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# FLYING START – 2006-2011 EXPERIENCES, LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A REPORT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES PREPARED BY  
CHILDREN IN WALES AND THE WALES FLYING START COORDINATORS NETWORK  
AMENDED VERSION



Children in Wales  
Plant yng Nghymru



# FLYING START – 2006-2011 EXPERIENCES, LESSONS AND RECOMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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## Introduction

The Flying Start Coordinators network, supported by the Welsh Government (formerly Welsh Assembly Government) and convened by Children in Wales has been meeting regularly from the outset of the Programme. Through the often challenging process of operationalising the vision of the Flying Start programme set out by the Government, the network as a collective of managers now have a wealth of experience and knowledge about every aspect of the Flying Start pilot programme in Wales.

Children in Wales have supported the Coordinators to produce this report in order to highlight the lessons learnt, the strengths and successes and the recommendations for the future roll out of the Flying Start Programme.

This report will focus on the operational strategic issues that are crucial for delivery. This report will not be discussing the impact of the programme on the children and families who receive the service. The outcomes of the Flying Start programme is the subject of a comprehensive evaluation that is being undertaken the Welsh Government with Ipsos Mori and SQW Consulting Ltd. The final stage of the evaluation is almost complete and consideration will need to be given to the ongoing needs for evaluation and guidance on development of the programme. In order to ensure greater consistency going forward and to ensure that every authority measures the outcomes of the programme in the same way the network, with support from the Welsh Government is developing a Results Based Accountability framework, based on Mark Friedman's approach.

The issues highlighted in this report are commonly reported by all Flying Start Coordinators, and the whole network has been part of the writing of this report and endorses its content.

## Funding

### Experiences

The funding allocated for capital expenditure for Flying Start is the area that has proved most challenging for managers. The process of bidding for capital and the subsequent timescales for Welsh Government giving approval, and then for officers to go through the design, planning, commissioning and building processes have been unrealistic. This has often led to building projects not being able to go ahead because of the consequent risks of funding clawback due to building work running over schedule (over financial years). Year on year planning, rather than a longer term phased approach has meant that Flying Start Managers haven't always been able to maximise on the opportunities of tying in Flying Start capital development with other Local Authority capital projects and the economies of scale that can be gained through doing this. Often programme managers were not advised of



allocations until well into the financial year, thereby putting projects at huge risk of not being delivered and not achieving best value.

The constraints on amounts of funding available and the limitations of year by year funding has led to under-spending on capital projects, leaving Flying Start projects at times without the building infrastructure needed for their programme locally. This subsequently effects making full use of revenue allocations, e.g. not having the infrastructure from which to offer the childcare entitlement has meant an under spend for some authorities on their childcare budget and children who have not been able to access their childcare offer.

The main challenges with capital funding arise from the allocation system being yearly, rendering inadequate time for planning consent and local agreements to be sought in the same year as the expenditure.

The capital provision has not been sufficient in any one year to enable the programme to develop substantial new facilities, especially so in smaller authorities and authorities with smaller populations. This has hampered the development of the programme to a degree which has affected some authorities' ability to deliver the full entitlements to some of the children in their areas.

***“Because of the way the capital allocations were calculated it has taken too long to complete the programme as there was always work to be undertaken over more than one financial year, and not enough money year by year”***

Several authorities found that the small capital sums on offer to them meant that it was not possible to embark on new builds which resulted in funds being returned to Government. Some expenditure has been made on community venues and existing buildings which brings a different set of management issues, such as shared responsibility and long term security.

Welsh Government officials are praised for their attempts over the four years to work around the challenges and support Flying Start coordinators with getting some projects completed against the odds.

Flying Start managers have found that having only an indicative allocation of funding for three years has left them only able to offer one year contracts to service providers. Late notification of the next year's grant (as happened in April 2011) means that redundancy notices are issued with the consequent loss of (well trained) personnel. This leads to gaps in services and a loss of talent and experience within the team.

