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# Qualitative study of beliefs, behaviours and barriers affecting parental decisions regarding childcare and early education

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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# Qualitative study of beliefs, behaviours and barriers affecting parental decisions regarding childcare and early education

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
ALN	Additional Learning Needs. Children have additional educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for additional educational provision to be made for them.
Childcare Offer (the Offer)	30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of three- and four-year-olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year.
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales – the independent regulator of social care and childcare in Wales.
CWLWM	Childcare Wales Learning and Working Mutually – a consortium of the five main childcare organisations in Wales. Cwlwm organisations are Early Years Wales, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs, Mudiad Meithrin, National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru) and PACEY Cymru.
Cylch Meithrin	A Cylch Meithrin is a Welsh-medium playgroup (plural: Cylchoedd Meithrin).
Flying Start	Welsh Government programme providing support in Wales’ most deprived communities for children (0-3 years) and their families. The childcare element of Flying Start applies to children aged two to three years of age.
FIS	Family Information Services - the point of contact for advice and information on local services for families and carers, which provides information on childcare.
Foundation Phase	The statutory curriculum for all three to seven year olds in Wales.
FPN	Foundation Phase Nursery – part-time education (a minimum of 10 hours a week) of funded early education

	for three- and four-year-olds during school term time, from the term following a child's third birthday. Sometimes referred to as early education entitlement and funded early education.
FPN1	Foundation Phase Nursery 1 - the pre-nursery cohort of rising threes.
FPN2	Foundation Phase Nursery 2 - the nursery cohort of rising fours.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation (2018)
Maintained provider	A local authority funded nursery; they can be standalone nursery schools or attached to a primary or infant school.
Mentrau Iaith	Mentrau iaith are community-based organisations that work to raise the profile of the Welsh language in a specific area and to work with individuals, organisations, and local business to promote the use of Welsh in its area.
Non-maintained provider	A childcare setting operated by a private, voluntary, or independent childcare provider.
PACEY	Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years
PaCE	Parents, Childcare and Education is a Welsh Government funded project that provides childcare support for parents whilst training or looking for work
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy
SNAP	SNAP Cymru provides information, advice and support for parents, children and young people who have, or may have, special educational needs or disabilities

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Welsh Government commissioned IAITH to undertake qualitative research to explore the beliefs, behaviours and other barriers that affect parents' decision not to take up their entitlement to funded childcare and early education. This work is part of a wider research programme to inform childcare policy for three to four year olds.
- 1.2 This report presents the findings from ethnographically informed qualitative encounters and interviews conducted in collaboration with parents from 53 families with a three or four year old child, across nine local authority areas in Wales.

### **Research aims and objectives**

- 1.3 The aim of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of why some eligible parents/carers choose not to take up the Offer, or elements of the Offer.
- 1.4 This research was designed to capture beliefs and behaviours of those parents and carers regarding childcare and early education and how these impacted on the non-uptake of provision. The study also sought to gather evidence regarding other perceived barriers and obstacles experienced by those parents and carers who would otherwise have wanted to access the Offer.
- 1.5 Given the small scale of this study, and the limited amount of time spent with families, findings provide an insight only. They indicate areas for further exploration.

## Report Structure

1.6 The structure of this report is as follows:

- **Background** – this section presents contextual information about the Offer and early education delivery across Wales.
- **Methodology** – this section sets out the aims and objectives, and outlines the methodological approach adopted for this study. It reflects on the study limitations, challenges and adaptations made to the research approach.
- **Findings** – this section presents the findings based upon our analysis of the qualitative data collected in collaboration with 54 families and one Gypsy and Traveller Community Support Officer (G&TCSO).
- **Conclusions** – this section provides an overview of the study's principle findings and conclusions.
- **Recommendations** – this section presents the recommendations for policy based on the research findings.

## 2. Background

2.1 This section gives an overview of the contextual landscape for this study. It provides detailed information about government funded childcare and early education for three and four year olds in Wales.

### The Childcare Offer for Wales

2.2 The Welsh Government provides 30 hours of government-funded **early education** and **childcare** for three and four year old children of eligible working parents for up to 48 weeks of the year. The primary policy aims of the Offer are to:

- enable more parents particularly mothers to return to work
- increase the disposable income of those in work and help counteract poverty for those in low-paid jobs
- encourage child development and school readiness. (Welsh Government, 2018a:7).

2.3 The Offer also addresses Welsh Government's commitment to 'expand Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point for Welsh-medium education' (Welsh Government, 2017a:36).

2.4 During school term-time, the Offer combines the universal education offer of a minimum of 10 hours Foundation Phase Nursery (FPN) per week to which all three and four year olds are entitled with up to 20 hours of additional childcare for eligible families. During the nine weeks of school holidays, eligible three and four year old children can receive up to 30 hours of government-funded childcare.

2.5 To be eligible for the Offer, both parents (or the lone parent in a single parent family) need to be able to provide evidence through their earnings that they work a weekly minimum equivalent of 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW), national living wage (NLW) or apprenticeship minimum wage (AMW) and earn less than £100,000 per year. There are some exceptions to eligibility. These include where a parent is temporarily

away from the workplace on statutory sick, parental, maternity, paternity or adoption leave or where one parent in a two-parent family is in receipt of specific benefits that relate to disability or caring responsibilities.

### **How does the Offer provision vary across Wales?**

2.6 The hours of funded FPN provision available to three and four year old children in each local authority varies. In some cases, FPN provision also varies between FPN providers within the same local authority (Glyn et. al., 2019). Consequently, the number of childcare hours available to make up the 30 hours of the Offer during term time also varies across and within local authorities (Ibid.). There is also variation in the type of provision available. In Swansea, for example, FPN provision is only offered through maintained settings while in other areas, FPN is delivered in a mixture of maintained and non-maintained settings. Table 1 presents an overview of the Childcare Offer provision within the local authorities included in this study.

**Table 1: Overview of Childcare Offer provision available in the local authority areas included in this study<sup>1</sup>**

Blaenau Gwent	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council provides 12.5 hours of FPN education provision for three and four year old children and 12.5 hours of provision for education, meaning that during term time, eligible parents can access an additional 17.5 or 20 hours of childcare. The delivery model favours schools. Two non-maintained settings deliver FP1 and two non-maintained settings deliver FP2.
Cardiff	Cardiff Council schools provide all three and four year old children with 12.5 hours of FPN education, meaning that during term time, eligible parents can access an additional 17.5 hours of childcare. The delivery model favours schools. There are 21 non-maintained settings providing FPN1 and 21 settings delivering FPN2.
Ceredigion	Ceredigion County Council provides 10 hours of FPN1 to three and four year old children in both schools and non-maintained settings. During term time, the number of childcare hours is therefore 20 hours for three and four year olds. There are 21 non-maintained settings providing FPN1 and 21 settings delivering FPN2.
Conwy	Conwy County Borough Council provides 10 hours FPN to all three and four year old children and up to 20 additional hours of childcare per child during term time. Virtually all FPN1 is provided in the authority's 46 non-maintained settings. All FPN2 is delivered in schools.
Carmarthenshire	Carmarthenshire County Council provides 10 hours of FPN1 to three year old children in a mixture of schools and non-maintained settings and provides 10 hours of FPN2 for four year old children, in schools, meaning that during term time, eligible parents can access an additional 20 hours of childcare. There are 31 non-maintained settings providing FPN1.
Denbighshire	Denbighshire County Council provides 10 hours of FPN1 to three year old children in mainly non-maintained settings. There were 39 non-maintained settings in 2020. All four year olds are eligible for 12.5 hours FPN2 provision. All FPN2 is delivered in schools.
Neath Port Talbot	Neath Port Talbot Council provides three and four year old children with 12.5 hours of FPN education, meaning that during term time, eligible parents can access an additional 17.5 hours of childcare. All

<sup>1</sup> The data contained in Table 1. presents the figures for July 2020, provided by local authorities to Welsh Government.

	FPN1 and FPN2 provision is delivered in schools. No FPN provision is delivered in non-maintained settings.
Newport	Newport City Council provides three and four year old children with 12.5 hours of FPN education, meaning that during term time, eligible parents can access an additional 17.5 hours of childcare. FPN1 and FPN2 provision is delivered in a mixture of schools and non-maintained settings. There were 20 non-maintained settings delivering FPN1 and 25 settings delivering FPN2 in 2020.
Swansea	Swansea Council funds schools to deliver 10 hours per week FPN to three and four year old children. All FPN1 and FPN2 provision is delivered in schools in 2020. A child that receives 10 hours of part time nursery education in a school will receive 20 hours of funded childcare.

