

# Early Implementer

Swindon

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# Why Swindon?

- ▶ Swindon submitted a bid based on delivering Flexible Childcare delivered outside of the 'core' hours of 7.30am-6pm. This was accepted by the Department for Education (DfE) as they were looking for innovative schemes.

## Why Flexibility?

- ▶ Swindon has some large car manufacturing plants including Honda and BMW
- ▶ The Great Western Hospital has A&E, 24 hour urgent care and multiple outreach services it employs 4000+ staff.
- ▶ The Headquarters of Zurich, Nationwide, The Science and Technology Facilities Council, The National Trust and WH Smith's are all in Swindon.

# The Basics

- ▶ Our pilot includes 415 children across the borough, these include children who are already 3 and 4 and some who will turn 3 during this pilot year. This is just under 10% of all 3 and 4 year olds in Swindon.
- ▶ Each eligible child is entitled to up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year or 21.9 hours per week on a stretched offer for settings open all year round. The total hours available per child per year is 1140.
- ▶ The hours can be split between 3 settings.
- ▶ Eligibility Criteria was set locally but had to follow some national criteria.

# Setting Local Criteria

- ▶ The LA consulted Providers via our Funding group, this group represents the whole range of providers in Swindon. We felt it was important that the 415 children were a representative sample from across the borough, the LA said this was too time consuming and carried the risk of 'hand picking' children.
- ▶ The LA opted to approach several large companies and organisations whose staff work on a shift pattern, this way they were given details of employees who worked shifts and had young children which was a good fit for their flexibility bid.
- ▶ They followed the National Criteria of parents who earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours at NMW and no more than £100,000 a year. In 2 parent households both parents must be working, single parents must be working to qualify.

# The Process

- ▶ Parents were made aware of the pilot by their Employers, Settings and the Local and National Media, this is an ongoing.
- ▶ Parents complete a very simple Application Form and return it to the LA who check their eligibility and then let parents know they are eligible. This information is taking sometime to get to providers which is frustrating for us and for parents.
- ▶ The LA offer to help parents who aren't currently using settings to find places but have found that the children are mainly already in settings accessing 15 hours and for the most part those settings have been able to accommodate extra hours, for those that couldn't the parents have chosen to split hours between settings or have moved the children to settings that could deliver 30 hours

# The DfE Requirements

- ▶ The LA has to feed back information to the DfE based on:
- ▶ The impact on families, has it enabled them to increase their working hours / has it caused a reduction in hours or has it made no difference other than a reduction in childcare costs?
- ▶ The impact on Employers; have the companies found that being able to offer employees 30 hours childcare helped with staff retention, recruitment, changes to working patterns (increased flexibility/ increased working hours?)
- ▶ This information wont be fed back until 2017 as they need time to gather it.

# The Story so far....

- ▶ The LA and Providers put in a joint rejection of the initial hourly rate which was to be the current £4 per hour for the first 15 hours and then £4.41 per hour for the second 15 hours.
- ▶ The rate was set at £4.41 per hour for the whole 30 hours
- ▶ Hours are being taken over a range of providers, including Childminders, PVI's, Maintained Settings, Opportunity group, Term time only and Full Day Care settings
- ▶ 8 Children with SEND who are eligible for SENRAP funding are accessing up to 30 hours a week. The LA are currently funding this additional funding themselves.

# The Providers View □

- ▶ ‘This is a good thing for area, we will have a head start when the scheme is rolled out Nationally and we get a chance to influence the full roll out through our feedback’.
- ▶ ‘Our occupancy has increased because parents are taking the additional hours every week so we have fewer children but the same number of sessions sold’.
- ▶ ‘This gives us more time with some children get to know them better and to complete EYFS observations and assessments’.
- ▶ ‘Why shouldn’t hard working parents get more help? My fees are £4.25 an hour so I’m happy, they’re happy and the children are happy, I think it’s great’.

# The Providers View :/

- ▶ Initial concerns around the hourly rate, for most providers in Swindon £4 does not match their hourly rate, so they were pleased with the 41p per hour uplift, however the fact that they have now lost the ability to sell the additional 15 hours at their normal hourly rate may mean an overall loss for providers charging any more than £4.41 per hour.
- ▶ Concerns from providers who can't open for 30 hours per week, they are worried that they won't attract new children or that they will only attract children who don't qualify for 30 hours but still qualify for 15 hours so will need to have more children on roll to remain viable.
- ▶ Concerns that we won't know which families are eligible for 15 and which are eligible for 30 hours until the time comes and the parents eligibility is checked. Do we hold 30 hours and risk that they won't be eligible or only hold the hours the children are booked for and risk losing them if they are entitled to 30 hours and we can't accommodate them?