## Recommendations for Expansion



- Capital allocation needs to be sufficient to ensure that the operational side of the programme can function effectively and timely. With expansion there will be a further need for significant capital investment to provide childcare premises (when there is a shortage in more deprived areas and rural parts of Wales<sup>1</sup>) and facilities from which to offer group based interventions. There will be an increase in staff recruitment that will need accommodating within Flying Start teams. This will be additional to the capital costs needed to maintain current provision and ensure children within the current Flying Start areas are able to access their full entitlements.
- Capital funding should be allocated on at least a two year programme or preferably three year rolling programme.
- Capital funding should be transferrable from one financial year to the next if the rationale is robust and practical.
- Decisions on allocations need to be made prior to the start of the financial year to allow time for design, planning and ratification by local committees, commissioning and project completion.
- Release revenue funding in stages to correspond with capital developments and operational processes. This would ease the pressure on under spend and reclamation of the grants.
- Provide clear guidance by January 2012 on where the expansion will be taken forward to enable early planning for capital projects where necessary.
- Flying Start Managers need to plan early, ensuring that agreements are in place prior to capital development to guarantee availability of premises
- Flying Start should be represented on the Board of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School programme to maximise potential for collaborative working.

## The Health Entitlement

The programme guidance states that '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'. Based on a judgement of need, families can then be offered services such as

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Years and Childcare Workforce in Wales 2010 Care Council for Wales  
<http://www.ccwales.org.uk/development-and-innovation/early-years-and-childcare-workforce/workforce-wales-2010>



- 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 e.g. infant nutrition, maternal mental health, immunisations, dental health.

Much has been learnt and established over the last four years and tremendous strides have been made towards the vision of the programme. However the Flying Start Managers face significant challenges in ensuring these services are available to families and continue to encounter issues four years into the programme.

## Experiences

### Recruitment

Recruitment of Intensive Health Visitors is difficult leading to gaps in service with no cover for sickness and absences. There are several reasons behind this:

- Despite investment into training health visitors there is still a national shortage of trained health visitors for Wales. This is especially evident in rural areas where it is necessary for Flying Start managers to attempt to encourage re-location from outside the area in order to recruit health visitors.
- Due to the nature of indicative funding allocations, posts are advertised as one year contracts. Often generic health visitors can secure three year posts, leaving Flying Start at a disadvantage when recruiting.
- There is a lack of consistency on pay grading for Flying Start Health Visitors across Wales. For example in one authority the Agenda 4 Change reviews had deemed that the Flying Start Health Visitors role was a Specialist Health Visitor profile deserving a Band 7 due to the demands of the post. For a period of time this made recruitment easier as it was seen to be progression from the generic health visiting role. However this re-grading was overturned by the local health board, re-grading the post back to band 6, and thus having a negative impact on recruitment. Now only newly qualified health visitors tend to apply for the posts, leading to a need for greater supervision due to lack of experience.
- There is an issue in many areas about managing the financing of the Health Visitor workforce. When recruiting local Health Visitors there will usually be some Health Visitor who are moved across from generic teams to Flying Start teams. However generally, despite reducing the numbers of children cared for by generic Health



Visitor Teams, the consequential financial saving is not being passed onto Flying Start in recognition. This practice does vary in different parts of Wales.

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***“Newly qualified Health Visitors do not have the required knowledge, skill and experience base to manage the complex caseloads in the Flying Start areas, particularly in respect of engaging with the hard to reach families, safeguarding and child protection in the community. They are novices, not experts.”***

## Retention

Retaining Flying Start Health visitors has been challenging for most managers, with most Coordinators reporting a high turnover of Intensive Health Visiting. High levels of sick leave amongst IHVs are also reported. The intensity of their case loads leads to high levels of pressure due to the prevalence of child protection concerns and issues often associated with vulnerable families.

