Process evaluation of the phased expansion of Flying Start

Main report

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Table of contents

List of figures

Glossary

Acronym	Definition
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
WIMD	Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
WESP	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

1. Executive summary

Background and research approach

1.1 The Welsh Government is committed to supporting disadvantaged families and making a decisive difference in the life chances of children by mitigating the impact of poverty upon their early childhood development. The Flying Start programme was first launched in 2006/7 and aims to advance this agenda through the provision of four core elements: i) funded, part-time high-quality childcare for two to three-year-olds; ii) enhanced health visitor support; iii) access to parenting support; and iv) support for speech, language, and communication development.

1.2 Following on from the Programme for Government (2021),[1] the Welsh Government committed to delivering a phased expansion of Flying Start with a particular emphasis on Welsh medium provision. The expansion consists of two phases which expand Flying Start services to new geographical areas across all Welsh local authorities. Areas eligible for Phase 1 of the expansion started receiving all four components of Flying Start from September 2022 onwards, aiming to reach an additional 2,500 children. Phase 2 consisted of the expansion of the childcare component of Flying Start only since April 2023 with a target of an additional 9,500 offers made to children.

1.3 Alma Economics have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to conduct a process evaluation of this phased expansion of Flying Start. The evaluation encompassed a review of (i) successes and challenges in the delivery process, (ii) impacts of the expansion on stakeholders such as local authorities, childcare settings, and parents, (iii) examples of best practice, and (iv) recommendations for the future. The analysis was conducted through a scoping phase, an in-depth document review, and extensive stakeholder engagement with Welsh Government officials and all Welsh local authority Flying Start teams.

Findings

1.4 Targets for the number of offers made to eligible children as part of the Phase 1 expansion were met as of June 2023. As a result, an additional 3,178 children have

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[1] Welsh Government (2021), *Programme for government: update*.

benefited from Flying Start, exceeding the target of 2,500 children. The expansion delivery process of Phase 1 was described as a smooth process.

1.5   The rollout of Phase 2 of the expansion continues at the time of writing. Notably, targets for the financial year 2023-24 have been met successfully. The Phase 2 expansion is expected to support an additional 9,500 two-year-olds to access quality Flying Start childcare. The Phase 2 delivery target of offering an additional 4,500 childcare places for the Flying Start childcare expansion during 2023-24 has already been met. When discussing the delivery of Phase 2, local authorities widely agreed that delivery to date was successful; however, stating that a number of challenges had been encountered in the process.

1.6   Discussing both Phase 1 and 2, local authority Flying Start teams unanimously emphasised the support they had received from the Welsh Government Account Managers directly, as well as through the official guidance shared. Nevertheless, local authorities frequently discussed that a longer lead-in time for Phase 2 would have allowed the involvement of more childcare settings, to be able to inform parents earlier, and to adjust internal local authority capacity.

1.7   The delivery model of Phase 1 followed similar processes across local authorities, however, approaches diverged more widely during Phase 2. This included decision-making on questions such as area selection where local authorities used a combination of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) in addition to local intelligence and additional data sources. Challenges were identified where parts of some communities would become eligible for Flying Start services whereas other parts of the same communities would live just outside of eligible areas, in addition to frequent concerns around the WIMD data being described as outdated.

1.8   When asked about the impact of the Flying Start expansion on childcare settings, positive feedback was received concerning the quality of childcare delivery, training for childcare settings, as well as helpful changes in the procurement of childcare settings as a consequence of the expansion. Local authorities raised wide-ranging challenges with the recruitment and retention of the childcare workforce, seen as delaying the expansion to date and with likely future impacts. Across local authorities, differences in the delivery model for childcare provision through the

medium of Welsh were noted. Notably, increasing the number of Welsh medium childcare places was widely seen as successful.

1.9 The collaboration with health boards with regard to data sharing was identified as a core determinant of successfully reaching eligible children. In Phase 1, health visitors played a crucial role in informing families of their entitlement to Flying Start and providing enhanced health support. Reflecting on Phase 2, challenges were noted in regions where data sharing was not possible and local authorities were therefore unable to access names, dates of birth, and addresses of eligible children. In some cases, this was successfully mitigated through new data-sharing agreements, other local authorities relied on close working relationships with health visitors who continued to inform families of Flying Start. Meanwhile, other local authorities were found to rely on wider public campaigns to increase awareness without targeting eligible families directly.

1.10 Findings from the research into data collection mechanisms identified a need for a unified approach, following the same definition of offers and take-up across all local authorities in Wales. It was furthermore emphasised that termly data reporting would reduce the burden on local authorities and align with childcare sector timelines.

Successes and challenges

1.11 Local authorities, as well as Welsh Government officials, identified key successes in the overall number of children benefitting from the rollout of the expansion services, as well as exceeding targets across a number of local authorities for both Phases 1 and 2. The development of novel registration platforms and data systems were highlighted as further core successes, unlocking lasting future benefits for local authorities in reaching respective local authority targets for Phase 2 and in case of future expansions. Another area of success was the number of additional childcare settings coming on board for Flying Start, often encouraged through simplified procurement processes and support from local authorities.

1.12 Throughout the process evaluation, a number of challenges were raised by stakeholders. The evaluation identified major concerns held by stakeholders around the recruitment and retention of qualified childcare staff, particularly the Welsh speaking workforce, as well as health visitors. This was seen as limiting Flying Start

capacity in deprived areas which was seen as slowing down the expansion. Additionally, the lack of data sharing between health boards and a number of local authorities was described as challenge, delaying the identification of eligible children and their contact details.

Recommendations and outlook

1.13   Looking to the future, the process evaluation recommends longer preparation timelines to allow local authorities to engage with childcare settings, expand local capacity, and adjust internal data systems to upcoming reporting requirements. Moreover, a uniform and standardised approach to monitoring data collection was recommended, following the same definitions across Wales to improve clarity and allow the comparison of data across local authorities for both offers and take-up.

1.14   Findings from this research suggest that less frequent data collection yet at higher granularity would be welcomed by stakeholders such as local authorities and childcare settings, while providing valuable insights into the impact of Flying Start on early childhood development. This could support a future impact evaluation of the programme, allowing to substantiate the impact of different programme components on early years child development. Finally, local authorities emphasised the importance of developing and communicating a clear long-term vision of Flying Start at the national level, ensuring certainty for local authorities, childcare settings, and families.

2. Overview of the expansion

2.1 Flying Start, first launched in 2006/7, provides targeted support for families with children under four years of age who live in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. The programme seeks to make a decisive difference in the life chances of children by mitigating the impact of poverty on their life outcomes. The programme encompasses four core elements:

- Funded, part-time, high-quality childcare for two to three-year-olds for 2.5 hours per day, five days per week;

- Enhanced health visitor support;

- Access to parenting support;

- Support for speech, language, and communication development.

2.2 The Co-operation Agreement[2] between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, alongside the resulting refreshed Programme for Government,[3] committed the Welsh Government to deliver a phased expansion of early years services, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision. Flying Start was chosen as the delivery mechanism for a phased expansion of high-quality childcare to all two-year-olds.[4] The expansion was delivered through two concurrent phases:

Phase 1 (Delivery from September 2022 – June 2023)

2.3 Phase 1 encompassed an expansion of all four elements of Flying Start to an additional 2,500 children across selected LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) in Wales. This target was reached in January 2023. By the end of March 2023, the target was exceeded, and data indicates around 3,170 children had been reached through Phase 1 provision, of which just over 770 had been offered a childcare place. The high-level priorities for Phase 1 of the expansion of Flying Start were addressing deprivation, increasing Welsh language provision, and addressing gaps in the availability of provision.

Phase 2 (Delivery from April 2023 – Ongoing)

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[2] Welsh Government (2021), *The Co-operation Agreement*.

[3] Welsh Government (2021), *Programme for government: update*.

[4] Prior to the expansion, 34,121 children had benefited from Flying Start services between April 2021 to March 2022.

2.4   Phase 2 expands the funded part-time, high-quality childcare for two to three-year-old children in eligible LSOAs not previously covered by core Flying Start or Phase 1. This constitutes a focused expansion of only the childcare component in contrast to the core Flying Start programme or the Phase 1 expansion with all four components. The Phase 2 expansion is guided by the high-level priority to maximise child development outcomes to support the best start in life, particularly for the most disadvantaged children through high-quality childcare. Furthermore, Phase 2 seeks to address inequality and alleviate deprivation impacts, support and strengthen Welsh medium provision, and address gaps in the availability of childcare services.

2.5   The aim is for Phase 2 to offer childcare places to around 9,500 children, delivered in two parts, Phase 2A and Phase 2B.[5] These are informed by similar guidance and funding formulas but with different timescales and targeting new areas across local authorities. By the end of February 2024, around 6,500 places had been offered to parents of two-year-olds in Wales which means that targets for 2023-24 have been exceeded. Just over 950 childcare places were taken up in a Welsh-medium setting.

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[5] Note that Phase 2A and 2B were jointly referred to publicly as Phase 2.

3. Evaluation methodology

Aims of the evaluation

3.1 A process evaluation of the phased expansion of Flying Start was conducted to achieve the following aims:

- Review the suitability and identify improvements to resources shared with local authorities.

- Review processes for local authority engagement with the Welsh Government.

- Understand the progress made with reaching additional children.

- Identify potential future challenges for continued expansion.

- Review the suitability of current data collection processes for monitoring, including providing suggestions for improvement.

Methodology

3.2 To achieve these aims, a mixed-methods approach to the process evaluation was chosen and implemented in four stages which are outlined below:

- **Scoping.** This stage involved mapping existing monitoring data shared by the Welsh Government and gaining access to relevant additional information. Based on the initial document review, a scoping discussion interview guide was developed to support interviews with Welsh Government policy officials. Findings from the scoping phase were fed directly into the design of research materials for later stages and to refine research priorities.