# The Providers View □

- ▶ ‘This is an artificial pilot, we have been told the hourly rate next year will go down, but not what it will go down to, how are we supposed to work out if we can make it work when we don’t know the rate?’
- ▶ ‘It’s too late (that we found out children were eligible) is it going to be like this next year when a child suddenly turns up and has met the criteria, we wont know how many places to save/sell’
- ▶ ‘I’m not opening on a Saturday, my staff work hard all week and deserve their family time at the weekend, no one is thinking about our staff in any of this’

# The Providers View □

- ▶ ‘I’m really worried, I can’t afford to have parents having 30 hours a week in term times at the rate paid then not coming in the holidays at all, my overheads stay the same every month and I can’t stay afford to reduce so much in the holidays’
- ▶ ‘In theory a parent could come for 20 hours a week every week of the year and not pay a penny, I can’t support that for every child if they all decide they want that’.
- ▶ ‘I’m reluctant to open longer hours (evenings and weekends) as I would need 2 staff teams, its hard enough finding good staff at the moment, let alone needing 2 separate teams’

# What's next for Swindon?

- ▶ The LA has identified several settings who are willing to open on Saturdays, they are currently working on a social media campaign to advertise Saturday childcare but will not expect any settings to open until demand is identified and it is financially viable for settings to open.
- ▶ The LA believe that it will take a while for parents to get their heads around the concept of settings being open on Saturdays so they don't expect an immediate take up. Currently a few childminders open on Saturdays.
- ▶ The LA will continue to support providers to consider extended opening hours, from 7am -7pm (up to 6am to 8pm)

# Protecting Our Businesses

- ▶ **With uncertainty about the funding rates for next year, settings are looking at ways to remain viable, whilst working within The Code of Practice**
- ▶ Some settings apply charges for additional services such as the provision of food/ sundries and extra curricular activities. Think about things that you already provide that are over and above the EYFS 'musts', can you charge for any of those? Look at York's model.
- ▶ Some settings limit the hours which can be taken as funded hours, for example offering the funding from 9-12 and 1-4 and charging fees for 8-9, 12-1 and 4-6 offering that parents can collect at 12 and drop off at 1 therefore paying for additional hours is a choice rather than a condition of access.

# Protecting Our Businesses

- ▶ Some settings are looking to limit the amount of fully funded places they offer, there is no minimum amount imposed by the LA.
- ▶ Some settings will not offer stretched funding, they will offer up to 30 hours in term times and charge in full for holiday weeks
- ▶ Some settings will only offer stretched funding and will charge for any hours over the 21.9 per week (over 51 weeks)
- ▶ Some settings will offer that parents can access the hours in any way they wish to but most are now looking at some loss of flexibility.

# The Code of Practice

**Understand the Code of Practice – this is ONLY Statutory Guidance for the delivery of funded Early Years Education.**

The LA should:

Ensure that if providers charge for any goods or services, this is not a condition of children accessing their place.

Encourage providers to offer flexible packages of Early Education; No session to be longer than 10 hours. No funded hours to be taken before 7.00am or after 7.00pm .

Some LA's put restrictive clauses in their provider agreements, if it's not in the Code of Practice, challenge it!

# The Code of Practice

As a minimum, ensure that parents are able to access their child's Early Education place in the following patterns; 5 hours per day over 3 days of the week or 3 hours per day over 5 days of the week

Enable parents to take up their child's Early Education place in patterns of hours that "stretch" their child's entitlement by taking fewer hours a week over more weeks of the year, where there is provider capacity and sufficient parental demand.

Enable children to take up a place at a provider which does not open for 38 weeks a year or for 15 hours a week where this suits parents' needs.

# Key Messages from Providers

- ▶ Know your local market, Who are your customers? What are their childcare needs? How can you meet those needs and remain viable? **YOU KNOW YOUR SETTING BEST!**
- ▶ Understand The Code of Practice and understand your LA's agreements, challenge your LA if they are placing restrictive conditions on settings, remember 'Local Authorities should not intervene in providers' private businesses outside of a child's early education place' Department for Education (2014, p.5)
- ▶ Work together, if you can't offer a space a local provider may be able to, they may refer children to you too, Childminders are very important to the success of this policy.
- ▶ Look at your staffing model, if you increase the amount of children attending term time only, can you employ some term time only staff? **IF THIS WORKS FOR YOUR SETTING!**

# Key Messages from Providers

- ▶ Be confident in what you can offer, if that is not what a parents needs, don't feel you have to change your offer – trying to be all things to all people rarely ends well!
- ▶ Remember that every child is entitled to 15 or 30 hours funded Childcare/Education per week, but they are not all entitled to it at your setting!!
- ▶ These are our businesses, we should not feel pressured or guilty about the way in which we choose to operate them, as long as we are acting inside of the Code of Practice and are crystal clear about what parents are getting free and what they are choosing to pay for, there is no one'right' way.

# Final Thought

- ▶ The Early Years is a very resilient sector, we live through seemingly constant changes in legislation, regulation, the EYFS, the list goes on. We are on the whole a demand led sector and we are responsive to our customers needs. We know our customers and our individual settings best. Do what is right for your setting ◻