



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Children & Education (DCS)
DATE:	Thursday 7 th March 2024

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Children, Young People and Education
WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: Wrap Around Childcare Programme

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To advise on Blackburn with Darwen's delivery plan for the National Wrap Around Childcare Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Notes the content of the report in relation to the Government's National Wrap Around Childcare Programme
- Approves the delivery plan and use of associated funding for Blackburn with Darwen's Wrap Around Childcare Programme

3. BACKGROUND

Wraparound childcare is childcare that 'wraps around' the conventional school day. It can also refer to provision in the school holidays. This provision can be offered by schools and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers (including childminders and early years settings) and can be run on a school site or at another setting in the area. It should not require parents to pick their children up from school and drop them off at another location.

Many schools already offer enrichment and extra-curricular activities before and after the school day. Whilst we would support and encourage schools to continue to deliver these activities themselves or in partnership, in many cases they will not currently be delivered in a way which meets the definition of wraparound childcare. The principal aim of the Wrap Around Childcare programme is to ensure childcare provision is regular, has longer hours and is more dependable for working parents.

Local authorities are responsible for delivering on the primary objective of the wraparound programme in their local area. That is, to increase parent/carer access to the labour market by increasing the number of wraparound childcare places for primary-aged children available and taken up between 8am and 6pm (or equivalent, depending on local labour market patterns). Local Authorities are tasked with using the funding available to them to create additional places and ensure existing places are available for the hours that are required, to:

- meet current demand – both in terms of number of places and hours available;
- ensure supply to build further demand; and
- where required, as traditional models of wraparound may not support sustainable provision, test new approaches to identify what works in their local area and identify the level of risk.

Each Local Authority has been allocated a capital and revenue resource to deliver this programme commencing September 2024. Funding allocations include:

Capacity funding: Funding for local authorities to use to build their internal capacity to deliver the programme, based on a maximum of 11% of the total revenue funding. This could include paying for a designated wraparound lead if one does not already exist.

Programme funding: Funding for local authorities to deliver programme objectives, including to distribute to providers to set up new provision or expand existing provision.

Capital funding: Funding for local authorities to support new/extended wraparound provision.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The national wraparound childcare programme is part of the childcare reforms announced at the 2023 Spring Budget. The ambition is that by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm, so that parents can access employment and improve labour market participation.

The Government’s vision for delivery of the programme is:

- Local authority-led provision - building on the local authority’s existing duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare in their local area, they will lead the strategy and delivery of the programme locally.
- School-centred - with provision delivered by a variety of childcare providers. Schools are uniquely placed to understand their communities and families. It is expected that the majority of parents will access childcare either through provision on a school site, or through the school signposting them to alternative local provision, for example PVIs and childminders. This approach reflects the diversity of delivery models for wraparound childcare and the need for coherence for parents.

The programme is to be delivered by Local Authorities and will be part of the existing statutory sufficiency duty. The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to **“make sure that there are enough childcare places within its locality for working parents or for parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children)”**. This programme’s specific focus is on children in reception to year 6 which fits within this age range.

There is funding for local authorities to build their internal capacity (‘local authority capacity funding’), but the majority of the funding will be for local authorities to work with providers to set up new provision or expand existing provision (‘programme funding’). The initial funding will ensure that local areas can increase the supply of wraparound places. Over time, it is expected that there will be an increase in the take-up of wraparound provision as parents are assured of the availability of places.

Schools are central to the delivery of the programme as they operate at the heart of the community, understand the needs of local families, and are usually the first port of call for parents for wraparound childcare. Wraparound provision should be set up around the needs of schools, given that it takes place directly before or after school hours, and should recognise the circumstances of each school. It is expected that the majority of parents will access childcare either through provision on a school site (either provided directly by the school or by an external provider), or through the school signposting them to alternative local provision, for example PVIs and childminders. Whilst schools are integral to

this programme, not all schools will provide wraparound childcare directly. For example, in some cases it may not be financially viable. However, all schools are expected to work collaboratively with their local authorities to ensure parents are, at a minimum, signposted to appropriate provision. This could be on or off school site (provided parents are not required to pick their children up from school and drop them off at another location or vice versa).

Local authorities may choose to deliver the additional places through working with local childminders, hubs/clusters, community-based provision, or adopt another delivery model, as well as more traditional schools-based models, whether run by schools directly or by PVI providers.

Blackburn with Darwen have undertaken an initial scoping exercise/consultation which informs:

- the provision for breakfast clubs across the vast majority of the borough is sufficient to meet demand, apart from provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- whilst breakfast provision (before school) seems more plentiful, provision delivered on a school site and by schools is not always self-financing with some costs at some schools being met through the schools' budget.
- provision for after school wrap around childcare is less available, with the majority of provision that is offered up until 6pm being delivered by Ofsted registered private out of School Clubs and/or Ofsted registered childminders. Similar to breakfast clubs, provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities is minimal.