Coordinators from parts of Wales have reported situations in which children who might previously have been accepted as referrals by social services specifically as a child in need, may now be regarded as being in receipt of intensive services through Flying Start, which are at least the same as and in many cases exceed the level of intervention and support that social services could provide. As part of establishing the Flying Start programme, clarification was needed with social services about where the responsibility for safeguarding caseloads was held. It is important to ensure that there is clarity of accountability, responsibility and workload distribution. Flying Start Health Visitors may bear the burden of a high level of safeguarding issues thereby increasing their work related pressure.

## Caseloads

Many of the Flying Start Health Visitors have caseloads that are higher than the recommended 1:110 in the guidance. One reason behind this is the difficulty in handing children over after they reach their third birthday and the risks associated with not having continuity. Indeed most Flying Start Health Visitors retain the children in their caseload until the children are four or five years old and entering the school system. At this point of transition they will be passed on to the school nurses caseloads. Some of these children continue to need intensive services after the age of three when they are a child in need. This impacts on the capacity of the Health Visitor to focus on the children in the Flying Start programme who are 0-3 years old. A further issue effecting Health Visitors capacity and the quality of service offered is the transferability rate of families. In some local authority areas the transfers in and out of catchments can account for up to 20% of a Health Visitors caseload.



## What worked well?

- Coordinators report many lessons learnt and examples of good practice.
- All the Flying Start teams have a mixed skills set to enhance the health services that families receive to a lesser or greater degree. Adopting a team around the family approach has been beneficial to families and the employment of family support workers has eased this approach in some areas.
- Where possible employing Flying Start midwives has proved to be highly beneficial and a way of opening doors at the earliest possible point of access and influencing health issues for the child in the antenatal period. Midwife support can lead to improvement in breastfeeding uptake, low birth weight issues, smoking cessation and support for young parents.
- Speech and Language Therapy is a service that is both highly valuable and very much in demand amongst the families the programme works with. The service is able to support the Flying Start teachers, the Health Visitors and the childcare settings in the early identification of additional needs and address communication issues in the best way.
- Establishing drop in clinics in Flying Start settings have proved to be an effective way of ensuring accessibility of health services outside of home visits.
- Co-location and professional networking opportunities for Flying Start team members are cited as central to the success of the integrated approach offered to families by Flying Start. Also joint training events for all the health providers within Flying Start together have been successful. The Health Visitors have needed significant update and additional skills training to ensure they can fully deliver on the enhanced Flying Start health core programme including Schedule of Growing Skills and parenting / health programmes.
- Cross-professional training that is delivered to all members of the Flying Start team has been central to reducing the cultural barriers to integrated working. Additionally, it has scaffolded consistent practices across and within professional teams in relation to supporting childrens language and communication skills; behaviour support and management; early identification; healthy eating; immunisation; safeguarding, to name but a few.
- Dieticians have also made a huge contribution to Flying Start and there is a growing body of evidence that links the future health and emotional well-being of adults to the patterns of diet and exercise developed in the early years. Those local authorities that have dieticians as part of the skill mix have seen improvements in the lifestyle choices made by parents and in the knowledge and skill levels of staff.