- **Desk-based review.** A comprehensive desk-based review was undertaken to understand the precise scope of the Flying Start expansion, as well as the objectives and outputs for each phase. Access was gained to key documentation and data, including the official guidance documents and data supplied to local authorities, statements and emails communicating decisions and expansion steps, as well as report cards with expansion data submitted by local authorities. These were subsequently reviewed, and findings were organised in a spreadsheet.

- **Stakeholder engagement.** In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with teams in charge of delivering the Flying Start expansion in all 22 local authorities, all four Welsh Government Flying Start Account Managers, as well as two Welsh Government officials with expertise in health visiting (one of whom had previously been interviewed in their capacity as Account Manager). During the interviews, the key processes involved in delivering both expansion phases were identified and evaluated. Particular attention was given to (i) successes and challenges in the delivery process, (ii) impacts of the expansion on stakeholders such as local authorities, childcare settings, and parents, (iii) examples of best practice, and (iv) recommendations for the future. It should be noted that while local authorities shared feedback they had received, no direct engagement was conducted with parents or childcare settings.

- **Analysis and reporting.** Finally, a thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted, which identified key themes within and across collected information. Findings from the analysis of documents and interviews with local authorities and Welsh Government officials were then used to compile a comprehensive final report. The findings from this evaluation will support the development of a set of conclusions and actionable recommendations for future programmes funded by the Welsh Government, delivered by local authorities, or seeking to promote children's development during early years more widely.

4. Delivery process

Progress to date

4.1 This section discusses the progress to date for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Flying Start expansion, drawing on the analysis of monitoring and interview data.

Phase 1

4.2 For Phase 1 of the Flying Start expansion, the target of 2,500 children was reached in January 2023, earlier than anticipated. In June 2023, the Deputy Minister for Social Services announced that Phase 1 of the expansion had been completed. Across Wales, an additional 3,178 children had benefited from Flying Start services, surpassing the Phase 1 target by 27 per cent (see Figure 1).

4.3 By March 2023, respective targets had been met in 20 out of 22 local authorities, with 18 authorities having exceeded their targets.[6] The two local authorities that had not yet reached their target were very close to achieving this number of children, with one local authority yet to add one additional child and the other yet to add six children. No substantial regional variations were observed, given that local authorities exceeded their targets across all Welsh regions.

Figure 1: Number of offers made in Phase 1
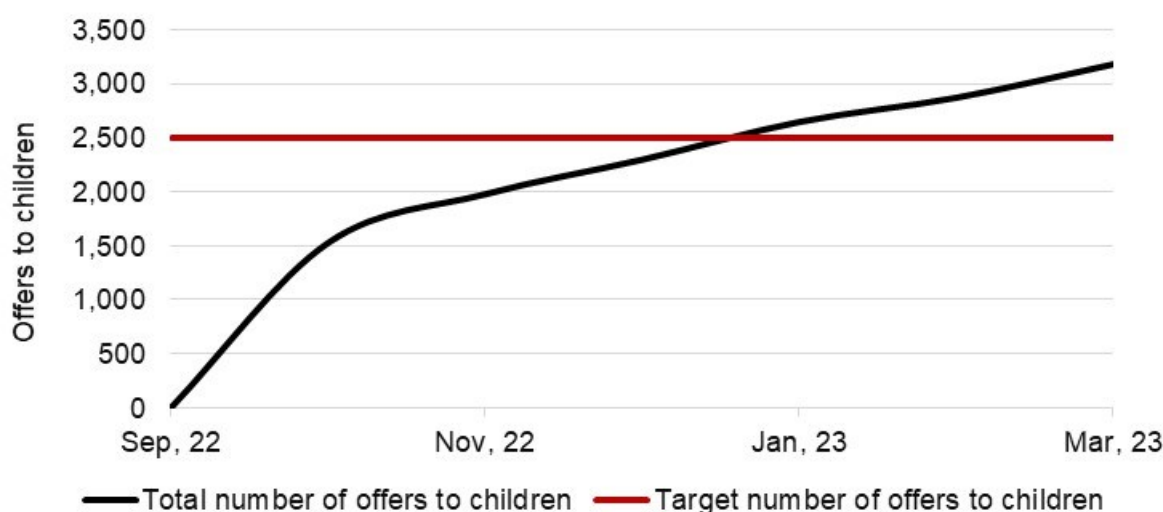
Note: Monitoring data provided by the Welsh Government, data available until March 2023 when reporting for local authorities having reached their targets was integrated into core Flying Start data collection.

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[6] Once targets were achieved, Phase 1 reporting was integrated into core Flying Start returns.

4.4 A large majority of local authority representatives voiced positive experiences with the progress made in Phase 1 of the Flying Start expansion, with some interviewees describing the rollout as 'seamless' alongside minor difficulties around the recruitment of health visitors mentioned. In sum, all local authorities were satisfied with the progress made in Phase 1 and the positive contribution this had made to eligible children and families.

Phase 2

4.5 Eligible children could access Flying Start childcare through Phase 2 of the expansion from April 2023 onwards. Rollout continues at the time of report writing across Wales. Ten local authorities were close to or had already exceeded their targeted number of children by November 2023, meanwhile other regions are progressing towards their targets. By November 2023, 85 per cent of the target number of offers had been made to an additional 4,195 children (up from 78 per cent since the end of October). By the end of February 2024, the target had been exceeded, and around 6,500 children had been made an offer (see Figure 2). The overall target for Phase 2 is for 9,500 children to receive an offer of Flying Start childcare by the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

4.6 The rollout of Phase 2 displayed a higher level of regional variation compared to Phase 1. Analysing data from up to February 2024 shows that the majority of local authorities are close to reaching their target or have surpassed their target already. Other local authorities reported experiencing delays in the expansion rollout.

Figure 2: Number of offers made in Phase 2
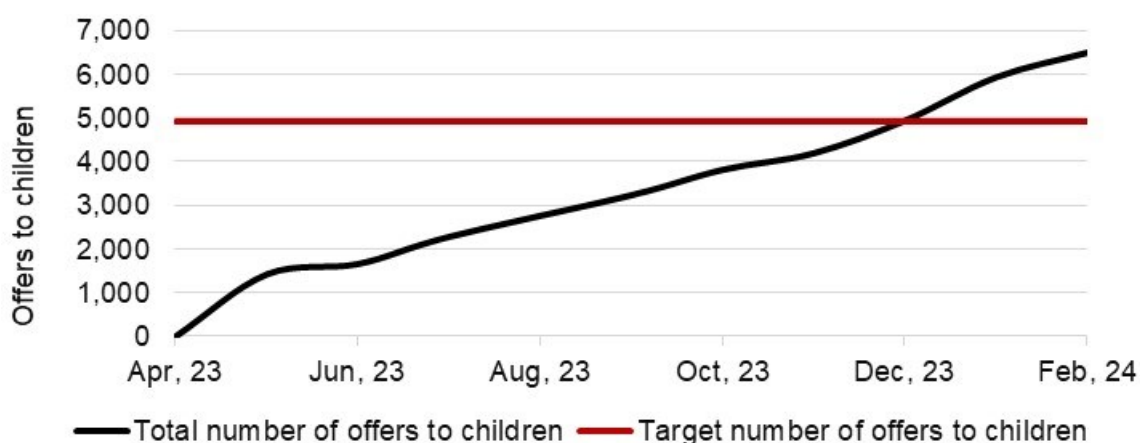
Note: Monitoring data provided by the Welsh Government, data available until the end of February 2024.

4.7   Local authority interviewees shared varying assessments of their Phase 2 progress. Most interviewees raised initial challenges with identifying children and establishing online registration tools. Where these challenges have since been overcome, local authorities have often reached their targets for Phase 2 already or were nearing completion. Other local authorities emphasised the challenges of moving towards a childcare-only model as part of Phase 2 and within a limited timescale. Interviewees often stressed the challenge of identifying and contacting eligible families without support from dedicated Flying Start health visitors or data-sharing agreements with health boards. Nonetheless, many of these local authorities emphasised that they were progressing quickly towards achieving their targets by the end of 2023.

Welsh-medium provision

4.8   Increasing the provision and take-up of Welsh-medium childcare is a key priority of both expansion phases. In Phase 1, around 117 Welsh-language childcare places were requested by families between September 2022 and March 2023, of which 111 were taken up. Local authorities indicated that this minor gap between places requested and places taken up may be due to a lack of nearby Welsh-medium childcare settings or families having moved to different LSOAs before being able to take up the places they originally requested. In Phase 2, just over 950 children had taken up places in Welsh-language childcare settings between April 2023 and February 2024.

Preparation and lead-in time

4.9   This section focuses on experiences with the time provided to local authorities to prepare for the phased expansions of Flying Start. Specifically, this includes findings from discussions with local authorities around the lead-in time provided to identify suitable expansion areas, draft delivery plans, bring childcare settings on board, and increase parents' awareness.

Phase 1

4.10   Local authorities received both the Phase 1 guidance and planning templates in April 2022, with an expectation that all four elements of Flying Start would begin to be expanded from September 2022 onwards. A large majority of interviewees felt that the lead-in time for Phase 1 was sufficient to identify suitable expansion areas

and discuss decisions with stakeholders, engage with childcare settings to encourage participation in the expansion and inform them of the Flying Start requirements, and to raise awareness of the programme's benefits among parents.

4.11   With further preparation time, local authorities thought this would have facilitated direct capital investments into the childcare sector's capacity in underserved areas. Relatedly, some local authorities called for a national long-term strategic plan for early years and childcare in Wales, seen as increasing the sector's confidence in investing in projects to expand the childcare sector (for example, via physical infrastructure and long-term workforce investment).

Phase 2

4.12   Templates for expansion plans and related funding for Phase 2A were shared with local authorities on 2 November 2022. The deadline to submit Phase 2A plans was the 13th of January 2023 and places were expected to be delivered from April 2023. On the 23rd of December 2022, local authorities were informed of an additional Phase 2B of the Flying Start expansion and subsequently asked to provide Phase 2B expansion plans. The deadline to submit Phase 2B expansion plans was the end of February 2023 (at times including internal approval processes within local authorities), with childcare places expected to be available from April 2023. In an e-mail announcing Phase 2B in December 2022, the Welsh Government appreciated that increasing the reach of Phase 2 further would be 'challenging, particularly given the pressures on the capacity of the sector and the timing of the announcement.'

