitive to the needs of ethnic minority communities should be an integral part of the programme.

Flying Start funding can be used to provide a bursary to enable children in Flying Start areas to access Welsh medium childcare of suitable quality, where this reflects parental choice and there is no realistic prospect of such childcare within the target area.

It is the Assembly Government's intention that Flying Start will remain a specific, ring-fenced grant to local authorities until April 2011 at least. This should give partners confidence to recruit good quality staff.

## **Foundation Phase**

The Foundation Phase, a new curriculum for 3-7 year olds, provides appropriate development and sets high expectations early on that will enable all children to reach their potential.

In the pilots we are currently funding any additional staff needed to meet the Foundation Phase adult/pupil ratios of 1:8 for 3-5 year-olds and 1:15 for Years 1 and 2 (5 to 7-year-olds). Funding is also available for cover and staff training.

### **The role of the private and voluntary sectors**

The Assembly Government has made a commitment to the development of a mixed economy in early years provision. This encourages both maintained and non-maintained sectors in providing education and care for young children before compulsory school age, within both Flying Start and the Foundation Phase. It also supports the rights of parents/carers to choose the form of provision they wish for their young children.

Guidance to Local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships states that the aim of each partnership is to bring together all those with an interest in planning or provision of early years education and childcare. In doing so, as part of their role, partnerships should bring together the local authority, private and voluntary sectors in a spirit of co-operation and genuine partnership, based on existing good practice. They should recognise and develop the particular strengths of the private and voluntary sectors.

Flying Start guidance indicates that Flying Start funds may be used to support children within private and voluntary sector childcare provision, including childminding, providing the requirements on quality are met.

In many authorities, the voluntary sector has been the catalyst for extending part-time provision to 3 year olds and they will continue to have a key role in the development and delivery of the Foundation Phase.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association, the National Childminding Association and the National Day Nurseries Association are part of the current Foundation Phase pilot and their settings have been provided with management and resources funding. The organisations have also been awarded a grant to employ development officers to support early years provision and the Foundation Phase.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

As regards Flying Start, research organisations will be invited shortly to tender for a major evaluation, to include the longitudinal tracking of a sample of participating children in order to assess the outcomes of the programme.

For the Foundation Phase, a team drawn from the University of London and UWIC has now completed its evaluation of the first two years of the Pilot and is currently finalising the text of its report, which will be made available to the Committee for its 22 November meeting.

The evaluation looked in particular, at the training and support materials which will need to be put in place, the impact on management and resources, the changes in pedagogy and the adult/pupil ratios that will be needed to support the Foundation Phase.

Early indications are that the Report will highlight:

- That there is overwhelming support of the philosophy and aims of the Foundation Phase; and
- the play and experiential pedagogy integral to the Foundation Phase has a positive effect on children's development and learning.

There are also a number of lessons that can be learned from the Pilot, these include:

- The need to provide suitable and well focused training in the Foundation Phase pedagogy; and
- Improving transition arrangements between the non-maintained and maintained sectors; and between the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2.

A full Action Plan will be prepared to address each of the recommendations in the Final Report and any that remain outstanding from the interim first year report. The Action Plan will be provided to the Committee for its meeting on 22 November.

## **Training and workforce plan**

The introduction of Flying Start and the Foundation Phase are major policy initiatives which will have profound consequences for the care and education provision that we offer to 0-3 year olds in our most disadvantaged areas and for 3-7 year olds throughout Wales from September 2008. These

policies have major implications for the workforce we will need to have in place and the training of that workforce, so that we can deliver these services to the high quality that will be required. Officials are now engaged in the demanding and complicated task of scoping the existing workforce and their qualifications. They will then develop a major national training programme supported by training materials to meet the needs identified.

In the case of both the Foundation Phase and Flying Start we are dealing with essentially the same group of staff - those qualified at level 2 or, ideally, level 3 on the Assembly Government's Framework of Accredited Qualifications in Early Years Education and Childcare. In addition, the Foundation Phase will require in-service training for teachers.

## **The Current Position**

A recent survey carried out for the Care Council for Wales estimated that there were 19,000 people working in the early years and childcare sector, registered with CSIW, in January 2006 (including childminders, and those working in crèches, full daycare, out of school care, sessional care (playgroups) and open access play). Around half of the staff working in out of school clubs, crèches, and sessional care have at least one other job. The survey estimated that 16% of practitioners had a qualification at level 2, 45% at level 3 and 4% at level 4. The survey indicated growth in the workforce, by 6% over the previous year, but also high turnover – 75% of employers recruited staff over the year.

The number of teaching assistants is also on an upward trend. There were 10,225 in January 2006 compared with 9,399 the previous year – an increase of some 9%. Indication from the workforce returns so far received from LEAs are that around 80% of classroom assistants in the maintained sector already hold a Level 3 (or equivalent) qualification and around 70% in the funded non-maintained settings. Approximately 11% of staff in the maintained sector are at Level 2 or equivalent and 22% in the non-maintained sector. These figures are based on the 13 LEAs that have submitted their workforce returns – the remainder are in the process of finalising their data.

The audits that have informed the workforce returns have proved to be a significant challenge for each LEA and have required close collaboration with their schools and the non-maintained funded settings that are part of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Whilst the capture of the workforce information has not been straightforward the individual LEAs have recognised it is key to the planning and implementation of the Foundation Phase. Officials will continue to work with their LEA counterparts to further refine the data to better target training, staffing and funding.