## Recommendations for Expansion

- The primary requirement in relation to the health strand of the programme is for sufficient additional funding to cover workforce needs including appropriate and consistent pay scales, and workforce development. Welsh Government needs to continue with the training of new health visitors and also midwives.
- The impact of the Health Visiting review currently taking place needs to be taken into account in guidance for planning the expansion.
- Clarification is needed in guidance about the role of a grade 5 health worker and what duties they can perform. If a band 5 Health Worker is used will they need to be undertaking Health Visitor training whilst working? It is recommended by some Flying Start Coordinators that this could work well within the programme.
- Consideration should be given to including Midwifery and Speech and Language Therapy as core elements of the Flying Start Programme.
- The Schedule of Growing Skills contract with GL Assessment should be renewed with the proviso that training can be cascaded through Flying Start directly on a more sustainable basis. This is the only assessment tool that is being used consistently across all 22 Flying Start Programmes and the data from the last four years has enabled us to form a baseline on which to measure improvement. Continued use of this tool is critical to understanding whether Flying Star children are developing in accordance with their chronological age.
- Adequate time is needed for planning and implementing expansion. This is not an undertaking that could be completed within a year. The Welsh Government needs to be realistic in its expectations of timescales. It has taken a minimum of three years for most programmes to reach a steady state of delivery, and even then, not all local authorities are in a position where they are fully delivering the four entitlements, or delivering to the guidance.
- Consideration should be given to including reducing non-intentional injuries in children as a part of the Flying Start service. Many Flying Start areas are already including this in their work through activities such as building in accident prevention and parental knowledge about risk management into our parenting programmes and using home safety equipment schemes.
- Increased levels of funding to train organisational enablers such as IT services, Information Governance, Procurement, Estates, HR, and Finances etc are focussed and understand Flying Start.



- Guidance should be prepared that outlines how Intensive Health Visitors should be recruited and whether the subsequent finances gained for the Generic Health Visiting teams through the reduction of children served, should be passed onto the Flying Start Programme.

## The Childcare Entitlement

The programme guidance states that:

The provision of good quality childcare for children from 2-3 years of age is the centrepiece of services to be delivered under the Flying Start initiative. The quality childcare provision will focus on children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in target areas, and aims to improve their outcomes in preparation for school and in the long term.

The Welsh Assembly Government has a mixed economy approach to the provision of good quality childcare and education therefore, a range of providers will be able to offer Flying Start, as long as they meet the criteria set. These providers include the maintained sector and private and voluntary nurseries, playgroups and childminders. Parents should be able to access Flying Start provision for their children through the medium of English or Welsh.

The current context of cutbacks have been noted by coordinators as affecting childcare provision outside of Flying Start in their localities which can have a knock on effect on some of the commissioned Flying Start services.

## Experiences

Many Flying Start areas have struggled to provide sufficient numbers of places for the childcare entitlement, especially in the first year or two. There has been considerable disparity between areas on how the childcare sufficiency has been reached with some authorities making use of facilities already established (private and voluntary sector provision) and others opening their own provision almost entirely.

*“We have been able to invest in the already established childcare provision within our catchment area. This has ensured that existing childcare settings were not compromised by the development of Flying Start ONLY provision.....The support we have provided to each setting has had the knock on effect of enriching the childcare experience for those children too.”*



Another Coordinator states

*“We had no registered childcare in any Flying Start area when we started. The tender process for childcare in all Flying Start areas took a long time due to European procurement rules etc. This was unsuccessful so we decided to develop own childcare provision with a bursary system for Welsh medium provision. There is a difference in quality of both provisions with Local Authority having more support for the teams and therefore greater ability to release childcare teams to focus on the children and families”.*

There has also been disparity in the actual service taken up by children and parents. Some authorities have taken a flexible approach to take up allowing children to attend for part of the entitlement if desired whilst others have been stricter with the entitlement insisting children attend for all five sessions. There are strong arguments underpinning this situation which Welsh Government are aware of and are working with coordinators towards achieving greater consistency in practice.

Delivering placements for children for 42 weeks of the year has been problematic in some areas with much variation in take up of holiday provision.

## **Workforce Issues**

All the Flying Start teams have had challenges in recruiting a suitably qualified workforce and significant investments have been made to train the workforce. There continues to be huge challenges in recruiting men into the childcare field. There is also a national shortage of Welsh speaking childcare workers (as identified in the Welsh Assembly Government Policy Statement Nurturing Children, Supporting Families: our policy priorities for childcare 2011)

Ensuring that the childcare provision is of high quality has also proved difficult in the absence of a Government endorsed Quality Assurance scheme and the absence of a national Framework for the 0-3 age group. The Coordinators commonly report the experience of finding that even when childcare workers are qualified; there had been discrepancies in the delivery of the NVQ's and other courses leading to inconsistent practices.