4.13   All local authority representatives expressed that the preparation time for Phase 2 had been insufficient. Reasons mentioned included that the timescales did not account for internal procedural and democratic processes within local authorities, the challenges of moving to a childcare-only model without health visitor support, and the need to engage with more childcare settings to increase capacity. Welsh Government Account Managers identified future lessons around allowing for more planning time once the announcement is made, recognising limits on the Welsh Government policy teams who could not communicate expansion decisions before formal budget processes had been undertaken and high-level sign-off was achieved.

4.14   Local authorities emphasised that the information on Phase 2A and 2B should ideally have come at the same time or, alternatively, that an informal announcement to all local authorities ahead of time would have been helpful.

4.15   Some interviewees explained their separate approach to planning, highlighting that they would have chosen different expansion areas in Phase 1 had they known that Phase 2 would only offer funded, high-quality childcare. For example, one local authority expanded to a relatively remote LSOA in Phase 1, far from the health visitors and speech and language professionals, however, likely more suitable to the Phase 2 expansion. Overall, local authorities pursued different approaches to plan and deliver Phase 2A and 2B. Some regions amalgamated their expansion plans for Phase 2A and 2B into a single plan, while others reported having kept planning separate. Where plans were delivered jointly, this aimed to reduce the duplication of work and to facilitate joined-up thinking throughout the planning and delivery of Phase 2.

4.16   Many local authority interviewees expressed frustration with the time taken by the Welsh Government to approve expansion plans for Phase 2A and 2B. Until expansion plans were approved, and funding was communicated by the Welsh Government, local authorities could not commit significant resources to the childcare sector in expansion areas. According to interviewees and Welsh Government Account Managers, this hindered a proactive approach to recruiting additional staff, preparing and training settings, or investing in increased capacity. In local authorities with a lower number of Welsh-medium childcare settings, investment into building such capacity within existing childcare settings or establishing new settings was seen as vital.

Support from the Welsh Government

4.17   This section focuses on the support local authorities received from the Welsh Government when implementing the expansions of Flying Start. A particular focus is placed on local authority experiences with the guidance they received from the Welsh Government and support from Welsh Government Flying Start Account Managers.

General

4.18   Interviewees universally praised the support they received from Welsh Government Account Managers during both phases of the expansion, stating that Account Managers had a positive and understanding attitude. There are four Account Managers within the Welsh Government for Flying Start in Wales, each supporting between five and six local authorities and focusing on answering queries around the delivery of Flying Start, explaining and clarifying the guidance, escalating questions or concerns, and supporting their data collection efforts (for example by discussing or clarifying definitions for data returns).

4.19   While expressing appreciation for the support of Welsh Government Account Managers via online meetings, one local authority representative believed that face-to-face meetings between Flying Start leads in different local authorities would have been useful for sharing best practice and building closer relationships. Some local authorities also felt that, while Account Managers listened to concerns and clarified the guidance, they lacked the influence to drive changes or adjustments at the programme level. This was particularly emphasised in instances of local authorities and health boards being unable to share data, as well as the uncertainty over how unspent money allocated to the expansion could be used in future years instead.

Phase 1

4.20   Most interviewees felt that the guidance issued by the Welsh Government for Phase 1 was constructive and useful. Local authorities stated that it provided them with the flexibility to make the best decisions for their area and the reasoning behind decisions. This was particularly valuable for explaining to parents and childcare settings why certain decisions had been made, for example the choice of new LSOAs for the expansion of Flying Start services. Some interviewees felt that the guidance for Phase 1 could have been shared sooner.

Phase 2

4.21   The Phase 2 guidance again provided by the Welsh Government was described as similar to the Phase 1 guidance and received similar praise for its combination of sufficient detail to help authorities make and explain decisions to parents and settings and also providing sufficient flexibility to adapt delivery to their area. One

local authority Flying Start team advised that no part-time health visitors could be hired to assist in Phase 2, meanwhile other local authorities have reportedly taken this route. This indicates a need for further clarity in the Welsh Government guidance.

5. Delivery model

5.1 This section provides an overview of local authorities' approaches to delivering both expansion phases. This includes a discussion of the following topics:

- The process of selecting eligible LSOAs for the phased expansion;
- Feedback from families and childcare settings on the expansion rollout to date;
- The provision of childcare places through the medium of Welsh;
- Experiences with the collaboration with health boards;
- The alignment of Flying Start with adjacent policies in the sector;
- Funding of both expansion phases.

Throughout this section, Phase 1 and Phase 2 are often discussed jointly where findings apply to both phases unless indicated otherwise.

Area selection for expansion

5.2 Following Welsh Government guidance, local authorities selected additional Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) for each phase of the Flying Start expansion. This selection was undertaken by considering a range of datasets and local contexts.

General

5.3 All local authorities used the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) to identify a set of LSOAs with the greatest need for Flying Start services. However, a majority of local authorities stated that they felt this information was outdated. Instead, local authority Flying Start teams chose to supplement the WIMD data with other data available to the local authority, where required with approval from the Welsh Government. Examples mentioned included the number of children eligible for free school meals, the number of children with additional learning needs, the number of children eligible for school uniform grants, the number of referrals to social services, the number of households eligible for council tax reduction schemes, and local knowledge in form of reports from health visitors. Some local authority interviewees supplemented this data through in-person visits to LSOAs to ensure that data was up to date (e.g., checking for new housing developments). Such in-person visits also allowed local authority teams to investigate whether newly eligible LSOAs

formed a cohesive geographical area (e.g., without excluding parts of the otherwise eligible neighbourhood) to avoid dividing communities.

5.4   A limiting factor for area selections was identified where LSOAs lacked suitable childcare settings in a nearby accessible area. Local authorities explained that such LSOAs often had to be excluded from the expansion unless childcare was available within a reasonable walking distance ('pram push distance'), according to the Flying Start expansion guidance.

5.5   In contrast, Welsh Government Account Managers and local authorities also highlighted geographical areas where nearly all LSOAs were eligible already, given the levels of deprivation. This was seen as leading to higher coverage in certain local authorities, where almost all or all LSOAs were covered by Flying Start, facilitating the operation of childcare settings that could then provide places to the majority of children in the area.

Phase 1

5.6   Many local authorities used the opportunity of the Phase 1 expansion to ensure that families across a local community had equal access to Flying Start, despite an area likely consisting of several LSOAs. For example, where every LSOA except one had already been eligible for Flying Start, such remaining areas were prioritised under Phase 1. This supported local authorities to remedy parents' perceptions of unfairness and ensure cohesive communities. Interviewees also thought that expanding to clusters of additional LSOAs would mean that childcare settings would become or remain financially sustainable.

5.7   Offering a future outlook, local authorities drew attention to challenges around declining birth rates and demographic change when meeting targets, planning future expansions, or maintaining the sufficient number of children requiring childcare services. A number of local authorities reportedly already prepared further expansions into new LSOAs due to falling birth rates in currently eligible areas.

Phase 2

5.8   Similar to Phase 1, several local authorities utilised Phase 2 to expand childcare provision to LSOAs where neighbouring areas were already eligible under core Flying Start or Phase 1. However, where existing areas were eligible for all four

elements of Flying Start, difficulties were identified if newly eligible families were only receiving Flying Start childcare. Local authorities reported that some parents were confused over the two provision models under the same name and suggested there is a need to increase understanding of the holistic approach offered by Flying Start. Additionally, parts of the same community eligible for different types of support was seen as furthering parents' discontent, who often contacted local authorities to request explanations for the differences. This was identified as a concern by a majority of local authorities and resulted in frequent emails and phone calls from parents.

Access to services for eligible families

5.9 Enabling families most in need to access Flying Start services is critical to the programme's success. The following sections outline feedback and views shared by local authorities directly or reported by local authorities on behalf of parents.

General

5.10 Local authorities widely reported that a large majority of eligible parents were successfully offered access to Flying Start services for Phase 1 and Phase 2. This extended to a large majority reporting that they could successfully offer parents their preferred nearby settings and session time for the childcare element, as well as the requested language of provision and setting type (e.g., local authority setting, private setting, childminder).

5.11 While Phase 1 was widely described as successful in offering and enabling access for eligible families, local authorities often focused on specific observations of Phase 2 delivery instead. Local authorities pointed out a small number of unintended consequences either due to ongoing rollout efforts or constraints on local capacity. Interviewees stated that in rare cases, a lack of local childcare capacity meant that children were offered fewer sessions than their entitlement. However, this constituted allowing temporary exemptions of the guidance in specific areas only. Further barriers eligible families faced, as reported by local authorities, included parents' working hours not aligning with the sessional childcare of 2.5 hours for five days per week provided through Flying Start. Some local authorities offer temporary exemptions to these rules – such as allowing longer sessions less frequently, temporary exemptions from qualification requirements (e.g., managers working

towards Level 5 instead of having obtained Level 5) or increasing the distance families are expected to travel to childcare beyond a 15-minute walk.

5.12   To take up a funded childcare place through Flying Start while working full time, parents frequently used the possibility of paying for additional hours, given Flying Start only covers certain hours of each day's childcare. However, this was not possible for parents who either did not have the financial means to pay for top-up hours in Flying Start childcare settings or those living close to a purely sessional Flying Start setting. Local authorities explained that sessional childcare settings do not offer childcare during the full working day, which may motivate parents to seek flexible childcare elsewhere, forgoing the Flying Start place offer. Furthermore, local authorities explained that parents declined places when they would instead prefer to access a childcare setting in a neighbouring local authority, often in cases of living in border regions or where parents live and work in different areas.[7]

Phase 2

5.13   Under the core Flying Start and Phase 1 expansion, health visitors play a key role in informing parents that they are eligible for Flying Start, which was seen as having a positive impact on childcare take-up. In Phase 2, however, local authorities often reached out to families in eligible LSOAs through flyers or local public campaigns. Some local authority Flying Start teams were therefore concerned that the most vulnerable families (e.g., low income intersecting with additional health needs) may either be missed out or would remain reluctant to take up Flying Start childcare due to lacking personal contact. Flying Start teams with closer ties to the local health board or health visitors frequently utilised these closer personal ties to families to follow up repeatedly or seek clarifications for the low number of families declining offers. Data on reasons for declining offers was not available for all the declined offers, but some examples of the explanations of reasons for declining offers included childcare being provided by family members instead or preferring not to switch childcare settings at age two if the child was already in another non-Flying Start setting before becoming eligible.