### Understanding take-up

- 2.7 Some parents in Wales choose not to take up universal FPN or the funded childcare element of the Offer, despite their eligibility. Take-up of FPN reported in the Pupil Level Annual School Census is high (89% and 98% of 3 and 4 year olds respectively)<sup>2</sup>. In many local authorities, at least some of the FPN provision is available in non-maintained settings (private nurseries, playgroups etc.) where, anecdotally, take-up is reported to be lower in comparison with school take-up figures (Welsh Government, 2018b:3). According to Welsh Government, anecdotal evidence from local authorities suggests that lack of FPN take-up may be linked to the delivery model and, possibly, other reasons including a lack of awareness of the benefits of early education (Ibid., 2018b:3).
- 2.8 Take-up of the Offer during its early implementation, when the Offer was only available in some areas of Wales, was lower than anticipated. Welsh Government Childcare Offer Management Information indicated that around half the estimated eligible parents were taking up the Offer. There has been relatively little recent research into the factors that influence why

<sup>2</sup> [StatsWales: Pupil Level Annual School Census.](#)

some parents do not take up formal childcare provision. One recent example was a review of the childcare sector in Wales (Welsh Government, 2019)<sup>3</sup> which refers to a study by (Paull and Xu, 2015). The study found the overall impact on poverty reduction and the participation of mothers in the workforce was expected to be minimal. It was also suggested that a more significant shift in income was required to make it worthwhile for mothers to work as other factors have more of an impact (e.g. the value placed on caring for children directly, other children that still require care). Evidence from some less recent studies, for example, a study of working parents living in urban areas in the UK, has shown that informal childcare arrangements with other family members may be preferred for reasons of trust, having shared views about how children should be raised, and creating strengthened family bonds as the result of grandparents' involvement in child rearing (Wheelock and Jones, 2002). Previous research in Australia indicated that some parents may be hesitant to take up early childcare and education because they had concerns about the amount of one-to-one interaction and support their children receive in a formal childcare or educational setting (Evans and Kelly, 2002).

- 2.9 A comparative study across several European Union countries illustrated how the challenges involved in simultaneously navigating childcare and the labour market affect parental decision-making (McLean et. al., 2017). Research conducted in the United States found that parents' own experiences of early schooling and cultural norms informed their beliefs about when children are ready to start education and could influence parents' decisions regarding their own children (Taylor et. al., 2004). Other research in the UK also showed that the high costs of childcare presented a barrier for some families (The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016). Furthermore, families living in rural areas could also be disadvantaged by

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<sup>3</sup> [Review of the Childcare Sector in Wales](#)

a lack of transport, distance and having less access to childcare services (De Marco, 2008).

- 2.10 Insights into parental decisions regarding childcare and FPN education from previous research on early language socialisation in Wales have shown that language can influence parents and carers' decisions about early education and childcare and that accessing these through the medium of Welsh can be important (Welsh Government, 2019; Morris & Jones, 2008).

### 3. Methodology

3.1 This section sets out the research questions set out by the Welsh Government in the specification for the research, and outlines the methodology taken. A number of challenges resulted in modifications being made to our approach, which are explained below.

#### Research questions

3.2 The research questions this study sought to explore in detail were:

- What are the influencing factors in determining why some parents/carers who are eligible for the Childcare Offer<sup>4</sup> choose not to take it up?
- What are the influencing factors in determining why some parents/carers choose not to take their child to FPN?
- Do parents/carers know how to apply for the Childcare Offer<sup>5</sup>?
- Do parents/carers understand how to apply for the FPN?
- How do parents/carers decide which services and/or entitlement(s) they engage with? How did they find out about these services? And what influences these decisions?
- What socio demographic and cultural influences have a bearing on parents/carers choosing not to access early education and childcare?
- Aside from practical implications, what perceptions / preconceived ideas do parents/carers have of early education and care, and do these expectations create reluctance and/or barriers to engaging with these services?

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<sup>4</sup> This question refers to the Offer as well as to the childcare element of the Offer.

<sup>5</sup> This question refers to the Offer as well as to the childcare element of the Offer.

- What hinders (and helps, or could help) parents/carers to engage with early education and care services?
- Are certain issues surrounding early education and childcare more prominent for certain groups? (e.g. socio-economic status / ethnicity / religious beliefs)
- What, if anything, would make parents/carers reconsider taking their child to an early education or care setting? And what would convince them to continue to do so regularly?
- If parents have used early education or childcare, to what extent has it delivered against any expectations?
- To what extent do language-related factors influence parents' / carers' choices about early education and care?
- What factors have a bearing on parents' / carers' wishes to access Welsh-medium and bilingual provision? And to what extent do these influence decisions?
- What are the factors that hinder and facilitate access to Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, and to what extent do these influence decisions?
- What perceptions do parents/carers have about Welsh-medium and bilingual early education and care?
- When making decisions about early education and care, to what extent are parents guided by a long-term aspiration in terms of the Welsh language abilities of their child?
- What, if any, do parents perceive to be the medium- to long-term impacts of childcare and early education for their child, and their family more widely?

## Approach

- 3.3 A qualitative approach was adopted for this study to 'go beyond the literature which reports what parents say they think they will do from surveys and interviews at one point in time and delve more deeply into understanding their real attitudes and behaviours', Welsh Government (2018:5). This research was intended to go beyond the literature and probe more deeply into understanding parents' and carers' real beliefs and behaviours towards early education and childcare.
- 3.4 Where possible the study sought to adopt ethnographic principles; making detailed accounts of how people lead their lives and make choices, based on observation and discussion. It was intended that the researchers use their links and relationships with the participants they spoke to in order to gain a transparent picture of their genuine beliefs towards early education and childcare. Skilled researchers sought to engage with research participants and encourage them to share their perspectives through conversation in natural settings. This has allowed researchers to observe and discuss behaviours and motivations and allow a better understand of why people do what they do. A full ethnographic approach was not possible within the timescales and resources allocated for this study.
- 3.5 Views on parenting practices can be both an emotive issue and highly complex. This makes the likelihood of 'social desirability bias'<sup>6</sup> and the gap between someone's stated intention and actual behaviour more likely when parents and carers respond to surveys or formal interviews with unknown researchers (Evans and Kelly, 2002). Researcher's opportunities to know and observe an individual in their local community can potentially help reduce the risk of social desirability bias (Given, 2008). For this reason in this study, a team of researchers were recruited, each of whom lived within one of the project research areas, knew the local area well, were familiar with early years provision, and had well-established personal

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<sup>6</sup> Social desirability bias refers to the tendency of research subjects to give socially desirable responses instead of choosing responses that are reflective of their true feelings (Grimm, 2010).

and professional social networks among parents with young children in the locality. While some of the researchers did know some of the research participants beyond the scope of data collection activities, this was not the case in most instances due to the need to involve a range of different parents and guardians in the research. Meeting up with parents in social settings on two or more separate occasions provided some opportunity for the researchers to observe some parenting practices and to get to know the research participants better than conducting a primary data collection exercise at any one point in time (e.g. an interview, or a focus group).

- 3.6 There are recognised advantages to forming a research team that combines ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives (Copland & Creese, 2015). These advantages include drawing upon an ‘insider’s detailed understanding of a local community, being trusted as a ‘local’ with shared community knowledge and contacts and having a shared understanding of the research participants’ experiences. Combining this with the ‘outsider’ perspective can bring added objectivity to the study and enables the team to question assumptions that ‘insiders’ may take as given. The research team for this project comprised seven local researchers, two external consultants – one from a professional child care background and one from an academic background specialising in education and childcare and two of IAITH’s office-based researchers who did not live in any of the eight research areas. In this team, it was possible to combine the advantage of local researchers knowing their research areas well, having ‘insider’ access to some social networks involving parents and carers with young children with the expertise and experience of IAITH’s research staff who are experienced qualitative researchers in the field of early childhood education and care.
- 3.7 All the researchers had some ‘shared’ experiences with the target research participants by being parents themselves. Two of the researchers had young, pre-school aged children, the others all had older children of differing ages. All the researchers also had current or previous experience of working in English-medium and Welsh-medium childcare and

education.<sup>7</sup> All researchers could speak both English and Welsh and were able to engage with parents in English and/or Welsh as the parents preferred.

- 3.8 The research team were ethnically White Welsh or White British and female. Such an ethnically homogeneous research group was not intentional and, might possibly have restricted access to a more diverse and hard-to-reach profile of research participants than was achieved in the sample. (This issue is discussed further in para. 3.17).

### **Recruiting and training locally-based researchers**

- 3.9 Advertisements to recruit researchers for each of the project research areas were distributed by email to providers in the English-medium and Welsh-medium childcare and early education sectors including special needs schools and further education colleges. In addition, English and Welsh language adverts were also posted on IAITH's website and shared with Mudiad Meithrin for distribution among CWLWM member websites, Facebook, and Twitter pages.