*“Since employing childcare staff, all have achieved their higher qualifications but have needed a lot of additional training beyond this to ensure they have sufficient leadership / management skills, child protection as well as skills for working with children with additional needs through specific CPD training plan”*

Many Coordinators found that general cultural expectations about childcare can be unhelpful. They have invested resources and worked hard to combat a general lack of



understanding of the complexities of child development, a lack of commitment and understanding of the need for continual professional development and a lack of knowledge on all levels about the different childcare career pathways.

## CSSIW Registration

Unfortunately the process of registering a setting with the CSSIW has been a hindrance to many settings being able to open for the 2.5 hours. The process of registering a new setting in some cases has taken up to 18 months. Despite many Coordinators having excellent relationships with their local CSSIW teams the bureaucracy of the process and the demands on the service is definitely slowing developments down.

## The experience for the child

In the absence of quality assurance frameworks that reflect current practice and knowledge and a coherent 0-3 framework, childcare settings have done their best to adopt progressive services that are centred around the child. Flying Start Managers are confident that the experiences that the children have, contribute positively to the overall development of the children and that this will be reflected in the formal evaluations.

However in some circumstances the child will experience a gap in provision between reaching their third birthday and gaining access into a Foundation Phase setting. Sometimes this can be a whole term. This can have a negative effect on the child and undermine some of the achievements made. This period of transition into a school or other Foundation Phase settings is very important to the child and parent/s. Some coordinators have identified this as an area requiring further development and relationship building. Sometimes schools are slow to realise the role that Flying Start has had in supporting children (especially when there are additional needs) and this can have a negative impact on the child and the family.

## What worked well?

Whilst this is by no means an exhaustive list of successes, it is a flavour of how challenges in delivering the childcare entitlement have been addressed and overcome by Flying Start Coordinators in various parts of Wales.

- One Flying Start team have committed to offering the same rate of pay across all their childcare settings to help retain staff, which has been successful
- Establishment of meetings between their childcare providers and the schools they feed, in order to improve transition arrangements for the children and families
- Liaising with careers advisors, schools and colleges to inform them on childcare careers in order to improve on signposting students appropriately into childcare courses
- Flexibility in provision of the childcare entitlement has worked well in some areas



- Establishing strategies to deal with absenteeism, recognising that it can sometimes be a symptom of other issues for the family
- Taking training courses into the workplace of the childcare workers
- Establish a network of all the providers to improve practice and share knowledge
- Creating resources for parents explaining the benefits of childcare for their child and the importance of regular attendance.

## Recommendations for Expansion

- Resources allocated for childcare in the expansion need to take account of the ongoing training and support needs within current childcare provision as well as the costs of developing and acquiring new provision and new buildings as needed.
- Revised guidance from Government needs to outline whether or not flexibility in delivery of the childcare entitlement is appropriate, and whether the current expectation of service delivery for 42 weeks continues.
- Welsh Government could work with CSSIW to prioritise registration for Flying Start in order to maximise the availability and take up of the childcare places.
- Revised guidance from Government needs to clarify to what extent the new Quality Assurance Framework (under development by WG) and the new 0-3 personal development framework (under development) should inform practice in Flying Start areas.
- Welsh Government, through the Flying Start programme needs to develop strategies to recruit under represented workers such as men and Welsh speakers and develop further provision to offer a choice of Welsh or English provision to parents.
- Provide clear guidance by January on where the expansion will be taken forward to enable early planning for workforce, building and tendering processes where necessary.
- The Government are urged to give consideration to the funding of the current childcare gap for children to enable them to experience continuity of learning between their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and entering school / Foundation Phase setting.
- It would be useful if, in developing future policy, advice is taken from leading experts/academics in the field. It would also be helpful to differentiate between a policy decision which is focused on childcare which supports primary carers into work, training or education or that which focuses' on enabling children to fully develop.