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[7] It should be noted that cross-border arrangements are in place and have been discussed through a working group.

Outreach

5.14   The Outreach mechanism of the Flying Start expansion allows local authorities to provide services to certain families even if they are not residing in an eligible LSOA. Most local authorities stated that they receive individual referrals for families from professionals – usually health and social services professionals – and that these are subsequently reviewed by a multi-agency panel. Such Outreach places are usually reserved for exceptional circumstances and addressed through offering respective families all four core components. A small number of local authorities discussed using Outreach more broadly. For example, one local authority explained that they use Outreach to fill geographical gaps within communities where only some areas have become eligible for Flying Start.

5.15   One notable challenge was reported in cases where Outreach places had already been approved and a family had received all four components, only for their LSOA to become eligible for the Phase 2 expansion. According to some interviewees, this led to complaints from parents and a lack of understanding for the different provision models within the same or neighbouring postcodes.

Rural areas

5.16   Local authority interviewees from Flying Start teams expanding to rural LSOAs discussed facing particular challenges as a consequence of lower population density, fewer childcare setting options, and challenges attracting a skilled workforce. Interviewees stressed that they had to bring onboard a larger number of childcare settings into Flying Start, given the geographical distances between different eligible LSOAs which could not be served by the same setting. In addition, eligible families living far away from their nearest childcare setting could struggle to access childcare in a timely manner potentially leading to lower take-up in rural local authorities. Local authorities, therefore, pointed to concerns over the economic viability of existing or potential future rural childcare settings, which often faced a declining local population.

5.17   Some interviewees from rural local authorities suggested that Flying Start as a programme is better suited to urban areas and presents local authorities with challenges when expanding provision into more rural areas. Rural poverty, interviewees noted, is often hyper-local with one very deprived family surrounded by

less deprived households. While the Outreach mechanism could be used to include these children, in practice, some families may live so remotely that no nearby childcare settings will be available. One largely rural local authority proposed trialling in-house 'pop-up' childcare services in rural areas, which could deliver 2.5 hours of Flying Start services in different communities on the same day. Other local authorities emphasised the importance of increasing the number of childminders delivering Flying Start provision to cover a wider geographic area yet requiring a smaller number of children to ensure economic viability.

Impact of the Flying Start expansion on childcare settings

Quality of provision

5.18 To deliver high-quality childcare, Flying Start requires childcare settings to be led by a Level 5 qualified setting manager and practitioners working in childcare settings to be Level 3 qualified. A majority of local authority Flying Start teams shared their views that the expansion of Flying Start had, therefore, contributed positively to the quality of childcare provision within and across childcare settings (e.g., through higher qualification requirements for staff, and high standards of the setting's equipment and space). Some interviewees were under the impression that new childcare settings offered services of very high quality and needed little to no support from the start. In other newly onboarded childcare settings, local authorities explained that by joining Flying Start, these settings were now bound to higher quality expectations. Such higher quality standards were reportedly accompanied by increased oversight of how childcare settings were run generally, regardless of whether some places were offered to privately paying families or underfunding other than Flying Start. Therefore, interviewees recognised increased standards and oversight as a positive unintended consequence that could contribute positively to quality provision for every child in settings offering any Flying Start places (e.g., staff qualification levels).

5.19 Some local authority representatives mentioned that some childcare settings, having joined during the phased expansion, did not yet reach the required quality standards, especially with regard to Level 5 manager qualifications. Nevertheless, interviewees noted that most childcare settings are rapidly working towards meeting

targets with the support of Flying Start advisory teams or advisory teachers, and the sharing of best practice from other settings.

Training for childcare settings

5.20 Local authorities highlighted the specialised training they provided to childcare settings in order to assist these in reaching the higher quality standards required by Flying Start. In some local authorities, additional health training was provided to childcare settings to address the absence of direct involvement from health visitors and equip settings to detect additional learning or health needs. This involved information and support regarding diet, speech and language, and early childhood development. Additional training was also provided to childcare settings by some local authorities to tackle child developmental delays following the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.21 Local authorities explained that they delivered training at consistent intervals, either through personal contact with advisory teacher roles in the local authority who would visit childcare settings or via Microsoft Teams to make training accessible to all settings. These sessions were often recorded and made available to those who could not attend the session previously.

Procurement process for childcare settings

5.22 Most local authorities reported using a formalised competitive tender process to register childcare settings with Flying Start. It was explained that this process could be lengthy and complicated but was considered rigorous and suitable for ensuring high-quality standards. According to some local authorities, formalised tender processes were perceived as bureaucratic and slow by some childcare settings.

5.23 To address concerns and facilitate the onboarding of new childcare settings, some local authorities used innovative tendering processes to expand the childcare capacity for the Flying Start Phase 2 expansion. Varying by local authority, these processes include 'Expressions of Interest' and 'Dynamic Purchasing Systems'. Interviewees explained that through these systems, childcare settings could express interest in becoming a Flying Start-approved childcare setting and have their quality assessed by the local authority. Settings could therefore enter the supplier framework for Flying Start more easily and receive the required support to achieve

Flying Start quality standards. In the case of Swansea, all Flying Start childcare places had previously been delivered by the local authority in maintained settings such as schools. This approach was changed fundamentally upon the announcement of the Phase 2 expansion, leading to the adoption of a newly introduced procurement framework of private childcare settings intended to reach delivery targets.

5.24   Local authorities that have adopted these innovative tendering processes stated that these were enthusiastically welcomed by childcare settings, which resulted in the vast majority of childcare settings in their local authority becoming registered within their Flying Start frameworks.

5.25   Local authorities also outlined feedback from childcare settings that had chosen not to provide Flying Start places. Specific reasons cited included a lack of capacity (due to insufficient staff members or space), childcare settings' inability to meet quality requirements, rates paid by the local authority per child and per hour being seen as too low, and other perceptions of bureaucratic burdens on Flying Start childcare settings.

Recruitment of staff

5.26   A majority of local authorities stated that the recruitment of staff with sufficient qualification levels poses a severe challenge for the childcare sector, which also affected the rollout of the phased expansion of Flying Start, particularly Phase 2. Welsh-medium childcare settings were reported to be facing especially severe challenges to recruit sufficiently qualified Welsh-speaking staff. Interviewees suggested that low wages and a perceived lack of appreciation for childcare work were core reasons for staff leaving the sector or hesitation to join the workforce.

5.27   Local authorities welcomed the ambition of high-quality childcare through requiring highly qualified staff (Level 3 for practitioners and Level 5 for setting managers), but recognised that requirements at times needed to be temporarily relaxed in order to open or maintain settings.

5.28   In the short term, local authorities suggested that equivalent qualifications from other countries – including England and Scotland – should be swiftly recognised in Wales. In the longer term, local authorities called for ambitious and strategic

investment in the childcare workforce to improve retention, boost recruitment, and support staff qualifications across the sector.

Provision through the medium of Welsh

5.29   Given the different shares of the Welsh-speaking population by local authority, different starting points were recognised when encouraging the take-up of Welsh-medium services as an integral part of Flying Start. This section focuses on how local authorities integrated the promotion of Welsh-medium provision as a key part of local expansions. Phase 1 and Phase 2 are discussed jointly in the following section due to the similar approach followed throughout the expansion.

5.30   In Gwynedd and Ynys Môn, all Flying Start childcare settings are either Welsh-medium or bilingual settings. In these local authorities, the focus is placed on improving the consistency with which Welsh is spoken within childcare settings and increasing transparent reporting of the amount of Welsh spoken within settings. For example, Cyngor Ynys Môn have developed a rating system to indicate setting progress along their 'Taith Iaith' (Language Journey) to increase transparency and inform parental choice. This was furthermore reported to aid settings to attract staff who wish to improve their Welsh and progress along their Welsh-language journey. In other local authorities with a high proportion of Welsh speakers (e.g., Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Carmarthenshire), most childcare settings are classed as Welsh-medium or bilingual, but English-medium childcare settings still play a crucial role in Flying Start childcare provision. These local authorities reported their focus is on increasing the consistency with which Welsh is spoken within childcare settings, while also increasing the number of Welsh-medium and bilingual settings participating in Flying Start to meet growing demand. This growth in demand was identified as largely originating from the expansion into more Welsh-speaking areas as part of Phase 1 and Phase 2.

5.31   In one example, a local authority that had expanded Flying Start into mostly Welsh-speaking LSOAs was unable to provide sufficient Welsh-medium places to all families who requested them. According to the authority's Flying Start team, the reason for this was that Phase 2 expansion's limited timescale did not provide them with enough time to engage with and expand the capacity of Welsh-medium childcare providers in or near the expansion area. Respective interviewees reported

that their local authority works as hard as possible to adjust the number of places offered to meet demand.

5.32   Local authorities with a lower share of Welsh speakers in their population also explained their wide-ranging efforts to expand the provision of Welsh-medium Flying Start services. This included sharing examples of innovative measures taken to increase Welsh-medium provision:

- Most local authorities engage closely with Mudiad Meithrin[8] and local 'Ti a Fi' parent and baby groups.

- Many local authorities directly run Welsh-medium childcare settings. In one local authority with a low proportion of Welsh speakers, the council closed an English-medium childcare setting it was running and re-opened it as a Welsh-medium setting on the site of a Welsh-medium school. Some staff spoke Welsh already, and new staff have been hired or trained.