### **Desk-based research**

- 3.10 The study was informed by a desk-based review of research literature and policy documents to ensure that the research team were familiar with the key policies and documentation that are relevant to the study.
- 3.11 Area Fact Files were created for each research area to supplement the researcher's local knowledge of the area and provide background and contextual information for the research team on the FPN and the Offer provision in each locality, information on how the provision is delivered, by whom and how many parents take advantage of that provision. The fact files also provided a brief socio-economic profile, language profile and

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<sup>7</sup> Two were primary school teachers, one was a further education lecturer, one a research student and three worked with Mudiad Meithrin. Mudiad Meithrin is a voluntary organisation specialising in Welsh-medium early years provision. More than 200 staff are employed throughout Wales, and 1,500 members of staff work in the cylchoedd meithrin (Welsh-medium playgroups) throughout Wales. Development Officers work at a local level in each county offering guidance and practical advice to staff, volunteers and parents.

ethnic profile for each area together with a list of suggestions for groups, organisations, locations, and community activities that could be useful to the researchers for sharing information about the project and recruiting families in each area.

### **The sample**

3.12 An indicative sampling frame was developed for each research area to try to ensure a range of characteristics in participating families in terms of their socio-economic status, the number of adults in the household, the parent(s)' ethnic origin, religious beliefs, language background and languages spoken at home – characteristics which it was hypothesised may influence the use of formal childcare or education. The sampling frame sought to cover the following characteristics:

- one parent household,
- two parent household,
- Welsh speaking parent(s),
- English speaking parent(s) who do not speak Welsh,
- parent(s) who speak languages other than Welsh and English,
- low income parent(s),<sup>8</sup>
- families from ethnic minority communities,
- Gypsy and Traveller families,
- child with additional learning needs (ALN)
- child with Welsh as their first language,
- child with English as their first language,

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<sup>8</sup> Conversations with families did not include a direct question about parental income on the basis that this was likely to be unhelpful in terms of gaining a rapport and building trust to be able to delve deeper into their true feelings and beliefs. As a proxy, living in a Flying Start Area has been used as 'low income' indicator. Several families not living in Flying Start Areas self-identified as having a 'low income'. Where mentioned, this information was noted in completing the profile of each family.

- and child with another first language(s).

3.13 Table 2 presents an overview of the key characteristics of the final sample of families. As shown, the majority of the families willing to take part in this study had a three or four year old child and were eligible for, but not currently accessing, both the FPN and childcare components of the Offer in full. Due to the challenges experienced in recruiting eligible families (see para. 3.16 for further details), it was decided, in collaboration with Welsh Government, to broaden the sample to include other kinds of families whose experiences capture the wide range of circumstances of families not currently accessing formal childcare or FPN. Of the 16 non-eligible families, three families had one parent who was a student and another family where one parent was awaiting the outcome of her resident visa application.

**Table 2: Sample of families according to key characteristics**

<b>Key characteristics of participating families</b>	<b>Total in all areas</b>
Eligible parent(s) not accessing the Offer in full	37
Non- eligible parent(s) not accessing FPN or Childcare	16
Two parent household	40
One parent household	13
Welsh-speaking parent(s)	17
Non-W-speaking parent(s) English	46
Non-W-speaking parent(s) – Other language(s)	7
Low income parent(s)	20
Ethnic minority community parent(s)	5
Child with ALN	6
Child with first language -Welsh	12
Child with first language -English	38
Child with first language – Other language(s)	3

### **Recruiting parents and carers**

3.14 The methods used to recruit parents and carers were varied and included:

- sending the pre-prepared letter explaining the purpose of the project and introducing the local researcher to various organisations, groups and professionals who work with parents and families in each area (e.g. Early

Years Wales (EYW), Flying Start Family Centres, Deaf Society, GP Surgeries, Health Clinics, National Childbirth Trust)

- contacting early years officials and Family Information Services staff within local authorities to gain advice and information on services and events provided for families with young children in the local area
- using social media to share the pre-prepared project leaflet that described the project and explained the study's objectives to potential participants. Examples of the social media used were the Facebook pages of various Family Centres, local parent groups (e.g. a Teddy Bears Picnic organized by PACEY, Family Fun Days, toddler groups in local libraries) and Cymraeg for Kids<sup>9</sup>
- visiting various locations (e.g. local libraries, primary schools, local cafes and shops, sports centres and gyms, child play-centres, local employers, medical surgeries, veterinary practices, and dental surgeries) to distribute the project leaflet and display the project poster
- visiting other settings such as: Flying Start, English-medium nurseries and playgroups, Welsh-medium Cylchoedd Meithrin, Cymraeg for Kids and Clwb Cwtsh<sup>10</sup> groups in order to both include families who only made partial use of the Offer and to know of any other parents known to not use the Offer at all
- handing out project leaflets on the street in rural towns and during community events for families, local fairs, and markets
- drawing upon researchers' contacts within their own local social networks to share information about the project
- attempting to access harder to reach parents via various support officers, agencies and charities (e.g. Gypsy and Traveller Community Support Services, PaCE and charities working with disability groups and ethnic minority communities).

3.15 A total of 53 families were recruited using the methods listed above. The breakdown for each research area is presented in Table 3. Of the 53 participant

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<sup>9</sup> Cymraeg for Kids is a national scheme funded by the Welsh Government that supports parents to use the Welsh language with their children by choosing Welsh-medium childcare and education.

<sup>10</sup> Clwb Cwtsh is an, eight-week taster programme for parents and carers focusing on speaking Welsh with young children.

families, 47 were represented by mothers, three were represented by fathers, and in three other families, both parents jointly participated in the research. Of the families, 40 were two parent families and 13 were lone parent families. No carers came forward to participate in the study. In addition to these families, one Gypsy and Traveller Community Support Officer was interviewed and provided some information on the early education and childcare beliefs and practices of families whom the researchers had not succeeded in involving in the project.

**Table 3: Number of participating families according to area**

Area	Number of families
Blaenau Gwent	2
Cardiff	5
Ceredigion	7
Carmarthen	4
Conwy Coast	8
Clwyd Coast	6
Neath Port Talbot	6
Newport	5
Swansea	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

### ***Challenges in recruiting research participants***

- 3.16 Recruiting parents and carers who were both eligible and willing to be involved in the research proved to be a considerable challenge. The kinds of difficulties experienced in contacting target group parents reported by researchers included a lack of response to the introductory letter and project leaflet, despite these being widely distributed by the researchers themselves and other professional and non-professional contacts who work and have contact with parents and carers.
- 3.17 Difficulties were encountered in contacting specific social groups. Despite various attempts, it proved difficult, for example, to gain direct access to and include Gypsy and Traveller families in the sample. Researcher characteristics are also likely to have restricted their access to some social

groups. All the researchers were white, female and ethnically Welsh / British with limited access to more ethnically diverse social networks<sup>11</sup>.

- 3.18 A great many of the parents and carers the researchers encountered were either already accessing the Offer or ineligible for various reasons. For some parents, the project requirements to spend around two to three hours meeting up with the researcher on two or three separate occasions involved offering more time than they were willing or able to commit. Some parents expressed unwillingness to discuss their personal circumstances. In around fifteen cases, parents who had initially agreed to participate in the study withdrew unexpectedly due to various family circumstances and time commitments. On two occasions, a parent did not turn up to pre-arranged meetings with a researcher.
- 3.19 Each participating family received a child's hessian bag decorated with a tiger, two age appropriate Welsh/English bilingual story books and a box of chocolates. This was used as a tool to engage research participants.

### **Data Collection**

- 3.20 There were typically three stages to data collection with each family. Firstly, the researchers gleaned some initial 'screening' information from the family contact member, either in their initial face-to-face encounter in the community or via email or phone if the parent had contacted the research team via phone, email or Facebook asking to take part in the study. This screening information was used to verify that the family fitted the research sample criteria and to ensure that a variety of types of family became involved in the project to form the sample for each area and for the project as a whole (see Annex B, template sections 1 and 2). The names and contact details of each research participant were held solely by the local researchers (and not shared with any other member of the

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<sup>11</sup> Research has found ethnic minority communities can be less likely to access government funded early childhood education and care. See for example, DfE (2018) [Take-up of free early education entitlements](#)

research team, including IAITH staff) for the purposes of arranging face-to-face meetings and any follow-up telephone or e-mail enquiries to complete data gaps.