The vast majority of training is carried out in further education institutions, where there is growth in provision. There were 2,133 learners undertaking early years and childcare qualifications at levels 2 and 3 on the Assembly Government Framework at FE institutions in Wales in 2003/04 and 2,471 such learners in 2004/05. Priority 5 of the National Learning and Skills Assessment for 2006 is 'To increase the numbers of workers within the early years and childcare services sector with the appropriate skill levels'. The Assessment is used to guide FE institutions on what provision they need to consider putting on. Each year, each college has to agree their map of provision with officials in the regions. The Assembly Government then monitors against the agreed map. Regional officials will be looking to the colleges to deliver the identified priorities wherever possible. In detail, the 2006

Assessment indicated:

The Early Years and Children's Services sector is one that has expanded in recent years, and is likely to grow further. It is a sector that is experiencing a great deal of change in terms of regulation and implementation of new policy and initiatives.

In order to develop a workforce fit to deliver the kinds of services children and parents expect in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an urgent need to support qualifications and training related to childminders and play work. New legislation requires that play leaders and senior staff require a level 3 in play work by April 2008 and 50% of others in the sector require level 2. All child minders need to be qualified to level 3 within 5 years of registration. It is estimated that during the Foundation Phase (based on ratios of 1:8 (for 3 to 5-year-olds) and 1:15 (for 5 to 7-year-olds) and on the 2004 PLASC returns) an additional 3,350 classroom assistants will be required. The additional staff will need to be in place over the first three years of the Foundation Phase rollout on the following basis: 2008/09 – 1,820; 2009/10 – 760; and 2010/11 – 770.

These figures will be further refined by the LEA audit of current provision and the PLASC 2006 returns. The latest analysis of the staffing levels in the maintained sector indicates that around 40% of schools already have sufficient staff resources to meet the proposed ratios.

Additional training money has been provided for local authorities to prepare teachers and assistants for the introduction of the Foundation Phase. In 2004/05 an additional ?20,000 per authority was available; in 2005/06 the figure was ?10,000; and this year we have provided a further ?15,000 to each authority.

?4.1 million has been provided within 2006-07 through Flying Start for the development of the early years and play workforces, as well as for the initial planning of Flying Start.

?7m has been made available through Iaith Pawb in order to increase the number of Welsh-medium early years practitioners. To date some 500 practitioners have been trained or are currently in training.

## **Teachers in Initial Teacher Education and Training**

There will be sufficient teachers in training to meet the needs of the Foundation Phase and the curriculum in place will enable HE to train them to the standards required. Consideration will need to be given to the current requirements on practical experience, to ensure that students gain awareness of both maintained and non-maintained provision. Officials have recently written to initial teacher training providers, drawing their attention to the timetable for the implementation of the Foundation Phase and the recently issued new Qualified Teacher Status Standards. The Standards require trainees to have knowledge and understanding of the subject(s) they are trained to teach, and to demonstrate that they can teach the required or expected knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to the curriculum for pupils in the age range for which they are trained. They now include specific requirements for the Foundation Phase, and the letter encourages providers to offer courses covering the Foundation Phase as soon as practical.

## **Teachers In-Service**

A major in-service training programme will be required in order to prepare teachers for the requirements of the Foundation Phase in preparation for its roll-out in 2008 and beyond that into the next decade. The 2007/2008 Better Schools Fund includes a new priority area which supports training teachers and classroom assistants in all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

## **Managers/Leaders in the Voluntary Sector and Higher Level Teaching Assistants in Schools**

There is evidence that the level of qualification of the leaders of settings can have a major impact on the quality of the provision. In the medium term, work will be put in hand to develop leaders to at least level 4, in a similar way to the proposed 'Early Years Professionals' in England. The savings released from the Furlong Review of initial teacher training offer a way of funding the necessary provision, through Foundation Degrees and Early Childhood Studies degree courses.

## **Care/Teaching Assistants**

The objective must be to train as many as possible of these staff to level 3. As indicated above, the indications are that 45% of staff in registered settings are already at this level.

It is currently envisaged that the plans produced by the statutory Children and Young People's Partnerships established by the Children Act 2004 will include workforce development plans, and the training of staff at this level should be a key element of these. In support of this work, the Assembly Government is currently funding two additional posts at the Care Council for Wales. One is a post to develop the early years and childcare workforce and the second is to bring together a network for the entire children's workforce to work on a children's workforce strategy for Wales. The first meeting of this network will take place at the end of this month.

## **Financial Implications**

The costs of Flying Start and the Foundation Phase are to be met from the following budgets agreed by the Assembly for 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09 respectively; the budgets for 2007-08 and 2008-09 are indicative only and subject to votes in plenary. The Foundation Phase budget for 2008-09 will of course need to be the subject of a bid in the 2007 budget planning round.

### **Revenue budgets:**

Early Years Revenue ?20.001 million / ?22.601 million / ?22.601 million

(This budget is made up by three main accounts within 2006-07: provision of education places for three year olds (?15.056 million), Iaith Pawb developments (?2.4 million) and Foundation Phase Pilot/ Rollout (?2.545 million))

Flying Start: ?15.000 million / ?31.000 million / ?31.000 million

## **Capital budget:**

Early Years: ?8.406 million / ?5.206 million / ?5.206 million

## **Cross Cutting Themes**

Flying Start and the Foundation Phase will both require a high degree of partnership working between the Assembly Government and local government. The impacts for the private and voluntary sectors in early years provision are set out above.

The Flying Start guidance recognises that potentially there may be differential impacts between racial groups and communities, and requires local partnerships to take a proactive stance in ensuring equality of opportunity within the programme. The guidance also requires services to be inclusive of disabled children. The Foundation Phase curriculum promotes equality of opportunity and values and celebrates diversity. It aims to support the cultural identity of all children, to celebrate cultural differences and help children recognise and gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures.

There are no significant issues relating to sustainable development.

## **Action for Subject Committee**

The committee is invited to note the paper for information and as the basis for discussion.

**Jane Davidson**

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