- Many local authorities who have moved to an 'expression of interest' approach to commissioning believe this has reduced real and perceived barriers to providers registering for Flying Start, including Welsh-medium providers. Specific benefits mentioned were a reduction in formal processes and bureaucracy, increasingly flexible timelines, and, at times, the ability to join and leave Flying Start provision to suit settings' needs (e.g., recruitment and retention of staff, demand for places). This was furthermore seen as positively impacting the registration of Welsh-medium childcare settings.

- Some local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) require all Welsh-medium primary schools to have an on-site childcare setting that is bilingual or Welsh-medium. Other examples mentioned included a pilot to eliminate rent costs for Welsh-medium or bilingual childcare settings on school sites.

- Some local authorities established formal partnerships with further education institutions to promote childcare courses and make the sector more attractive, especially to Welsh-speaking students.

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[8] (Mudiad Methrin) - voluntary organisation specialising in Welsh-medium early years education.

- Some local authorities have hired a dedicated member of their Flying Start team whose focus is to increase the quality and quantity of Welsh-speaking and bilingual childcare settings. These staff members share best practice, improve standards, and promote the benefits of becoming a Welsh-medium setting.

- Some local authorities are engaged in capital investment programmes to build new Welsh-medium childcare settings.

5.33 Beyond the innovative measures outlined above, interviewees highlighted wider factors to support increasing the provision of Welsh-medium childcare. These include introducing long-term plans to improve recruitment and retention of Welsh-speaking staff within the childcare sector, as well as dedicated funding to support Welsh-medium childcare settings in areas with lower demand. Furthermore, local authorities highlighted the need to increase the number of Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools to demonstrate to parents a clear future path for Welsh-language education.

5.34 In local authorities with lower demand for Welsh-medium provision, efforts are made to induce demand for Welsh-language childcare. For example, some local authorities promote Welsh-medium primary schools and childcare settings as the location for baby and toddler activities run by the local authority. Such activities are often bilingual or Welsh-medium, and thus promote the benefits of multilingualism and familiarise parents with the Welsh-medium childcare setting. The ambition is that this will mean that parents are more likely to choose Welsh-medium early years provision for their child. Local authorities indicated that they would welcome the Welsh Government sharing best practices on how to promote the Welsh language as part of Flying Start.

Collaboration with Health Boards

5.35 The collaboration between health boards and local authorities was identified as crucial for the successful rollout of the Flying Start expansion for both Phase 1 and Phase 2. This section discusses this partnership with a focus on Phase 2 where this relationship was seen as a critical determinant of delivery success.

Phase 1

5.36   As Phase 1 expanded all four elements of Flying Start, health visitors played a crucial role in informing eligible families of their entitlement to Flying Start and providing enhanced health support. However, in many local authorities, a shortage of health visitors was a challenge and at times delayed the rollout of the expansion. No challenges around data or information sharing were identified and relationships were generally described as 'positive' and 'mutually supportive'.

5.37   Welsh Government Account Managers furthermore emphasised positive working relationships during Phase 1, discussing a working group consisting of health representatives, the Welsh Government, and local authorities. This working group was seen as valuable for building positive networks and focusing on developing the health visitor workforce.

Phase 2

5.38   As Phase 2 only expanded the childcare element of Flying Start and notably did not include enhanced health visitor support, the traditional mechanism of health visitors informing parents of their eligibility for Flying Start and encouraging take-up was not as readily available to local authorities. Importantly, a majority of local authorities, particularly in the north of Wales, did not have any data-sharing agreements in place which would have allowed health boards to share the names, addresses, and other details of eligible children with the local authorities. Local authorities sought to address this challenge in three ways:

- Some health boards and local authorities agreed on a data-sharing protocol in the lead-up or during the implementation of Phase 2. Despite often taking significant time to negotiate, successful agreements were highlighted as a highly effective way for local authorities to receive the data needed to identify and contact eligible families. These are expected to continue applying as Flying Start services are delivered in the future.

- In other local authorities who could not receive data from health boards, the Flying Start team utilised their close professional connections with health visitors. In some cases, this included Flying Start managers formerly working in or leading the local authority's health visitor team, or senior health visitors

formerly working as Flying Start health visitors. Through closely established ties, health visitors were informed of the Phase 2 expansion areas and agreed to inform eligible parents of the funded part-time childcare being offered, primarily during routine visits but with some additional visits where necessary. Particularly strong examples of collaboration saw health visitors calling or making additional home visits and telephone calls to eligible families which had been informed of the scheme but had not yet taken up the offer. This ensured that vulnerable families were made fully aware of their eligibility and offered additional support if required.

- If data sharing with health boards or a close partnership with health visitors could not be achieved, local authorities often posted or hand-delivered letters to every household within the eligible LSOAs; however, they were unable to individually identify and contact parents who did not engage with the offer. Other local authorities relied on health boards to deliver targeted invitations to eligible families directly and without sharing the details of addresses with local authorities. However, in one example, local authority interviewees described a delay of over six months between the health board receiving the letters from the local authority Flying Start team and the first letters being delivered to eligible families. In other cases, local authorities relied more heavily on social media, community groups, posters, and other innovative advertising to raise awareness of the scheme without support from health colleagues. These usually directed parents to a 'postcode checker' to assess their eligibility for Flying Start.

5.39 The challenges of administering Phase 2 of Flying Start without direct involvement from health visitors or, in some cases, without data sharing from health boards was a topic raised by all local authorities. Interviewees suggested that in future expansions, the Welsh Government should directly support the relationship-building between health boards and local authorities. Another suggestion, though recognised as challenging to implement, was to instate an all-Wales data-sharing agreement for the purpose of Flying Start and related early years services if feasible.

Alignment with adjacent policies

5.40   When reflecting on families' needs and differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2 provision, local authority interviewees frequently discussed the way that Flying Start aligns with adjacent policies for early years development and childcare. Views were shared on behalf of the local authority on behalf of parents and childcare settings following their feedback.

5.41   From the perspective of local authorities, the degree to which the internal teams within early years policy are aligned or cooperate varies between local authorities. In some local authorities, those working on Flying Start are part of the same team and work in the same space as those working on adjacent policies such as Families First, the Childcare Offer for Wales, additional learning needs teams or health visitors. Interviewees suggested that this allows for close collaboration and joined-up strategic thinking between all teams and individuals. Other interviewees explained that their teams work separately from others working on early years policy and recognised the importance of avoiding duplication of services by Flying Start and Families First teams, as well as the value of sharing information swiftly and effectively. In addition, local authorities believe that Flying Start and the Childcare Offer's reporting procedures could be brought into closer alignment.

5.42   From the perspective of childcare settings, interviewees suggested that they received significantly higher levels of support and guidance from local authorities when delivering Flying Start than when delivering the Childcare Offer. Divergences were also noted between the different rates being paid per place for Flying Start by local authorities and for the Childcare Offer by the Welsh Government. Childcare settings furthermore provided the feedback that, in settings with limited capacity due to space or staff constraints, this meant that Flying Start competes for places in settings against other schemes, notably the Childcare Offer.

5.43   Based on feedback from parents, local authority interviewees suggested that the transition from Flying Start to the Childcare Offer once the child turns three years old can confuse parents, given different policy drivers and eligibility criteria. The points of confusion focused on the shorter childcare sessions of Flying Start, compared to full days offered by the Childcare Offer, and the lack of Flying Start provision outside of term time. Local authorities bordering England, stated that

some parents were unsure of the differences between the eligibility criteria and delivery model of Flying Start and the English childcare model, especially considering that an announcement to expand English childcare coincided with the rollout of Phase 2. In addition, interviewees raised the risk of some children being eligible for Flying Start but ineligible for the Childcare Offer or having to switch childcare setting when turning three years old in cases where Flying Start childcare settings do not offer the Childcare Offer, potentially causing a disruption for parents and children.

Funding

5.44 This section discusses the funding available to local authorities for the phased expansions of Flying Start. Interviewees discussed a range of considerations, such as ring-fencing, staffing costs, and anticipated future financial challenges, as well as views specific to Phase 1 and Phase 2.

General

5.45 Overall, local authorities emphasised that funding was largely sufficient and that funding constraints on the rollout of the expansion were minimal. Nevertheless, local authorities remarked that clarity around funding should have been established earlier. Furthermore, interviewees explained that had funding been announced and provided throughout a longer time period, this would have allowed local authorities to pursue more innovative strategies and drive long-term capital investment into existing and future childcare settings in areas with shortages of places.

5.46 Local authority Flying Start teams commented that they felt uncomfortable when planning strategically and in the long term, given the lack of assurance over future funding. For example, this uncertainty was seen as preventing local authorities from hiring additional staff or adding additional childcare places in case funding is reduced in the future. According to local authorities, this may also lead to staff layoffs and subsequent attempts to re-hire individuals in cases of gaps between funded phases.

5.47 Furthermore, local authorities expressed mixed views on the benefits or drawbacks of ring-fencing the Flying Start budget. A majority of local authorities welcomed ring-fencing, arguing that it helped to ensure that Flying Start budgets were spent

exclusively on Flying Start services, which provided greater certainty for programme delivery and, thus, the childcare sector and parents. However, a significant minority of local authorities argued that ring-fencing limited their ability to strategically invest in services and administrative capacity.

Phase 1

5.48   Local authority interviewees felt that the funding for the Phase 1 expansion of Flying Start was adequate. It was seen as suitable for funding the services and places required despite not allowing for a significant expansion of the childcare sector's capacity.