A more detailed survey/consultation is currently underway across the boroughs' primary schools to ascertain each school's position on delivering out of school childcare either directly, in partnership with a third-party provider and/or as a collaborative with other schools/providers in a local area. This will be followed by a consultation with families to assess demand.

Blackburn with Darwen's Delivery Plan

Schools will be asked to submit expressions of interest in delivering Wrap Around Provision (before school provision, after school provision or both), and/or expanding on existing provision. Expressions of interest will be in the form of an application and will require schools to provide a robust business plan that evidences the financial support (capital and/or revenue) that they require to set up and establish a business that as a minimum is cost neutral and sustainable.

Expressions of interest must evidence how each provision will operate, if the provision will be directly delivered or delivered on behalf of the school or cluster of schools by a third-party provider. If a school's proposed plan is to deliver Wrap Around Services for a cluster of local schools, the plan will need to evidence how the criteria set out in Government guidance will be met, in that, it should not require parents to pick their children up from school and drop them off at another location. In addition, if a third-party provider will be delivering the provision from a school site, schools will need to evidence what lease/licence arrangements are to be put in place alongside responsibilities for insurances.

Expressions of interest will be considered by a panel of professionals from across Education, Finance and Growth to determine validity of proposed business plans and approve bids that meet the set criteria for funding; that being:

- Applicants must be rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, and/or awaiting their first Ofsted inspection.
- Evidence of demand for Wrap Around Provision within the locality
- Capacity/space to deliver a Wrap Around Provision
- Finance plans that evidence longer term sustainability.
- Ability to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Invitations for expressions of interest in delivering Wrap Around Provision will be communicated to Schools by the end of March. Information will also be sent to third party childcare providers (including childminders) currently operating across Blackburn with Darwen to advise of the proposed

programme and to ascertain if any providers would be interested in working with a school or cluster of schools to support Wrap Around Childcare delivery. The Local Authority will maintain a register of interested third party providers to share with schools should this be the schools' preferred delivery model.

Schools will be required to submit expressions of interest before the summer half term break with decisions regarding funding allocations to be made by mid-June 2024.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Future Childcare Sufficiency Assessments will include the supply, take up and demand for Wrap Around Childcare.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Programme delivery funding of £1,400,352; allocated as follows:

- 23/24 - £15,292
- 24/25 - £943,478
- 25/26 (provisional) - £441,582

The programme funding aims to remove barriers to setting up new provision or expanding current provision, including removing the financial risk of setting up new provision when demand is not guaranteed. It is based on a 'pump prime' model, whereby relatively small amounts of government funds are provided to spur growth.

Capacity Funding is based on Local Authorities retaining a maximum of 11% of the Programme Delivery Fund (**£154,038**) to build capacity to deliver the programme. It is intended that this funding will be used primarily to increase staff capacity on a fixed term basis to deliver the programme alongside an allocation to support communications.

Capital Funding totals **£335,264** and is for use to deliver both the Wrap Around Pathfinder Programme and the Early Years Expanded Entitlement Programme where a capital project is required to deliver an increase in supply/provision. Capital grants will be for the purpose of smaller scale adaptations not for larger scale extensions or new builds.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Implementing this programme will assist the Local Authority to fulfil its legal duties under the Childcare Act 2006, with regard to ensuring a sufficiency of childcare is available within the borough. This funding from the Government is subject to conditions (purpose of funding, delivery timescales, clawback if not spent etc) with which the Local Authority must comply. Therefore, grant funding (capital and revenue) will be allocated by a panel of professionals from Education, Finance and Growth, assessing expression of interests submitted by prospective providers and any funding awarded will be detailed in grant funding agreements/contracts that explicitly detail funding amounts, purpose of funding, intended outcomes, performance indicators, timescale for delivery and the provision for clawback. Legal input/support will be obtained as necessary in relation to these contracts.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capacity funding will be used to support an increase in the staffing establishment in the Schools System Support Team to enable the Wrap around childcare programme to be led, managed and delivered within the required timeframe.

There will be a need to allocate some funding (capacity funding) circa £10k to support communications.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

An initial scoping exercise in the form of a consultation with schools has taken place and a further detailed survey/consultation is currently underway.

Prospective providers will be required to submit evidence of consultation to prove demand as part of the proposed Expression of Interest process for funding applications.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Carol Grimshaw – Head of Service, Schools System Support
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DATE:	14 February 2024
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	
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