- 3.21 Secondly, a first face-to-face meeting was set up at an agreed location in the community chosen by the family at a time that was convenient to them. Most face-to-face meetings took place in a café. Some meetings took place where the child or children could play e.g. outdoors in a park or inside in a 'soft play' setting. On most occasions, the parent(s) had their child with them. In a few cases, a parent chose not to have their child present, 'to concentrate on the conversation without being interrupted'. In some cases, the researcher would meet with both parents and one of the two parents would 'entertain' the child(ren) as suited the child(ren) while the other parent spent more time talking to the researcher. One parent wanted to participate in the study but did not want to meet up to maintain their anonymity. A further six parents requested telephone rather than face-to-face meetings for their convenience. Due to the challenges experienced securing parental engagement in the study, these preferences were permitted.
- 3.22 Despite attempts to maintain the informal, conversational approach used in face-to-face meetings, the telephone conversations were similar to more traditional, semi-structured qualitative telephone interviews. However, it was decided that by permitting some families to be interviewed over the phone, parents who could not otherwise participate in the research were able to do so and their data does provide insights which would not otherwise have been captured.
- 3.23 During the face-to-face meetings with parents, the conversation between the researcher and the research participants aimed to be as informal as possible to make participants feel comfortable and prepared to share information about their parenting practices, and beliefs. Conversations were conducted in English or Welsh or a mixture of both languages, according to the parents' preferences. In order to maintain the informality

of the encounter the researcher did not refer to the Family Data Collection Template (see Annex B) to ask questions or make written notes or audio record the conversation in the presence of the parents. Instead, following ethnographic principles, the researcher wrote up their 'fieldnotes' of their conversation as soon as possible after meeting with the family. This is a typical ethnographic strategy.<sup>12</sup> In their fieldnotes, the researchers aimed to recall as much information as they could to complete the family profile and the values and practices sections of the data collection template (sections 3 and 4 of the template - see Annex B). They also aimed to record as accurately as possible the way parents had expressed their thoughts and beliefs by recalling and noting key phrases and words that the participants had used. This note-making tended to take place in the researcher's car immediately after speaking to the family. It is inevitable that some missed information and gaps result from this method. And it was for this reason that participants were asked to meet on a second occasion in order to continue the conversation. A first draft of the Family Data Collection Template was sent to IAITH staff to check, identify any information gaps and agree the additional aspects of information to be gleaned in the second face-to face meeting with each family.

- 3.24 The third step in the data collection process was the second meeting arranged with the family to continue the conversation. The purpose of the second meeting was to have another opportunity to get to know the family and to cover any aspects of information that had not been gathered during the first meeting. These conversations were also informal with the researcher completing their fieldnotes after speaking to the family. In some

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<sup>12</sup> Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011:48) explain the importance of timing the writing up of fieldnotes: 'Over time, people forget and simplify experience; notes composed several days after observation tend to be summarized and stripped of rich, nuanced detail'. Writing field notes immediately after leaving the setting produces fresher, more detailed recollections that harness the researcher's involvement with and excitement about the day's events. Indeed, writing notes immediately on leaving the field offers a way of releasing the weight of what the researcher has just experienced. It is easier to focus one's thoughts and energies on the taxing work of reviewing, remembering, and writing.

instances, researchers contacted some parents by email or phone to complete any essential data gaps remaining.

### **Piloting the data collection**

- 3.25 The data collection process was piloted with two families. The piloting stage confirmed the suitability of the research instruments and the informal, conversational interview approach. Each researcher was given examples of completed Family Data Collection Templates produced by other team members to emulate in terms of style, type of information and level of detail. For each researcher, their first two interviews served as their individual piloting step, with a chance to discuss the interviewing experience with IAITH's two research managers, before and after each encounter with each family. Feedback was provided on the first and second drafts of each Family Data Collection Template with requests made for any additional information required to fill any missing gaps and ensure, as far as possible, comparability across the data collected for each family. As each researcher gained experience of interviewing families, the researchers found that there were fewer data gaps to be filled in the second meeting with families.

### **Data Quality**

- 3.26 Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample does not claim to be representative of the population with 3 and 4 year old children in each area or in Wales as a whole. The final sample was self-selected as parents who participated contacted the research team to ask to take part after learning about the project. This was particularly the case with the first three or four families in each area. After securing the first three or four families, the researchers screened the additional families offering to participate to capture as great a variety of characteristics as possible within their local sample.
- 3.27 The fieldnote data gathered from interviews with parents, which included quotations from participants and observations by the researchers, was

used to populate the Family Data Collection Template (Annex B). Templates tend not to be used in ethnographic studies to allow researchers the freedom to make more expansive fieldnotes. However, in this study, the template served the purpose of facilitating the need to standardise family data collection across a team of seven researchers and conduct data analysis over a limited time.

- 3.28 As part of the data quality assurance process, the data collected was checked against the list of research and 'aide-memoire' questions in Section 5 of the template (see Annex B) in order to ensure that, as far as possible, the data collected answered each of the research questions. Further standardisation of the research team's fieldnotes was achieved by sharing anonymised data records among the research team members, and providing advice and feedback from both project research directors. The data collected for each family was reviewed by both of IAITH's two project research managers at first, second and final draft stage to ensure, as far as possible, parity of level of detail and content across the data. During the process of reviewing the data collected for each family, the records were checked for clarity and detail, that the information given was relevant and provided an understanding of each family's background, circumstances, choices and beliefs with regard to childcare and early education.
- 3.29 Due to the use of both face-to-face and telephone data collection methods, some variation in the quality of data occurred. The data collected via face-to-face meetings and observations were conducted in locations that were familiar to participants and in non-threatening environments that could encourage participants to be forthcoming and open about their circumstances and beliefs. In contrast, the data gathered via seven telephone interviews were limited as it was not possible to make visual observations. Some of the parents interviewed by telephone also appear to have been less cooperative and less interested in the research, as suggested by their less detailed responses and there being more gaps in the information they provided than in the face-to-face interviews.

## **Data Analysis**

3.30 The data was sorted and coded according to themes identified from the project research questions, research literature, anecdotal evidence and additional themes identified in the data. These codes were drawn together to provide an analytical framework for the research. The data gathered was then sorted and grouped under corresponding data codes within the framework, with a focus on similarities and dissimilarities and illustrative examples in the data.

## 4. Findings

4.1 In this section, we present the findings based upon our analysis of the data collected in collaboration with 53 families and one Gypsy and Traveller Community Support Officer (G&TCSO). These findings are reported under the following headings:

- Parent awareness of entitlement and understanding of how to apply for the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)
- Knowing about and accessing family support agencies and services
- Practical barriers to accessing the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)
- Administrative barriers to accessing the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)
- Beliefs and behaviours that encourage engagement with funded childcare and FPN
- Beliefs and behaviours that limit engagement with funded childcare and FPN
- Language issues and their impact on parents' childcare and FPN choices
- Issues regarding accessing funded childcare and FPN for specific groups

### **Parent awareness of entitlement and understanding of how to apply for the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)**

4.2 Most of the parents interviewed in each of the research areas were aware of the Offer. Only four were not aware of their entitlement to 30 hours of FPN and funded childcare. Many who knew about the Offer said that they had received information through a provider such as a day-care nursery, playgroup, or childminder. Other parents mentioned obtaining information on local authority and Welsh Government websites, local radio stations and in local libraries.

4.3 Some parents said that despite being aware of the Offer, they were unaware of how to access it (Swansea 3 and 4).<sup>13</sup> For instance, an eligible family, where the mother had heard of the Offer through their childcare provider said they needed assistance in providing the information required to register for the Offer. For them, the lack of help available to apply for the Offer had been a barrier in progressing with their application.

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<sup>13</sup> The place name and number in brackets are identifiers for the parents who took part in the research.

Consequently, it was something they, 'haven't got around to doing.' As a result, their child attended childcare in a playgroup, 'just one day a week, because that is all we can afford' (Swansea 3).

- 4.4 FPN is built on the principles of learning through play<sup>14</sup> and can be delivered in a nursery, funded playgroup or childminder approved by local authorities or a school. Most of the parents interviewed knew that all three and four year old children in Wales are entitled to a specified number of hours of early education during term time and about the availability of FPN provision in their area. Many of the parents were, in fact, taking their children to FPN provision such as nursery classes in primary schools and playgroups, but were not claiming, or not eligible to claim the funded childcare hours of the Offer for their child. Only a few parents said that they were unaware of the difference between early education and childcare.
- 4.5 Most parents knew how to apply for FPN provision. Examples of how parents gained this information included, 'information on the council's website' (Blaenau Gwent 3) and 'information provided by the nursery manager' (NPT3). A parent explained the importance of providers in sharing information, 'I'm only aware because it was signposted by creche - I would not have known otherwise' (NPT4). Another parent explained that she was aware of early education within schools and that this is provided for by schools in Swansea, not by non-maintained settings (Swansea 7). She chose not to access FPN because this was not available locally through the medium of Welsh.

### **Knowing about and accessing family support agencies and services**

- 4.6 When asked about accessing information about support agencies and services, most parents said they were able to access the information they needed. Many parents referred to the Family Information Service in their area as a useful source of information. Other sources of information

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<sup>14</sup> [Foundation Phase nursery: a guide for parents and carers](#)

frequently mentioned included: a health visitor or GP, a childcare provider in their area, information available in the local library, information from friends, a local newspaper, social media such as Facebook, and local Mentrau Iaith.

- 4.7 Some parents said that they had researched the quality of provision available by accessing local authority websites and official reports. One parent, for example, said that she had been, 'reading the ARAD childcare reports<sup>15</sup> recently, 'so that had raised my awareness of the childcare scheme.' This parent also noted that, 'CIW<sup>16</sup> reports are useful as a reference,' along with information provided, 'word of mouth from other parents who have used services' (Newport 3). Another parent said that, 'the council's website is a little bit corporate and because of that I don't really look at that, but I know that the information is there. I know that I can phone the department in the council' (Blaenau Gwent 3).