Phase 2

5.49   Reflecting on Phase 2, local authority interviewees also judged the funding provided for the second phase of the expansion as adequate, yet also highlighting some limitations. Interviewees outlined that the tight timescales of Phase 2A and 2B and the delayed approval of their expansion plans provided only limited time for local authorities to invest in the capacity of the childcare sector in expansion areas or to recruit additional administrative staff for local authorities. Such challenging timescales, in addition to cases of difficulty with accessing health board data on eligible families, meant that some local authorities were expected to be slower to reach their targets. Some interviewees explained that they expect a significant underspend of ring-fenced budgets for the Phase 2 expansion which would then be returned to the Welsh Government. Instead, local authorities felt that longer-term budgeting (e.g., through allocating funding in two-, three-, or four-year intervals) would allow for better outcomes and aid efficient planning, rather than seeking to spend budgets quickly and without an informed strategic vision.

5.50   One-off grants of up to £50,000 for local authorities were announced by the Welsh Government in May 2023 to help address any specific challenges faced by local authorities in delivering Phase 2. The deadline for the submission of bids was the 9th of June 2023. However, some local authorities stated that the approval from the Welsh Government or within their local authority for their plans to spend this money came into effect too late for their proposed plan, especially where the hiring of new staff was concerned.

6. Data collection and reporting

Experiences with data collection and returns

6.1 This section focuses on the experiences of local authorities with collecting, collating, and reporting monitoring data for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the expansion. Throughout both phases, local authorities were expected to report monitoring data to the Welsh Government on a monthly basis. Given the differences between both expansion phases, data requests differed as follows:

- In Phase 1, the data requested was the number of unique beneficiaries reached, the number of childcare places offered, and the number of Welsh-language childcare places requested and taken up. Local authorities were also expected to report on their confidence in achieving their targets, any service relaxations of requirements they had adopted (e.g., childcare setting manager working towards Level 5, childcare settings further than pram pushing distance from eligible families), and how they promoted the benefits of multilingualism. Once local authorities achieved their target for Phase 1, the data reporting was integrated into the core Flying Start reporting – collected once a term.

- In Phase 2, local authorities were expected to collect and submit monthly reports on the cumulative number of childcare places offered, the cumulative number of childcare places taken up that were provided through the medium of Welsh, local authorities' confidence in reaching the target number of children, and to complete open-text narrative fields on their progress, successes, and challenges.

6.2 Local authorities voiced an understanding of the reasons behind monthly data collection and why certain data indicators were being collected. In particular, they recognised the usefulness of this data for senior Welsh Government officials and ministers. However, a large majority of local authorities expressed their view that monthly data collection for Phase 2 was too frequent. The reasons behind this view were either because it placed too much strain on local authority administrative staff or because the childcare sector's timescales are better suited for collecting accurate data every term. Local authorities emphasised that staff welcomed the transition of Phase 1 data reporting into termly core reporting once the relevant targets were achieved.

6.3   Local authorities reported varying experiences with data collection depending on the flexibility and suitability of their data processing systems. Some Flying Start teams explained that their internal software and monitoring systems made the compiling of data and reports quick and simple, highlighting that they were able to change data formats or derive different output measures at short notice. Other local authorities outlined difficulties associated with outdated and inflexible data processing systems which required large amounts of manual data input and processing. Some interviewees reported efforts to modernise existing systems or set up new internal platforms, however, this was often associated with delays. Consequently, local authorities cautioned that more advance notice of future expansions and reporting requirements would allow them to invest in updating systems and train staff in using them.

6.4   Drawing attention to reporting on programmes adjacent to Flying Start, some local authorities raised concerns about overlapping data returns in different formats. Specific examples included the burden for childcare settings when collecting data on children with funded places through core Flying Start, Flying Start expansion phases, or the Childcare Offer. This led to increased workload for childcare settings and some local authorities.

Definition of offers and take-up in Phase 2

6.5   The childcare-only model delivered under Phase 2 required a new approach to data collection, where local authorities were required to report on the number of offers made to families and the number of childcare places taken up without input from health visitors. Local authorities welcomed being consulted by the Welsh Government on the suitability of respective offer and take-up definitions, stating that clarifications throughout the Phase 2 implementation were helpful.

An 'offer' of childcare was deemed to have been made under four circumstances:

- A generic health visitor, wider health team or local authority staff member informs a family that they are eligible for Flying Start childcare provision.

- Registrations or requests made by parents on online platforms after scanning QR codes or visiting local authority platforms independently to check their eligibility for Flying Start childcare.

36

- Families are made aware of their eligibility for Flying Start childcare provision in a targeted way within expansion areas through leafletting, postcards, texts, or phone calls.

- Local authorities running extensive public awareness campaigns of the extended reach of Flying Start, for example, through social media posts, information on local authority websites, community outreach events, as well as relying on word-of-mouth dissemination of information. Such local authorities counted offers as having reached 100 percent, assuming each family likely had access to necessary information.

A childcare place was deemed to have been 'taken up' under the following two circumstances:

- The offer of childcare was accepted by the family, regardless of whether the child subsequently attends childcare.

- Elsewhere, take-up was defined as any child who attended at least one session in a childcare setting following registration.

6.6   Across interviews with Flying Start teams in all Welsh local authorities, it was reported that different definitions were employed. When discussing offers for childcare places, local authorities frequently pointed out that the definition used for reporting depended on local relationships with health boards. Local authorities without access to health data and thus unaware of children's contact details most frequently relied on letters and leaflets or counting the number of completed registration forms. Among local authorities collaborating closely with health visitors, offers were either made directly during health visits and reported back to the local authority or by counting requests for childcare places.

6.7   Discussing the take-up measurement, the majority of local authority interviewees defined take-up as a child first attending a childcare setting. Remaining local authorities defined take-up as families accepting the offer of childcare, for example by registering through the online portal or directly with the childcare settings. Some local authorities furthermore reported having changed their approach to counting take-up during the Phase 2 delivery. Overall, a preference was expressed in favour of counting take-up once children had attended the childcare setting as this was

seen to increase accuracy and measure the intervention through Flying Start services having been received by families.

6.8 In consequence, comparing data returns across local authorities was described as 'difficult' and 'inconsistent' and respective definitions should be clearly accounted for when reporting the data.

Suggestions for future data collection

6.9 Local authority interviewees raised several suggestions for how to improve data collection and monitoring in the future:

- **Move to termly data reporting:** The vast majority of local authorities called for monitoring data to be reported to the Welsh Government every term rather than every month.

- **Increase consistency of categories:** Most local authorities called for more consistent and unified definitions of offers and take-up of childcare. There are currently a variety of definitions used by local authorities.

- **Establish a national data system:** Some local authorities voiced their views that the Welsh Government should provide an all-Wales data system for future expansions of Flying Start. Specifically, it was suggested that this should include a central postcode checker, a unified portal for requesting childcare places for parents, as well as a system for local authorities to record data. For example, local authorities suggested this could be based on the Dewis Cymru system used by childcare settings for the Childcare Offer.

- **Increase the granularity of data returns:** Several local authorities explained that they collected additional indicators to returns required by the Welsh Government. More detailed and consistent data collection across Wales would also be facilitated through longer lead-in times for future expansion phases. This would enable local authorities to update their data processing systems before commencing rollout.

- **Provide frequent feedback:** Some local authorities requested more feedback on their reported figures and reassurance that input data and format are correct.

7. Successes

7.1 Interviewees were asked to identify successes in their local authority's delivery of the phased expansion of Flying Start. These have been categorised by successes either relevant to both phases of the expansion of Flying Start, only relevant to Phase 1, or relevant to Phase 2.

General

7.2 All local authority interviewees expressed pride in the difference that their work, the childcare sector, and the Welsh Government have made in the lives of children and families by expanding Flying Start services into new geographic areas. Interviewees most frequently described the positive feedback they had received from families and childcare settings as key indicators of their success.

Phase 1

7.3 For many local authorities, the key achievement was exceeding their target number of children receiving Flying Start services through the expansion. Twenty of 22 local authorities in Wales reported having reached their target by the end of March 2023, including 18 exceeding their targets. Across Wales, the target was exceeded by 27 per cent.

7.4 In addition to achieving or exceeding their targets, some local authorities highlighted their newly developed or updated data systems established to facilitate the first phase of the expansion. These were often designed to increase efficiency for higher caseloads and to separate Phase 1 reporting from core Flying Start while required. Other local authorities highlighted their successful efforts in encouraging new childcare settings to participate in Flying Start, with a particular emphasis on the successes of Welsh-medium childcare settings participating in the scheme.

Phase 2

7.5 Local authorities and Welsh Government Account Managers alike emphasised their achievement of delivering thousands more Flying Start childcare places across Wales. To adapt to the rapid expansion of childcare provision through Phase 2, a number of local authorities successfully introduced new processes and tools. The following have been identified as particular successes:

- **Innovative communication platforms:** One local authority's Flying Start team established individual Microsoft Teams channels with each registered childcare setting providing Flying Start childcare. These include spaces dedicated to planning, attendance, financials, and data entry. The advantages of this system include relevant colleagues being able to access all necessary information in one place, easier transitions to new local authority colleagues, more efficient communication with childcare settings, and increasingly structured conversations using the designated channels for different topics.

- **Digitising application and payment processes:** Most local authorities have built new online application forms and postcode checkers for parents to use when applying for Flying Start. Many have also adopted new payment mechanisms, simplifying the systems used to pay childcare settings. In many local authorities, this process is automated and has therefore reduced the amount of manual data entry required from local authority staff members. Such new digital systems can and should continue to be used in future expansions.

- **Simplified applications for childcare settings:** Many local authorities simplified their processes when procuring and approving childcare settings to offer Flying Start places. This was described as marking a move from complex and lengthy procurement systems to more streamlined expressions of interest or dynamic procurement systems. While childcare settings still need to demonstrate that they meet Flying Start standards, the streamlined approach reduces barriers to entering provisions, which had previously prevented some childcare settings from joining. In a small number of local authorities, this meant that all childcare settings in the local authority are now registered as approved Flying Start childcare settings, giving parents optimal choice and flexibility when choosing a setting or requesting a Flying Start place in a setting the child already attends.

- **Increased engagement with childcare settings:** A majority of Flying Start delivery teams successfully increased their engagement with new and existing childcare settings. This has resulted in more private childcare settings expressing interest in joining Flying Start and conveying feedback that the guidance and visits from the local authority were seen as supportive.