## The Parenting Support Entitlement

The Programme guidance states which programmes should be delivered under the programmes based on a report carried out by Communities that Care. Knowledge about the impact of particular parenting programmes has been much developed since this report and there are commissioners toolkits and guidance available to inform this process.

Different programmes focus on different outcomes (some behaviour; some attachment & relationships etc) The revised guidance ought to consider what the key outcomes are that Flying Start is trying to achieve, so that commissioners can think about the most appropriate programmes to use for their area to achieve these.

## Experiences

There have been some challenges in delivering the parenting support element of the programme but all areas report that they have a service able to reach at least some of the families. There are gaps in provision for certain families in Flying Start areas so this entitlement is still being developed further in some areas.

There are a few models of service delivery being used. Most areas have made parenting training available to their Health Visitors who are able to deliver both within homes as 1:1 support or in groups in the community. In some areas the group parenting support is contracted out to various providers, often in the voluntary sector. In other areas the skills have been developed internally within the teams to offer the services. Many Flying Start teams link in with their county wide Family Support Strategies and use the resources and services provided through a central team.

*“Flying Start in our Authority has been a trailblazer in commissioning specific evidence based programmes and building a group of trained professionals”*

Not surprisingly one of the main barriers to the service is the cultural stigma attached to attending parenting courses and some parents lack of experience and apprehension about group learning. Parental engagement can be a challenge and this is reflected in the attrition rates for some courses.

When using external providers or Local Authority county-wide services the Flying Start families cannot be prioritised so they experience waiting times of up to 2 months.

Ensuring that parenting practitioners are trained in an approved programme has been time consuming and challenging. There is a need for support with professional practice to ensure the parenting workforce are well supervised and receive appropriate continual professional development. This is also crucial to ensuring course fidelity.



Another challenge experienced by some authorities is matching trained facilitators with courses running because people who have been trained often move teams. Some facilitators may also have been trained in a particular programme but do not have experience of running groups. People trained to deliver parenting programmes are not always subsequently available to facilitate groups.

The Communities that Care list of programmes in the current guidance, created a challenge for at least one authority as the programme that they had invested heavily in (prior to Flying Start) was not on the list of approved programmes. The Family Links Nurturing Programme has since received Welsh Government funding towards the costs of conducting a Randomised Control Trial evaluation of the programme. The results are expected soon.

One of the challenges mentioned most often by Coordinators is finding suitable venues that are suitable for the crèche provision that is provided when the courses are running. Registering mobile crèches with the CSSIW is time consuming and duplicates much of the work that will have been done to register the Responsible Individual for a setting.

## What worked well

***“Cross Partnership delivery has worked well. We have established a rolling programme of infant (baby) IY and Basic (toddler) IY, which are run in group format. We use parenting Positively for 1:1 support for behaviour, sleep, faddy eaters and toileting issues. We have trained 6 family support workers and 4 Intensive Health Visitors who between them co-facilitate an IY course each per year. Two Family Workers act as the constant contact and co-deliver each course with another member of the team”***

Recruiting the right people is of utmost importance:

***“It is the skill of the facilitator that is important in understanding and managing group dynamics and having enough background training to understand what is happening and deal with issues appropriately as they arise. Facilitators need a broad knowledge of child development as some children have attachment difficulties or emotional trauma.”***

Having a flexible range of provision with courses of different length and interventions that can take place in the home can be of benefit. Also taster sessions are valuable to engage parents and other types of courses such as baby massage.

## Recommendations for expansion

- Updated guidance for the Flying Start Programme should review the list of approved Parenting Programmes and evaluation tools. The revision should take account of



programmes that have been successfully evaluated since the last guidance was issued.

