



Early Years Transformation Consultation

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

July 2019



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the consultation.
- The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on proposed changes to the way that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council deliver early years' services.
- The consultation period ran from the 14th June to the 10th July. 254 responses were received.
- 73% of respondents had children aged 0-4.
- 48% of the respondents currently accessed the Flying Start Programme.
- Respondents were asked what elements of the flying start programme they accessed. Of those that responded the following elements were reported;

Flying Start childcare for a 2-3 year old	95%
Flying Start Health Visitor	58%
Flying Start parenting programme or parenting support	12%
Flying Start early language support for your child	18%

- The original Flying Start programme is limited to particular postcode areas only. Respondents were asked if they thought it would be beneficial to offer the support provided by the Flying Start programme to any family in Rhondda Cynon Taf with an identified need. **96% agreed with the proposal.**
- **85% of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce the Flying Start Childcare offer from 42 weeks to 39 weeks** and offer 15 family fun sessions during holiday periods instead, to enable younger and older siblings to access activities as well.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a consultation on proposed changes to the way that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council deliver early years' services
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines the background to the proposals and what the Council would like to change.
- 1.4 Section 3 details the methodology used.
- 1.5 Section 4 presents the consultation results.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Welsh Government Flying Start Programme provides additional services for parents with children aged 0-4 years living in Flying Start postcode areas. These additional services include:
 - **Parenting** programmes for parents with children aged 0-4 years living in Flying Start postcode areas
 - **Early Language and Communication** – support for children in childcare settings and support for parents to encourage early language development of children aged 0-4 years living in Flying Start postcode areas
 - **Flying Start Health Visitors**– enhanced and specialist support for children aged 0-4 years and families living in Flying Start postcode areas
 - **Childcare** - Children living within eligible postcode areas are entitled to receive free childcare for 12.5 hours per week for 39 weeks of the year from the term following their second birthday until the end of the term following their third birthday (in RCT we have provided 42 weeks a year, the extra three weeks is the first half of the summer holidays, however these additional weeks are not well attended).
- 2.2 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, this has meant that communities are divided between those streets where families are eligible for this additional support and those streets where families cannot receive it because of their postcode. This has resulted in some families who require additional support not being able to access it.
- 2.3 The Council is proposing to provide the additional services of Flying Start to any child and family in RCT who need it:

- **Parenting** – provide open access to informal parenting support and formal parenting programmes for parents with children up to the age of 18 years and specialist support for parents with children with additional needs
- **Early Language and Communication** – delivered as a targeted early intervention for children aged 21 months identified as experiencing language delay and also for children up to the age of 7 years who are not making expected progress
- **Health Visiting** – all families with a child aged 0-5 years will have a Family Health Visitor who will undertake a developmental assessment at 24 months and a speech and language assessment at 20 months to ensure any issues are identified as early as possible. Where a family has wider support needs, the Family Health Visitor will help them to access this support
- **Childcare** – funded childcare for 2-3 year olds is provided as part of a co-ordinated package of support for families based on assessed need. The childcare will be provided for 39 weeks of the year with 15 family fun sessions provided during holiday periods to enable younger and older

2.4 Access to these additional services would be needs based via referral to the Resilient Families Service.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The consultation period ran from the 14th June to the 10th July.
- 3.2 A questionnaire and FAQ sheet (What You Need to Know) was designed and placed on the Council's website.
- 3.3 Responses were requested via this online survey, a dedicated email address or via a freepost address.
- 3.4 All of the current flying start providers were made aware of the consultation.
- 3.4 Face to face consultation was undertaken at the Council's Teddy Bears Picnic event on the 21st June, using survey tablets.
- 3.5 254 responses were received.