8. Challenges

8.1 Interviewees were also asked to discuss any challenges they faced when delivering the expansion of Flying Start. The following section first discusses the challenges applicable to both phases, before highlighting challenges specific to each phase of the expansion.

General

8.2 When asked to describe challenges with planning and delivering the expansions of Flying Start, some local authorities discussed challenges resulting from the geographically targeted model, leading to frequent questions and criticism from parents of ineligible families or childcare settings outside Flying Start areas. Local authorities explained that this manifested through phone calls from dissatisfied parents, particularly where only some parts of a neighbourhood were eligible. This challenge has been tackled by local authorities in different ways, for example, by employing outreach officers dedicated to liaising with families and childcare settings to relieve Flying Start delivery teams. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the universal needs-based delivery system for Flying Start was identified as solving the challenges of the geographically targeted model.

8.3 Local authorities also raised further points of relevance to both phases of the expansion, such as:

- **Recruitment and retention of qualified childcare staff:** Many local authorities highlighted the lack of staff working in the childcare sector, stating that pay and conditions in the sector should be a strategic focus of the Welsh Government in order to increase staff recruitment and retention. In addition, many local authority interviewees suggested that there is a lack of sufficiently qualified staff at the necessary Level 3 practitioner and Level 5 manager qualifications to meet Flying Start standards. Challenges were also reported with recognising qualifications from England or Scotland.

- **Lacking childcare capacity in deprived areas:** Local authorities recognised the challenge of expanding Flying Start to the most deprived areas not yet included in Flying Start, given the frequent lack of additional childcare capacity. Local authorities attempted to resolve this with small

capital grants to increase capacity within existing childcare settings. This was identified as a particular concern in rural areas with few incentives for private providers to open additional childcare settings, given a lack of long-term revenue and funding assurances. Overall, interviewees explained that in areas with a severe lack of childcare capacity, significant time and financial resources will be required to build new childcare settings either as part of future expansions, or before planning towards expanding universal high-quality childcare to all two-year-olds.

- **Covid-19 affecting child development:** Some interviewees discussed how childcare settings are experiencing challenges caring for children whose development has been adversely affected by Covid-19. Childcare settings reported to local authorities that additional learning needs are often recognised only once the child enters childcare. Across a number of local authorities, efforts are currently being undertaken to offer additional training to childcare settings, improve communication between settings and health visitors, or link families to other support services (e.g., through Families First).

- **Concerns over unsuitable delivery model:** Some interviewees highlighted that a number of private childcare providers believe that sessional Flying Start provision (2.5 hours a day, 39 weeks a year) constituted an unsustainable business model for their childcare setting. Settings had reported that they could only remain economically viable by generating additional revenue from privately paying parents or charging for top-up hours for Flying Start children.

- **Insufficient clarity on cross-border working:** Local authorities expressed confusion regarding the processes for cross-border working between different local authorities, for example, where parents lived close to the local authority border or lived in a different area from their workplace. Some local authorities bordering England also expressed confusion about the collaboration with English childcare settings, which was seen as creating uncertainty for local authorities and parents.

- **Outdated local data processing systems:** Some local authority Flying Start and Early Years teams reported issues resulting from outdated digital and data systems. This often resulted in the employment of additional administrative staff to input registrations, process data, and manually produce offer letters to parents in both phases of the expansion.

- **Burden of monthly data reports:** A majority of local authorities emphasised the burden of reporting data separately on Phase 1 and Phase 2 every month to the Welsh Government as a key challenge they faced when delivering the phased expansion. It was felt that monthly reporting did not align with the termly nature of childcare setting intake, and that narrative reporting elements only changed marginally in such a short period of time. Welsh Government Account Managers furthermore explained that resources necessary for data reporting were more readily available in larger local authorities. Meanwhile, the same staff members were often in charge of multiple workstreams within smaller local authorities.

Phase 1

8.4   Local authorities and Welsh Government Account Managers raised a limited range of challenges specific to health visitors when delivering Phase 1:

- **Health visitor recruitment and retention:** A range of interviewees raised concerns over shortages of health visitors across multiple local authorities in Wales, at times causing delays to the delivery of Phase 1. The reasons were identified in low recruitment and many professionals leaving the sector generally, as well as health visiting often being a highly female and ageing workforce, increasingly working part-time or leaving the sector. Further reasons for recruitment challenges were mentioned where several local authorities competed over the same workforce members in border areas between local authorities.

- **Caseload of health visitors:** Another key challenge specific to core Flying Start as well as the Phase 1 expansion was identified in the overall high caseloads of health visitors, placing pressure on the workforce. Interviews identified unintended consequences in the recruitment of specific Flying Start health visitors as opposed to generic health visitors. The latter was reported to carry

even higher caseloads, leading to perceptions of a 'two-tier health visitor service'.

- **Funding allocation through local authorities:** A small number of interviewees explained that Flying Start funding was distributed locally through the respective local authority. Nevertheless, given the overarching nature of health boards spanning multiple local authorities and their higher-level strategic planning, it was noted that funding for health visitors managed by local authorities rather than health boards may have caused tensions.

Phase 2

8.5 Local authorities and Welsh Government officials emphasised the following challenges in delivering Phase 2:

- **Lack of data sharing:** A large number of local authorities experienced challenges accessing the names and addresses of eligible children during Phase 2. Frequently, this meant that families could not be contacted directly, and the local authority instead sent out generic letters or postcards to all households within an expansion area and organised community outreach events or social media campaigns to make parents aware of Flying Start services available to them. As a consequence, several local authorities and Welsh Government Account Managers expressed concerns that eligible children who would have benefited from the intervention had been missed.

- **Short timelines:** When discussing challenges, a large number of local authorities restated difficulties with meeting the short timelines between the Welsh Government granting approval of Phase 2 expansion plans, particularly Phase 2B, and children expected to enter childcare settings.

- **Uncertainty over future funding:** Insufficient certainty over the long-term funding for Flying Start limited the willingness to invest in increasing the capacity of childcare settings or to build new settings. For example, one local authority had sufficient resources and capacity to fund additional childcare places in the current year and the possibility to exceed their targets. However, given feelings of uncertainty over funding for coming years, it was decided not to proceed.

9. Lessons learnt and future recommendations

Lessons for local authorities to apply locally

9.1 Lessons learnt were identified from policy documentation, monitoring data analysis, as well as interviews with local authorities, Welsh Government Account Managers, and other Welsh Government officials. The following section focuses on lessons for local authorities to implement locally and to support implementation within their respective area:

- **Prepare early:** Some local authorities are already preparing for potential future expansions, for example by considering the deprivation levels of additional LSOAs, reaching out to new childcare settings to come on board and offering training to them, as well as recruiting for internal posts to increase capacity across Early Years teams and Additional Needs teams.

- **Invest in data processing systems:** Many local authorities concluded that their data processing systems are unsuited to the greater number of eligible children and increased complexity following the expansion. Local authorities instead suggested modernising their data processing systems or introducing a unified Wales-wide system which should also include postcode checkers and online registration portals for parents would be better suited.

- **Strengthen relationships with health services:** Local authorities explained that in case of obstacles to data sharing with health boards, maintaining close local collaboration with health visitors is key. Examples included local authorities where health visitors distributed postcards or helped families with sign-up for childcare places as part of Phase 2. Relationships could be further strengthened through frequent communication, involving health visitors in planning and regular meetings, or as in some cases, establishing working groups with local authority representatives, health visitors, and childcare settings.

- **Consider employing Liaison Officers:** Some local authorities employ Flying Start 'Transition Officers' or 'Childcare Liaison Officers'. These positions play a crucial role when visiting families' homes, signposting families to wider

resources, or supporting childcare settings with meeting qualification requirements or completing data reporting.

- **Communicate flexibly with parents:** Some local authorities emphasised the importance of flexibly communicating with parents. This includes including 'Frequently Asked Questions' sections on local Flying Start websites, providing offer letters and application forms in multiple languages, as well as working directly with parents to promote the scheme in cases of initial reluctance to take-up.

Recommendations for Welsh Government to apply nationally

9.2   Wider recommendations for action by the Welsh Government with relevance for Flying Start expansions across Wales include the following insights:

- **Develop a longer-term strategic vision for Flying Start:** Interviewees emphasised the importance of developing and communicating a detailed and long-term vision for Flying Start. This could provide certainty for childcare settings and parents and allow local authorities to plan in advance and maximise the use of budgets. One example suggested by local authorities was setting a target date for when Flying Start would become universal. This would support the sector and local authorities in planning for the years ahead.

- **Promote multi-agency integration:** Local authorities and Welsh Government Account Managers suggested a greater role for the Welsh Government in bringing health boards and local authorities together to encourage data sharing. This was seen as particularly relevant in areas with currently little direct local collaboration. Given the strategic priority of the Flying Start expansion in the Programme for Government, promoting increased multi-agency integration of health services, local authorities, and other social services was considered crucial.

- **Ensure sufficient preparation time and efficient approval of delivery plans**: Many local authorities faced delays in receiving approval for their Phase 2 expansion plans from the Welsh Government or their respective local authority. When combined with the short lead-in times for local authorities to prepare delivery plans, both factors imposed challenges to procuring additional places,

informing parents and providing them with sufficient time to complete registration and prepare data reporting systems within local authorities. It was therefore recommended that longer lead-in times are necessary between announcements from the Welsh Government and delivery plans being required from local authorities. If this was not possible due to political timelines, it was instead recommended that the delivery of services should commence later, thus allowing for buffer times between delivery plan approval and rollout to account for possible delays.

- **Promote the use of innovative procurement methods:** Some local authorities using Dynamic Purchasing Systems and Expressions of Interest, rather than more traditional procurement systems, stated that the Welsh Government should promote and share the lessons learnt from these systems across Wales. This carries the potential of increasing the number of participating childcare settings, facilitates flexible expansions, and provides flexibility to settings.