#### *Services and support agencies used by parents in the research areas*

- 4.8 Parents referred to a range of services and support agencies that they used locally. Examples of these agencies and voluntary groups included SNAP, Flying Start parent-and-child groups, Cymraeg for Kids<sup>17</sup> sessions for parents and young children, Canolfan Enfys Teifi (an integrated children's centre), Jigso (children's centre), Ti a Fi groups, playgroups, Toddler Clubs, Storytime in the local library, and leisure classes and facilities for parents and children run by the local authority. Accessibility for families appears to vary. Explanations given by research participants include:
- Cost: One parent was aware of some local groups and she attended a local parent group which was free of charge. She said that finances were a barrier to her attending other groups (Swansea 3).

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<sup>15</sup> Arad Research, in conjunction with NatCen Social Research, was commissioned to undertake the evaluation of the early implementation of the Childcare Offer.

<sup>16</sup> Care Inspectorate Wales are responsible for regulating childcare and play services: child minders, crèches, full day care, sessional day care, out of school care and open access play provision.

<sup>17</sup> Cymraeg for Kids is a national scheme by the Welsh Government that supports parents to use the Welsh language with their children by choosing Welsh-medium childcare and education.

- Awareness: Another parent said that the, 'health visitor is the only support we accessed as a family' (NPT4). This parent was not aware of any other agencies. An additional parent had no knowledge of services and support available to help parents with young children locally, 'I don't really know of any. I didn't even know where the library was' [until meeting there with the researcher] (Clwyd Coast 6).
- Choice: Another parent said that she did not use any local support groups, 'I don't need to because I have support from my family' (Swansea 5).

#### *Influences on parents using services and support agencies*

- 4.9 Influences on parents using services and support agencies included information shared by childcare settings such as playgroups, information shared by health professionals and recommendations from friends. A parent explained that staff at the childcare setting were, 'very good at sharing relevant information. They let us know of all sorts of things going on locally and will even telephone people as needed' (Conwy Coast 7). A well-established relationship with childcare setting staff was also mentioned as a source of influence, 'playgroup is really good, and I know who to phone for more information for things. The staff there are like my family' (Conwy Coast 5). A parent said that, 'friends recommend services to me because I don't use much social media' (Newport 4). According to another parent, 'the health visitor shares information and we decided to use the ones that are closest to home because I don't have car and have to walk' (Conwy 1).

#### **Practical barriers to accessing the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)**

- 4.10 This section identifies the practical barriers preventing parents from accessing their full entitlement to childcare and FPN. These include lack of knowledge about the Offer, difficulty accessing childcare provision and transfer between childcare and FPN locations, and a perceived lack of flexibility in provision to suit parental employment needs.

### *Lack of awareness and information*

- 4.11 A few parents explained they had difficulty accessing information about the Offer. One parent said that access to the Offer, 'is a bit confusing and I feel it's tricky to ask for advice' (Cardiff 4). According to the parents interviewed in this study, childcare providers play an important role in informing parents about the Offer. Consequently, limited contact with childcare providers may lead to a lack of parental awareness of the Offer. One parent who reported not having much contact with her childcare provider, said that she was, 'vaguely aware' of the Offer. She explained that because she did not drop-off or collect her child from childcare, 'it was not something I had thought to pursue,' because she didn't feel she had enough information about it and didn't have the opportunity to ask childcare staff about it due to her own work commitments (Swansea 6).
- 4.12 A minority of parents lacked awareness of entitlement to FPN and were uncertain of where to access early education in their area. A lack of awareness was more apparent amongst parents interviewed in Swansea (including in two-parent, one-parent and low-income households), where over half reported not being aware of their child's entitlement to FPN. For instance, one family were not aware that all three-year-old children are entitled to early education and were not sure where to access early education (Swansea 3). Another parent said, 'I was not aware that all 3-year-old children in Wales are entitled to 12.5 hours of early education per week' (Swansea 1).
- 4.13 There were instances of lack of awareness of the entitlement in other research areas such as in Ceredigion where a parent reported, 'not much information has been shared about it' (Ceredigion 2). Another parent lacked awareness of where to access FPN and said, 'I did not know about this until very recently - I had not heard about the Childcare Offer until a colleague mentioned it' (Clwyd Coast 5). Another parent said that she had attempted to gain information, but the process was slow, 'I contacted

Family Choices, the Local Authority website for information but found that the Local Authority were slow to respond' (NPT3).

*Lack of suitable childcare provision in the area*

- 4.14 Due to lack of availability of suitable childcare provision which qualified for the Offer in their area, some families made private childcare arrangements and they did not wish to change their arrangements to access the Offer. One parent reported that her children enjoyed their time with their current childminder, 'who is able to provide flexibility' (Ceredigion 2). Another family in Ceredigion reported that they were unable to find provision to suit their needs. This included a lack of registered childminders who speak Welsh, and a lack of 'ad hoc' childcare to suit family needs, where one parent was in full time employment and the other worked irregular part-time hours (Ceredigion 5).
- 4.15 In Ceredigion parents reported that the lack of childcare provision in their community restricted their employment options. A parent reported that she had not been in employment since moving to Wales in 2018, although she had investigated part-time positions. The lack of childcare in the area, 'is a problem' she said. 'I'd return to work and claim the Childcare Offer if I could find a nursery close by' (Ceredigion 4).

*Lack of suitable FPN provision in the area*

- 4.16 Some parents were not accessing their child's FPN entitlement because the FPN in their language of choice was not available locally or was too far away to be practical. One parent explained that she was aware of FPN and knew how to access it, however, her local Cylch Meithrin only provided childcare and did not receive funding for FPN provision. The parent was aware that early education was available within schools but not delivered in non-maintained settings, within the LA. This parent had subsequently chosen to pay to use the Cylch Meithrin for her child, in order to access Welsh-medium provision locally (Swansea 7). She was happy for her son to continue attending this provision, as he was

benefitting from mixing with other children there, being immersed in the Welsh language and learning all he needed to learn at this stage.

- 4.17 Another parent who didn't drive, said attending the nearest bilingual school, would be her FPN provision of choice, 'but that would mean a forty minute walk each way, which would be too much with two small children' (Conwy Coast 1). The parent said, 'I would have liked X to go to early education, but it just wouldn't be practical. I worry that she will be behind now when she starts school full-time in September' (Conwy Coast 1). This parent said their nearest school and playgroup were Welsh-medium, which she did not want for her children.
- 4.18 Some parents did not want to move children from their current provision to claim the FPN because they felt that their child was settled at nursery, 'we decided against the entitlement to early education because it would be too difficult to move X now that she is used to nursery' (Clwyd Coast 3).

#### *Issues with transfer between childcare and FPN settings*

- 4.19 Some families were not claiming the FPN element of the Offer due to the lack of arrangements for taking their child from childcare to a FPN setting. One parent explained, 'we are eligible and using it to a certain extent, but unable to access full entitlement because of problems with transfer from school to nursery' (NPT 1). Their child attended a day nursery full time rather than accessing FPN. The issue for this family was that the additional cost of transfer from the day nursery to the school setting was high. Other parents also reported they were unable to access the Offer fully because, for them the logistics and cost of moving their child between FPN in school and a non-maintained childcare setting was a barrier.
- 4.20 In many cases, there were no travel arrangements available for parents. One parent commented that, 'it would have been ideal if my child's nursery could have provided pick-ups from school or that the school had registered to provide the 30-hour childcare scheme' (NP2). Similarly, another family had decided not to claim the early entitlement to FPN because, 'the nursery don't pick up from the places we'd consider to send her for early

education so we've decided not to take it up, as it would be more complicated to take her there for two hours a day' (Clwyd Coast 3). Lack of wraparound care and disruption were also mentioned as a barrier. For instance, for one family who were not accessing FPN, their child attended a nursery two days a week at the mother's workplace. Because there was, 'no wraparound with the current nursery, and with no family living locally, it would mean a lot of disruption and we don't feel it's worth it as we are comfortable with the current arrangement' (Cardiff 1).

*Offer provision was not flexible enough for parental needs*

- 4.21 Shift-working parents, in particular, said that a lack of flexibility in provision was a barrier to using The Offer. Not working regular set hours was a challenge explained one parent, 'we haven't taken an early education place for X because we can't commit because of our shifts.... X is a very social little boy and would enjoy school now, but it isn't possible with the shifts we both work full time' (Conwy Coast 2). Other shift-working parents said, 'it is hard if you work shifts. Flexibility is important because of our work shifts' (Ceredigion 2). This parent said that she was happy with the current situation of using informal childcare<sup>18</sup> because of the flexibility they provided, 'they are flexible to look after the children and they only look after my children'. The parent was aware she could have free childcare but, 'I would not change the current situation to save money or use the Offer because the children enjoy their time with XXXXX, they are flexible and trustworthy' (Ceredigion 2). This parent felt that 'formal childcare is not set up to meet the needs of working parents who work shifts – they can't accommodate changes at short-notice'.