- Resources will be required to ensure that all the new Intensive Health Visitors and Family Workers (and other appropriate employees) receive the relevant Parenting Support training
- In shaping the updated guidance for Flying Start the Welsh Government should recognise facilitator experience and quality as a vital component of parenting support and give this equal emphasis to the use of evidence based programmes. The National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents should be used as a toll for ensuring consistency in practice.
- There needs to be recognition that engaging some families can be time-consuming, requiring multiple visits, phone calls and other semi structured engagement. This is an essential prerequisite to running a successful parenting course but not always fully recognised in funding and resource allocation.
- Consideration could be given to practitioners assessing parental readiness to change, as this will lead to the greatest effect, and the use of motivational interviewing maybe a powerful tool to assist with this.

## **The Basic Skills Entitlement**

The Flying Start Guidance states:

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 Language and Play (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.

## **Experiences**

The information provided by Coordinators for this report showed a mix of experiences with this entitlement. It seems that some areas have has sporadic delivery due to lack of funding, leading to the conclusion that this entitlement may have received less emphasis in some areas. The suggested model in the guidance of using the LAP coordinators has been successful sometimes. Certain Flying Start teams have invested in alternative language development programmes for their own employees, working with local speech and





language therapists for advice. Some of the programmes mentioned are Elklan programme and PEEP (Parents Early Education Partnership) Learning Language & Loving it (to up skill staff) and 'You make the difference' for parents.

Despite these inconsistencies in delivery there was a common experience reported which was that supporting families with basic skills and language needs is appreciated by families and is often the key that unlocks the door for the other Flying Start services. Some Coordinators reported that the families who had received home visits initially then group support from language and play workers, were more likely to engage with the Parenting Support programmes later.

Delivering support in communities where the language of choice is not English or Welsh is a challenge for some areas. Use of interpreter services has worked particularly well in overcoming language barriers, particularly where interpreters are familiar with the Flying Start Programme and receive Flying Start training alongside Flying Start staff. Use of translation services, such as the WITTS organisation has been less successful.

## What worked well

- Ability to go into the home to provide support.
- Parents requesting support with their own literacy needs as a result of this service.
- Informal delivery works well. This is based on parents own evaluations.
- What has worked well for some has been linking this aspect of the programme to other Flying Start services, e.g delivery as part of a baby clinic, but also, linking the Language and Play and Bookstart aspects to more mainstream work such as the literacy strategy; local libraries etc

*“The additional Bookstart sessions, the Language and Play sessions and the Toy library service have been well appreciated by families and have good user satisfaction rates. These services have been an important introduction to the programme for many families especially as they are not statutory”*

## Recommendations for Expansion

- Security of Revenue funding for three years would enable more effective planning
- Revised Guidance to include advice on how adults within the programme should be supported with literacy and language needs



- Revised guidance to outline the importance of the involvement of the speech and language therapist
- Recruitment of further workers to deliver LAP type programmes.
- Clarification is needed on which programmes should be delivered under the Flying Start programme. It is debatable whether or not the current Language and Play provision is grounded in the best practice for underpinning language acquisition skills in children when it is not guided by the management of the Speech and Language Therapy service.
- Consideration should be given to whether Basic Skills data should inform part of the rationale and evidence for where the expansion needs to take place.
- Revised guidance which clarifies the outcomes that the Language and Play strand is supposed to impact on and how these might differ from any outcomes that might be expected if Speech and Language Therapy are considered as part of the standard Flying Start workforce.

## Concluding Observations

The Flying Start programme has undoubtedly been a great example of an ambitious Early Intervention project and is one that Coordinators are very proud of working for. To take this pilot programme to the next stage of roll out it would be beneficial to establish an advisory panel of policy makers and academics that are experts in the field of early years interventions. Individuals who are key to other Early Interventions programmes across the UK could support Flying Start towards development informed by up to date research and evidence based practice.

It is crucially important that Flying Start continues to build into its expansion evaluative work that will prove over time the outcomes of the programme for children in Wales. Such an ambitious and exciting programme must utilise the best skills we have within Wales and from further afield. This requires a well funded and resourced programme, that demonstrates the Welsh Government's commitment to creating opportunities for children and families to grow out of disadvantage in Wales.