- **Conduct an impact evaluation:** The phased expansion of Flying Start should be evaluated through an impact evaluation, ideally a longitudinal study that tracks a cohort of children throughout their childcare journey. It should compare the results of children who are eligible for Flying Start and similar children who are not eligible. Some local authorities are already gathering performance and outcome data internally to aid them in identifying which approaches and types of support yield substantive impacts.

10. Conclusion

10.1 This report presented the findings from the process evaluation into the phased expansion of Flying Start. The research was undertaken through a scoping phase, an in-depth document review, and extensive stakeholder engagement with Welsh Government officials and all Welsh local authority Flying Start teams. The main objective of the research consisted in identifying (i) successes and challenges in the delivery process, (ii) impacts of the expansion on stakeholders such as local authorities, childcare settings, and parents, (iii) examples of best practice, and (iv) recommendations for the future.

10.2 The expansion delivery process of Phase 1 was found to be a smooth process and collaboration from the Welsh Government was emphasised as supportive throughout. Discussing Phase 2, local authorities widely agreed that delivery to date was successful; however, stating that a longer lead-in time between the announcement of the expansion funding and deadlines for delivery plans would have helped to involve more childcare settings, inform parents earlier, and adjust internal capacity.

10.3 The delivery model of Phase 1 followed similar processes across local authorities, however, approaches diverged more widely during Phase 2. This included decision-making on issues such as area selection, outreach, motivating childcare settings to join Flying Start, and the collaboration with health boards with regards to data sharing. Further differences were noted around the provision of childcare through the medium of Welsh despite being widely seen as successful in increasing Welsh medium childcare places.

10.4 Local authorities, as well as Welsh Government officials, identified key successes in the overall number of children benefitting from the rollout of the expansion services, as well as exceeding targets across a number of local authorities for both Phase 1 and 2. The development of novel registration platforms and data systems were highlighted as further core successes, unlocking lasting future benefits for local authorities until reaching respective local authority targets for Phase 2 and in case of future expansions. A third area of success was the number of additional childcare settings coming on board for Flying Start, often encouraged through simplified procurement processes and ample support from local authorities.

10.5   Nevertheless, throughout the process evaluation, a number of challenges were further raised by stakeholders. The evaluation identified major concerns around the recruitment and retention of qualified childcare staff, particularly the Welsh-speaking workforce, as well as health visitors. This was seen as limiting childcare capacity in deprived areas, slowing down the expansion. An additional challenge discussed was the lack of data sharing between health boards and a number of local authorities, described as delaying the identification of eligible children and their contact details. This was successfully overcome in some areas where data-sharing agreements were achieved, or close collaboration between the local authority and health visitors supported successful contact with families.

10.6   In conclusion, the process evaluation recommends longer preparation timelines to allow local authorities to engage with childcare settings, expand local capacity, and adjust internal data systems to upcoming reporting requirements. Moreover, a uniform and standardised approach to monitoring data collection was recommended, following the same definitions across Wales to improve clarity and allow the comparison of data across local authorities for both offers and take-up. Less frequent data collection yet at higher granularity was also highlighted as important throughout the stakeholder engagement. This could support a future impact evaluation of the programme, allowing to substantiate the impact of different programme components on early years child development. Finally, local authorities emphasised the importance of developing and communicating a clear long-term vision of Flying Start at the national level, thus ensuring certainty for local authorities, childcare settings, and families.

Annex A: Welsh Government Account Manager discussion guide

Warm-up

- To get started, could you describe in just a few words your role and your day-to-day activities as Account Manager throughout the Flying Start expansion?

  Prompt: Which local authorities are within your remit?

  Prompt: How did your responsibilities differ during the expansion compared to the flagship programme (if applicable)?

Progress to date

- Were you involved in the preparation and planning of the expansion? If yes, could you tell us about the process that led into starting the implementation of Phase 1 and 2?

  Prompt: How did early goal setting work? Who was involved?

  Prompt: Were there differences across local authorities in their level of preparedness for the expansion?

- To what extent did the expansion achieve its objectives to date?

- Who were the core team members involved and what was your experience with communicating with Welsh Government colleagues on the one side and local authorities on the other?

  Prompt: Were LAs satisfied with the communication flow and frequency during the planning and implementation of the expansion?

- To what extent did support needs differ between local authorities?

- What was local authorities' experience with the funding obtained for the expansion phases?

Data

- What was your role as account manager in the data collection and reporting?

- Could you tell us how data has been gathered on progress of the expansion?

- Would you say the monitoring and target data collected have captured LAs' progress accurately?

Prompt: Do you think there is another way to measure success and/or progress?

Prompt: Is there any way in which data collection or monitoring could be improved?

- What feedback have you received from LAs on the amount of data and effort required collecting such data during the expansion?

Prompt: Were there any other aspects of data collection which LAs asked questions about or expressed a preference for change?

- We are aware of two ways of measuring take-up of childcare places for Phase 2. Have you received any feedback about this approach or recommendation for future definitions?

- Are there any other variables or indicators collected which could be interpreted in different ways or could benefit from adjustments in the future?

Overarching questions

- What successes were achieved in the expansion delivery to date?

Prompt: What has worked well during the implementation?

Prompt: Did the work follow the originally proposed work plan across local authorities?

Prompt: Did any key objectives or strategies change?

- What were the main challenges that you/LAs encountered during delivery to date?

Prompt: How did you approach challenges once identified?

Prompt: Do you anticipate any upcoming challenges until the completion of Phase 2?

- Could you share any lessons learnt with us?

Prompt: Could the programme design and delivery to date have been improved in any way?

Prompt: Should planning or delivery priorities have been set differently in any way?

- Are there any specific local authorities or case studies that you think can illustrate the success and/or lessons learnt particularly well?

Debrief

- Are there any other issues that you would like to discuss that we have not asked you about?

Annex B: Local authority discussion guide

Warm-up

- To get started, could you describe in just a few words your role and your day-to-day activities in the Flying Start expansion in your local authority?

  Prompt: How did your responsibilities differ during the expansion compared to the flagship programme (if applicable)?

  Prompt: Were you involved in Phases 1 and 2? If so, how did your responsibilities differ between both phases?

Progress to date

- To what extent has the expansion achieved its objectives to date in your local authority? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

- Were you involved in the preparation and planning of the expansion? If yes, how would you describe your local authority's preparedness at the start of the expansion? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: Local authorities were involved in the development of the guidance through Flying Start coordinator national meetings. Did this forum provide you with sufficient opportunity to provide feedback and engage in the process?

- Did you feel supported by the Welsh Government and Account Managers throughout the expansion process? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: What was your experience communicating with the Welsh Government throughout the expansion to date?

  Prompt: Were the resources and guidance provided by the Welsh Government sufficient?

  Prompt: Would you have needed any additional support resource? If so, what kind of support?

- What was your experience with the funding obtained for the expansion phases? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

- What was your experience with increasing Welsh-medium provision (number of places and settings) through the Flying Start expansion in your local authority? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: Were there any particular successes or challenges when delivering Welsh-language places in your local authority as part of the Flying Start expansion?

  Prompt: How do you measure Welsh-language place offered and taken up under Phase 2?

  Prompt: Do you have any other feedback on how Welsh-language provision could be improved as part of the Flying Start expansion?

Data

- What was your experience with the data that you were charged with collecting and reporting to the Welsh Government? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: Were you able to consistently collect and provide this data?

  Prompt: How confident were you in the quality of the data reported to the Welsh Government?

  Prompt: Did the time and volume of data collection feel appropriate?

  Prompt: Did you encounter any other challenges when gathering and reporting this data?

  Prompt: What was your experience with data being reported <u>to you</u> during Phase 1, e.g., from NHS health visitor colleagues?

  Prompt: Did you gather any additional data which was not required for monitoring purposes by the Welsh Government?

- We are aware of different ways of measuring take-up of childcare places for Phase 2. How have you approached the measurement of take-up? And why have you approached it in this way?

- How did you measure offers made to children and families within your local authority for Phase 2? Why was this the approach you took?

- Would you say the monitoring data collected has captured your LA's progress accurately?

  Prompt: Are there any variables or indicators collected which could benefit from adjustments?

  Prompt: Are there any variables which should no longer be collected?

  Prompt: Are there any indicators that would be informative but are not currently captured within the data collection?

- Is there any way in which data collection or monitoring could be improved?

Overarching questions

- What successes were achieved in the expansion delivery in your local authority to date? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: What has worked well during the implementation?

  Prompt: Did the work follow the originally proposed work plan in your local authority?

  Prompt: Did any key objectives or strategies change?

- What were the main challenges that you encountered during delivery to date? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: How did you approach challenges once identified?

  Prompt: Do you anticipate any upcoming challenges until the completion of Phase 2?

  Prompt: Were there any bottlenecks in the implementation on the ground (e.g., not reaching enough eligible families or workforce shortages?)

- Could you share any lessons learnt with us? Please distinguish between Phase 1 and 2.

  Prompt: Could the programme delivery to date have been improved in any way?

  Prompt: Should planning or delivery priorities have been set differently in any way?

Debrief

- Are there any other issues that you would like to discuss that we have not asked you about?

Annex C: Overview of stakeholder engagement

Type of stakeholder	Role
Welsh Government	Flying Start Account Manager
Welsh Government	Flying Start Account Manager
Welsh Government	Flying Start Account Manager
Welsh Government	Flying Start Account Manager
Welsh Government	Quality & Nursing directorate
Welsh Government	Communities & Tackling Poverty – Early Years
Local authority	Anglesey
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent
Local authority	Bridgend
Local authority	Caerphilly
Local authority	Cardiff
Local authority	Carmarthenshire
Local authority	Ceredigion
Local authority	Conwy
Local authority	Denbighshire
Local authority	Flintshire
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil
Local authority	Monmouthshire
Local authority	Gwynedd
Local authority	Newport
Local authority	Pembrokeshire
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot
Local authority	Powys
Local authority	Swansea
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Local authority	Torfaen
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan
Local authority	Wrexham