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<sup>18</sup> Informal childcare refers to childcare provided by grandparents, other relatives, friends and neighbours.

## **Administrative barriers to accessing the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)**

4.22 This section identifies the administrative barriers preventing parents from accessing their full entitlement to funded childcare and FPN. This included difficulties proving eligibility, difficulties with completing the application form and beliefs that the application process was too invasive of personal and family privacy.

### *Proving eligibility for the Offer*

4.23 Several parents reported that they were unable to claim the Offer provision due to their employment circumstances. Inconsistent working hours was a barrier to accessing the Offer for some parents. One parent from a one-parent household was aware of the Offer but was having some difficulty accessing it because she did not work over 16 hours a week consistently every week due to the nature of supply-teaching. Her situation appeared to be complicated because she worked over 16 hours some weeks and under 16 hours other weeks (Swansea 7). Other parents said that their circumstances restricted them from being able to work for the minimum 16 hours a week required and were therefore prevented from claiming the Offer. Most of these parents were in part-time work but were not consistently working 16 hours every week. A low-income single parent said, 'I wish I was able to work more. It would make things easier financially, but I have to do what I can that fits in with our family life. Also, not having a set contract means that I'm not eligible for a lot of the help with childcare, which makes it a vicious circle really' (Conwy Coast 8).

4.24 Not having payslips or being able to prove working hours was reported as problematic. Some eligible families had difficulties in providing evidence, although they were working more than sixteen hours a week. A family where both parents worked for more than sixteen hours a week and earned less than £100 000 per annum were unable to claim, 'because X is self-employed, farming his own land he cannot provide the required pay slips' (Swansea 1). A family where both parents were in work and one parent was self-employed said they were unable to claim the Offer,

because the father did not pay himself and it was not possible to claim the Offer (Ceredigion 5).

#### *Working in insecure employment*

- 4.25 Parents in precarious working conditions struggled to meet the qualifying requirements and to engage with the Offer. This is illustrated in the experience of a family where one parent was self-employed full-time in agriculture and the other parent worked part-time in hospitality, who were disappointed not to be able to claim the Offer. The parent said, ‘when I got the childcare form, I thought it was 32 hours total that both parents needed to work, so as X works over 40 hours, I assumed we would have no problems. When I realised that I needed to work 16 hours, I managed to find a job that fitted. But because of the nature of the job, I am often sent home early if the pub is quiet. I was really disappointed to then find out that we still couldn’t get it’ (Conwy Coast 7). Parents on insecure, zero-hour contracts, on agency contracts or in low-paid employment were often required to work non-standard working hours – long shifts on weekends or in the evenings – and to work to irregular shift patterns. Agency working and zero-hours contracts meant insecure work with unpredictable hours and often either too few hours or too many hours which for many affected their eligibility to apply for the Offer.

#### *Complicated form-filling*

- 4.26 Completing the application form to claim the Offer was reported to be a barrier to accessing it by some parents. A family knew how to obtain information about the Offer, however the parent did not, ‘feel confident in filling in all of the necessary paperwork, especially as much of my time lately has been taken up with family issues’ (Swansea 5). One parent said that the forms could be ‘clearer’ (Conwy Coast 7). Another eligible family did not want to go through the process of form filling and providing evidence of payslips etc. because the father was self-employed and they were, ‘aware that the process was more complicated in these circumstances’ (Swansea 4). For them, this was a barrier and prevented

them from using the Offer. Another one-parent-family had heard of the Offer and had started on the process of applying. However, the parent felt, 'the forms are very longwinded, and I could not devote the time needed to fill them in' (Swansea 9). A parent who was eligible but not claiming, also perceived that the application process was difficult and said, 'if I thought the form was really easy and that I had done it as soon as X was eligible then that could have been better' (Clwyd Coast 4).

*The application process is too invasive of family privacy*

- 4.27 Some parents reported that they found the application form to be invasive into their family life, and they did not agree with the amount of information required to register for the Offer. One parent said she felt the application form was 'intrusive' (Ceredigion 1). Another family said they were, 'happy to pay for childcare fees because we don't want to go through the process of form-filling and providing evidence of payslips etc' (Swansea 4). Another parent said she did not agree with the Offer on the basis that the process for applying required families, 'to share too much personal information'. She had found the process to be, 'very invasive' and was reluctant to share information regarding family finances and any other matters relating to personal circumstances (Swansea 2).

*Issues of affordability*

- 4.28 Some families who took part in the research reported that when the provider of their chosen provision was not signed up to the Offer, the cost of alternative childcare restricted the family's ability to access provision for their child. In some families, parents were paying for elements of childcare themselves, but the child received limited provision due to issues of affordability for the family. A family with one self-employed parent said that although they are eligible for the Offer, they could not access it because the playgroup their child attends was not signed up to the Offer due to the local authority's model of provision and so the family, 'pay out of our own money for her to have Welsh-medium that isn't available in our local

school'. They said, 'if we are in a situation where we cannot financially afford this, unfortunately X will not be able to attend' (Swansea 1).

- 4.29 Other families were also paying for childcare provision for limited periods due to the costs involved. For example, a family from a self-employed background said, 'we can only afford to send X to Cylch on a Thursday every other week' (Conwy Coast 7). A low-income, single parent was not able to pay for childcare provision following separation from the child's father. The parent said, 'I would love to send X to playgroup but we're not eligible for any funding help, and I really can't afford it.' (Conwy Coast 8).

*Affordability for parents with multiple children who are close in age*

- 4.30 Some parents with additional younger children reported that the lack of free childcare for children under the age of three added greatly to their potential childcare costs. This was a significant barrier for low-income parents in particular. One low-income parent preferred to work less and stay at home to look after the children, 'than use all my wages to pay for childcare'. This family also had a younger child in addition to a three year old and the parent further explained that, 'childcare for one child is no good to us. I have changed my work to need as little childcare as possible because we can't afford to pay for X' (Conwy Coast 1). Children under three years of age are not eligible for the Offer at present. This may cause a significant barrier for parents to be able to be in employment for more than 16 hours a week if no alternative childcare provision is available.

*Being on a combination of benefits*

- 4.31 Several of the parents interviewed were frustrated that they could not apply for the Offer, even though they felt they needed the support to access it. In some instances, this was because they were in receipt of other benefits. The following is an example of how one single parent explained her situation: 'I can't access the Childcare Offer because it means that I would lose all of my housing benefit. I only get housing benefit because I get childcare tax credits. If I take the Childcare Offer (20 hours childcare) then I can't claim childcare tax credits and then would

lose housing benefit. At the moment, I can get her time at playgroup subsidized by childcare tax credits. When X at playgroup told me about the childcare offer my mum told me to check about my housing benefit first, and they told me I wouldn't get it if I took the childcare offer. My rent is £500 a month but I only pay £100, council tax is £100 per month but I only pay £12. So I get £488 help each month. Childcare for three afternoons a week costs me £260 so I would be £228 worse off if I took the Childcare Offer. It really annoys me because I really need the help' (Conwy Coast 5).

### **Beliefs and behaviours that encourage engagement with funded childcare and FPN**

4.32 In this section, we consider some of the beliefs parents expressed in relation to their decisions regarding the extent they chose to take up the Offer, to identify potential enablers to engaging with early education and childcare service. This section also focuses on parents' experiences of using FPN and childcare as articulated by the parents interviewed. In general, parents reported that they felt that attending FPN and childcare had a positive impact on their child's development.

#### *The importance of work and accessing the labour market*

4.33 Parents articulated differing beliefs in relation to the importance of work and using some of their FPN and childcare eligibility to re-enter the labour market. For some, financial incentives were paramount. For example, a parent who used the childcare element of the Offer for her child explained, 'work is a necessity, so my child has to go to Nursery' (Cardiff 4). A parent who said that they were using the Offer to a certain extent, explained that she had returned to work, 'due to financial pressures as soon as possible after having another child.' (NPT1)

4.34 One parent was currently using Flying Start provision but was not working more than 16 hours per week and so not currently eligible for the Offer. This parent said she found it difficult to work and bring up a child as a single parent. She did not want to give up working, 'because when X goes

to school I'm hoping to increase my working hours and make use of the Offer' (NPT 6).