4 CONSULTATION RESULTS

Results – Online Survey

- 4.1 254 respondents completed the questionnaire.
- 4.2 73% of respondents had children aged 0-4.
- 4.3 48% of the respondents currently accessed the Flying Start Programme.
- 4.4 Respondents were asked what elements of the flying start programme they accessed. Of those that responded the following elements were reported;

Flying Start childcare for a 2-3 year old	95%
Flying Start Health Visitor	58%
Flying Start parenting programme or parenting support	12%
Flying Start early language support for your child	18%

- 4.5 The original Flying Start programme is limited to particular postcode areas only. Respondents were asked if they thought it would be beneficial to offer the support provided by the Flying Start programme to any family in Rhondda Cynon Taf with an identified need. 96% agreed with the proposal.
- 4.6 In 2017/18 attendance at Flying Start childcare settings during the 3 weeks of the Summer Holidays dropped by 18%. As a result the Council is proposing to reduce the Flying Start Childcare offer from 42 weeks to 39 weeks and offering 15 family fun sessions during holiday periods instead, to enable younger and older siblings to access activities as well. Respondents were asked if they agreed with this proposal, of which 85% did agree.
- 4.7 Respondents were asked to provide any further comments and these are summarised under the themes below, with a selection of comments. 57 open responses were received.

- **Support for the proposal to expand Flying Start to all areas with identified need;**

“I have experience of delivering this model and it proved successful as all communities differ and it provides the opportunity to develop activities and events in line with individual community need. Our provisions are extremely successful in highlighting key opportunities in throughout the year where families best engage in family events and providing they are planned effectively the impact is positive and measurable.”

“Flying start should be available to all families in Wales regardless of affordability. The postcode selection is utter nonsense as there are families in the poorest areas who do not qualify.”

“It is vital that all children in need be entitled to this opportunity current system excludes children in poverty and must be targeted fairly”.

“I live in between streets that are eligible for flying start support and I am not entitled to it. Using a postcode lottery is silly and unfair”.

“My friend lived just outside and needed it”

Email received from Cllr. Brencher;

“As councillor for the Graig Ward I have been shocked at the inequity of the current system determined to be a postcode lottery in Flying Start provision .There is an overwhelming support for the proposed changes which will make a real difference to the lives of the children involved . One clear concern is that child poverty levels are rising and that through this current system many needy children are excluded. In Philip St alone in my ward half the families are entitled to this excellent and much needed support package whilst others often in greater need are not. This cannot continue...”

- **Positive about reducing from 42 to 39 weeks in Summer**

“I also work within flying start as a setting leader and I do believe that reducing the weeks to 39 weeks per year would be beneficial due to the poor attendance we see usually due to parents not wanting to bring older siblings out of the home to bring the child. Also as a working mother myself I would welcome having the full 6 week summer holidays off with my own children and not have to worry about paying for and arranging holiday care.”

- **Negative about reduction from 42-39 weeks**

“There are a lot of family activities already in the area I would keep it at 42 weeks.”

- Staff issues

“If childcare funding finished at 39 weeks staff would still be expecting to be paid, so unless we were paid to complete a family programme, I would not be willing to fund the additional staff costs or resources”.

“We have fairly good attendance during the summer. If the childcare provision were to finish at 39 weeks rather than 42, I feel that 15 family run sessions are a lot for staff to organise and this would not improve attendance overall.”

- Working parents

“Need the 42 weeks for working parents”

“Need the 42 for working parents and for support for those with children with additional needs”

“For working parents three weeks child care through the main school holidays has got to be beneficial. Maybe research if parents are in employment to see if this does have an effect of your attendance figures.....”

- **Family Fun Sessions**

“Other children could access the fun days”

“Better as I have older children and I could access the fun days with the family”

“Family sessions good to get involved”

- **Concerns with Family Fun sessions**

“.....some older siblings may not think its trendy enough or feel it's too much like school. They may want to hang out with friends instead. The younger ones may not want the siblings attending as it's their space.....”

- Cost/Setting

“I feel that it would be difficult to deliver family fun in our setting. This is due to the cost which may be implicated and the room size at our setting.”

- Poor attendance from experience

“I don't feel families would take part in the family fun sessions. Any family fun sessions we have experienced have always had very poor attendance.”

“Family engagement sessions are the hardest to gain a good attendance”

- **General positive comments about Flying Start**

“My older children went to flying start, my baby is too young at the moment. My boys loved the sessions they really helped them progress as they both had speech problems it will be very sad to see the services go”

“Flying start were marvellous with me”

“Flying start was brilliant with my son's speech”

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