- 4.35 For others, being in employment was very important. One parent said that, 'work is very important to me and I'd work, even if I didn't need the money.' This parent claimed the FPN element of the Offer, but not the full entitlement because her child was not, 'very happy going to early education' (Ceredigion 1). This parent had prioritised early education over childcare to reduce the child's anxiety and explained that family members provided childcare to enable her to continue working.
- 4.36 Some mothers talked about their need to work and the mental health benefits they gained from working. For example, one parent said, 'I feel positive about being a mother going to work part-time, it's something 'for me' (Cardiff 1). Another parent said, 'it's difficult to juggle family around work commitments but I feel it's beneficial to my own mental health to go to work even though financially it makes little sense' (NPT4).
- 4.37 A parent who used childcare provided by a childminder said that she would love to stay at home with the children all the time, 'but I know I would be bored and miss socializing with my colleagues at work. I enjoy having both the life at home with the children and work life. I sometimes feel guilty when I take the children to the child minder but I also know they will be ok because we choose a child minder rather than a creche with hundreds of children in it' (Newport 2). It seems that child minders who offered care for a smaller number of children provided greater reassurance for some of the parents interviewed. A study by PACEY in 2016 found that decisions as to who would look after their children was a major worry for parents preparing to return to work; many were anxious that they wouldn't find suitable childcare or that a child would become just another face in a crowded room.

*Importance of children's early socialisation outside the family and with their peers*

- 4.38 Believing in the importance of a child's early socialisation outside the family and with the child's peer group was a reason for accessing the Offer

or elements of the Offer for some parents. In one parent's view, 'school really teaches them to behave and helps them learn about respect and friendship' (Clwyd Coast 4). Another parent felt that it was, 'really important' for a child to attend early education as, 'we can't always help our children therefore it is essential; children need to socialise with other children and learn these valuable skills' (Swansea 4). Other parents mentioned the positive impact of making friends by attending early education, 'I feel Cylch is important so that children can make friends and I'm happy that it's there to make transition to school easier when the time comes' (Ceredigion 3). One parent acknowledged that taking a child to an early education setting, 'pulls on my heart strings' but recognized that, 'it is healthy for both the children to learn to socialise and for my own mental health' (NPT4).

*Importance of developing early learning skills and being 'school ready'*

- 4.39 Parents expressed their beliefs about the importance of developing early learning skills and being 'school ready'<sup>19</sup> through using the Offer. Many parents reported they felt that early education was beneficial for children for educational reasons. For example, parents whose children were accessing FPN commented, 'early education is good because they will do better early on' (Ceredigion 6); 'a good education is very important' (Swansea 10). A parent commented that, 'early education is very positive to the development of a child, particularly on a social level'. She felt that even though some nurseries do not offer the Foundation Phase, following its principles still encouraged a child's development (NPT3). Another parent thought that, 'it's very important for children to attend pre-school before they start full-time education. It encourages early development and for some children may offer a better start than they would have had with stay-at-home parents' (NPT4). Another parent believed that, 'children are

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<sup>19</sup> Research from PACEY (2013) has found that early years professionals, parents and teachers agreed that 'school ready' should mean that children: have strong social skills, can cope emotionally with being separated from their parents, are relatively independent in their own personal care have a curiosity about the world and a desire to learn.

more confident, more developed and with better social play skills and basic numeracy and literacy. And it's fun for the children' (NPT5). A parent also praised the ethos of play embedded in the Foundation Phase, 'my friends in England are quite jealous of the system we have here. Their children were given lengthy spelling lists aged five and not really had the same ethos of play at all' (Clwyd Coast 1).

*The positive impacts of FPN and childcare on a child*

- 4.40 Several of the parents interviewed expressed their belief that FPN and childcare had a number of positive impacts on a child. Some parents felt that attending formal childcare provision and early education had a positive impact on their child's language development. 'My child was late in developing verbal communication', said one parent, 'and the Cylch has helped X's communication skills' (Swansea 1). 'Going to part-time school is helping my child hugely with gaining 'British' social skills and the English language' said a parent from a mixed heritage background (Conwy Coast 3). Another parent who was keen for her child to learn Welsh at school was 'happy' with her child's progress in Welsh at the local Cylch, 'because I'm not confident speaking Welsh at home (Ceredigion 3).
- 4.41 Parents whose children were experiencing the upheaval of divorce or separation believed that attending childcare or FPN playgroup was, 'definitely a positive impact, it is a consistent feature in the children's lives at the moment' said one mother (Swansea 10). 'It will provide stability for the child,' said a separated father, 'and a sense of being safe' (Blaenau Gwent 1).
- 4.42 Some parents who were unable to send their child to FPN provision due to their circumstances (e.g. lack of transport, shift work) felt this had been a disadvantage for their child and hoped that their child would be able to make up for this when they started in school. One parent said, 'I think X would be a lot more confident with other children had she attended early education, I think she would have learnt other really useful things as well, but hopefully she's bright enough to catch up' (Conwy Coast 1). Another

parent remarked, 'I think X would enjoy learning and socialising and I hope he makes friends when he joins school because everyone else will already know each other' (Conwy Coast 2).

#### *Positive experiences of FPN and childcare*

- 4.43 Most of the parents whose children had used this provision, reported positive experiences of attending FPN or childcare. Some parents said they had been wary of using early education and or childcare but their experiences of using services had changed their minds. One parent said, 'I had heard negative stories about creches, and I was reluctant to use any early education or childcare at first' (Swansea 1). Another parent said that she had not used FPN or childcare for her oldest child, as it was her first child and, 'I was very overprotective of her and I relied heavily on my mother for help with childcare' (Swansea 6). Furthermore, the parent explained she had seen, 'undercover television programmes of bad things happening in nurseries and I was apprehensive of sending my child to one'. She said that, 'my opinion has changed in recent years and, 'I use the local Cylch for my second child and I'm very pleased with them' (Swansea 6). A parent was supportive of early education, albeit with some reservations regarding the quality of childcare, 'I'm supportive of early education if the individual child is ready. Childcare can however vary in its standard. I'm not put off by the idea of early education – quite the opposite' (NPT3).

#### *Impact of parents' own experiences of childcare and early education*

- 4.44 Many parents reported that they had attended early education themselves and, to a lesser extent, childcare. Others had not attended early education or childcare at all, because a parent was at home to care for them and they started school at four or five years of age. Whatever the parents' childhood experiences, it was clear that these did shape the parents' beliefs but that other factors were often also at play in their decisions as adults around their own child's education and childcare.

'It did me no harm'

- 4.45 Some parents accessed FPN for their child, just as they had done themselves as young children. For instance, one parent reflecting on their personal experience said, 'I attended early education as a three/four-year old and it did me no harm, so I have no reason not to send my children other than if they are not school ready. I believe that children should attend early education but that does not necessarily mean within a school setting' (NPT3).

'I'm determined my children do not suffer the same fate'

- 4.46 The parents interviewed who did not recall positive experiences of early education or schooling themselves talked about wanting their child to have a different experience to them. A parent who was attempting to increase her current working hours to over 16 hours to qualify for the Offer said, 'I didn't start pre-school or nursery and was definitely on the back foot developmentally because of this. It took time to catch up and I was very shy starting school due to lack of early socialization' (NPT3). A parent who was not eligible because she was not in employment said that she felt she wasted her time in school and there was, 'no support or encouragement for people like me' (Ceredigion 6). She wished she had revised more and got more qualifications. A-levels and university were never thought of. No one in her family had ever done anything more than leave school at 16. However, she felt that, 'early education is good because children will do better later' (Ceredigion 6).
- 4.47 Another parent said that he rarely attended school himself and, as a result, left school with no formal qualifications, 'I'm determined my children do not suffer the same fate'. He said he was supportive of early education and childcare and believed that 'children not only develop academically but also learn how to socialise and share,' by attending this provision. His child was not accessing FPN but the family paid for the child to attend a playgroup one day a week saying they could not afford to pay for more

than that. This family were not claiming the Offer and did not seem to be aware of what help was available to them (Swansea 3).

#### Doing things differently

- 4.48 Other parents were more reluctantly doing things differently to the way they had been raised themselves. One parent explained, she had to return to work as soon as possible after the birth of her child due to financial pressures. This was different to her own experience as a child, 'my own mother was a stay-at-home mum and able to give full attention to raising a family' (NPT1).

#### **Beliefs and behaviours that limit engagement with funded childcare and FPN**

- 4.49 Beliefs about childcare and early education that limit engagement with the Offer and FPN varied according to parents' beliefs about what experiences are most important to children, their beliefs about who should be responsible for raising young children, and their cultural and religious values.

#### *I'm the best person to care for and teach my child*

- 4.50 Some parents felt that they were the best placed people to provide all their child's childcare and early education needs. One parent who had chosen to home school her children explained, 'I always assumed I would use a childcare provider before I had children. But my mind changed completely when I was pregnant. Who better to give the children what they need both emotionally and academically than their mother who knows them best?' (Carmarthen 1). This parent emphasised that she was not, 'opposed to the education system,' but believed, 'I am their mother and I know what is best for them. The children will progress to school when they get to a late junior age... I am not at home doing nothing every day, I am home teaching, raising my boys and giving them the very best.'

*Providing childcare and early education according to the principles of my faith*

- 4.51 A small number of families interviewed during the field work said that religious beliefs had a bearing and influence on their educational choices for their children. One family chose not to access the Offer because raising their children according to the principles of their own faith was important to them. This family said that as Christians, they practised their faith as a family. 'We want the children to have a Christian upbringing. However, we decided not to send them to [FPN] in a faith school so that we can give them that upbringing ourselves. We want them to be able to contribute positively to the world. The church is the focal point to our social network. We attend a mother and child group at the church and other children's groups within the community' (Newport 4).

*'Education in school starts too early'*

Some parents expressed more cautious views about early education and childcare. Some mentioned their uncertainty about the consistency of provision, for example, 'I think the quality of early education and childcare varies a great deal' (Clwyd Coast 5). Several parents believed there should be more emphasis on children staying within the family until they are older, 'I wish that the childcare culture in Wales was more like in Scandinavian countries where so much more emphasis is placed on family, and children start school later,' said one parent (Ceredigion 7). This view was echoed by another parent who said, 'education is important but going to school at four years old is early enough...education at home is more important.' This parent also believed that there was too much formality in the way some settings implement FPN, 'I like the concept of learning through play, although I think that some schools are doing it too formally' (Newport 1).

*'I prefer to keep childcare within the family'*

- 4.52 Several parents used FPN provision but did not use the childcare element of the Offer. One of the most frequent reasons for not using the childcare element of the Offer was a preference, and often a strong preference, for

keeping childcare within the family. One parent who paid for her child to attend Cylch Meithrin<sup>20</sup> said that she believed the services of the local Cylch Meithrin were beneficial to her child by providing the opportunity for her to play with friends. However, the parent would not use the playgroup provision for more than four mornings a week and would not use any other form of childcare because she said she felt uncomfortable about leaving her child for longer than that, when her mother was available to help out. She said she would rather her child, 'be cared for by family than childcare services because of the special relationship between family members' (Swansea 6).

- 4.53 Another parent who was happy for her child to attend part-time FPN in a local playgroup was quite adamant that there was no positive benefit to a child from formal childcare, 'children should be at home not dropped off with childminders every day' (Ceredigion 3). Another parent said that, 'children only have the first five years of life at home to do as they wish before they must go to school and everyone should have the opportunity to be a stay at home mum or dad' (Ceredigion7). Several parents shared this belief and reported that they did not want to take their child to formal childcare provision because they preferred that their child received care provided by a family member, or family members were eager to provide care. As one parent explained, 'the grandparents really love looking after X and I really think they wouldn't be happy if I chose to use the full 30 hours instead of them looking after her' (Clwyd Coast 3).

*It is better for my child's needs to be looked after by family*

- 4.54 In other cases, parents did not make as much use of the childcare element of the Offer as they were eligible to do because they believed that formal childcare didn't suit their child's personality or meet their particular needs. One parent said that she preferred that family members cared for her child due to her child's personality. 'I like the fact that X is close to her family

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<sup>20</sup> Swansea Council do not provide FPN in non-maintained settings such as Cylchoedd Meithrin. Parents pay for Cylch Meithrin provision in Swansea.

and that we look after her ourselves. My Mum heard about the Childcare Offer at the library....Mum thought it was a really good thing, but because X is a sensitive child...and there were times when she wouldn't let go of my Mum's or my hand, I felt that starting school was enough for her without sending her to nursery or playgroup as well' (Clwyd Coast 2). This parent feared that her child would lose confidence if she would also be attending a play group and away from the familiarity of home in addition to attending FPN, but acknowledged that the grandparent has said perhaps they should re-consider it after Christmas when the child had settled at school.

- 4.55 The eligible parent of a child with Additional Learning Needs reported that it was easier for a family member to care for the child rather than use formal childcare. The mother explained that, 'X likes to know exactly what's happening so it's easier that a family member look after him. We are eligible for the Offer, but we have decided to use only early education, as X would need to walk from school with other children to the childcare nursery. It's a fair walk and if it rained or there was any change, he wouldn't be able to cope with that' (Conwy Coast 4). The parent felt that, 'moving from one setting to another a couple of times a day isn't good for a child.' Wraparound care in one location would be the answer for this family according to the parent, but there was no suitable provision.

#### *Cultural beliefs and practices*

- 4.56 While several families commented on the very different cultural beliefs and practices around early education and childcare in their own country of origin, most of the ethnic minority community families accessed some FPN or childcare provision, even if they were not eligible for the Offer. An eligible family who was not accessing the Offer, employed an au pair to help with childcare. The mother spoke of her upbringing in China. 'In China we have very high expectations of our little emperor children. I think my thinking [as a Chinese mother] is not always understood here. I had a nanny ['Aiyi'] when I was growing up. She was really there to help me be

successful and to give me stability. I think I am trying to do this in the same way here but have to adapt to life here in Wales.<sup>21</sup>

- 4.57 Some information about Gypsy and Traveller cultural beliefs and practices was provided by a Gypsy and Traveller community officer in one LA. The community officer stated the norm was that young children were cared for at home by female members of the community, ‘Gypsy and Traveller families are very close and depend on each other for childcare to a great extent.’ A common belief among Gypsy and Traveller community members was reported to be that, ‘children aged three and four are too young to leave their families’. Reflecting this belief about childcare and early years education, three and four year old Gypsy and Traveller children that the officer engaged with tended not to access funded childcare or FPN although, the officer said that there had been a recent attempt in some local authorities to encourage children to attend nursery classes.

### **Language issues and their impact on parents’ childcare and FPN choices**

- 4.58 Parents expressed a range of beliefs about their linguistic aspirations and the influence of language on their early education and childcare decisions. This included English-medium, Welsh-medium, and bilingual education.

#### *Welsh-medium education and childcare for my child is important to me*

- 4.59 For some non-Welsh speaking parents, the availability of Welsh-medium education for their child was important for several reasons such as integrating within the local community and gaining work. A non-Welsh speaking parent said that being able to speak and use Welsh was, ‘very important in the local community and wider community, particularly job opportunities in the future and given the Welsh Government’s target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050’ (Swansea 4). Another parent believed that her children would, ‘stand a better chance within the future economic

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<sup>21</sup> Local Authority identifier not provided to protect identity

market, if they can speak Welsh' (Swansea 7). A non-Welsh speaking parent in Conwy Coast said, 'I realised as an adult how important Welsh is and how you really need it if you want to work in North Wales, that's why I've insisted that our children go to the Welsh School...I was determined that they would go to the Welsh primary' (Conwy Coast 4). A bilingual Welsh and English-speaking family felt that 'Welsh-medium education at the early years level and primary and secondary levels is essential and Welsh schools perform far better than English-medium schools, and children have so much more out of the system' (Ceredigion 7).

*Lack of Welsh-medium provision nearby*

- 4.60 Parents discussed the availability of early education and childcare in their language of choice in their local area. The availability of Welsh-medium early education and childcare provision varies significantly across Wales. Issues for the parents interviewed included being unable to find suitable linguistic provision, limited opening hours in settings and concerns about transport to Welsh-medium settings where provision was not available in close proximity to the home.
- 4.61 A perceived lack of Welsh-medium childcare provision was referred to by one parent who said, 'I have been searching for Welsh-medium childcare but I can't get it' (Ceredigion 1). A non-Welsh speaking parent said, 'I would definitely have considered sending my children to Welsh-medium early education had there been more services within close proximity to home or the nursery....The lack of choice of Welsh-medium settings for preschool and their limited opening hours was a big factor influencing this decision' (NPT3). A Welsh speaking parent who was also a childminder said that the availability of Welsh-medium provision was very important, and referred to a local lack of Welsh-medium childcare, 'all the children in my care go to the Welsh school, and I have a waiting list because there is a shortage of Welsh-medium childcare in the area' (Clwyd Coast 1).
- 4.62 A parent from an English-speaking home said that they would have considered sending her children to Welsh-medium early education had

there been more services within close proximity to home. 'But none of the Welsh-medium settings had undertaken Quality Assurance schemes and their CIW reports fell short in comparison with English settings' (NPT3). Another parent said she was travelling several miles from home to ensure that her child attended Welsh-medium provision. She explained that there was no Welsh-medium provision in the immediate vicinity of her home, therefore she used a playgroup approximately four miles away from her home, 'based on the fact that it is Welsh provision' (Swansea 1). She felt that more Welsh-medium provision was needed in her locality.

*Welsh is beneficial, but English is more important*

- 4.63 For other families Welsh-medium education was not an important consideration. A non-Welsh speaking parent felt that even though she sent their child to the local Cylch Meithrin and that the child, 'has benefited from getting a basic grasp of the language' that Welsh was, 'a dying language' and the child would 'not necessarily benefit from it in the future' (Swansea 5). A non-Welsh speaking parent was happy with English provision but didn't mind if her child learnt Welsh at school. 'Welsh isn't important to me as a parent, but I'm happy enough that my child will learn it at school' (Ceredigion 6). Another parent said that, 'nothing would make me choose a Welsh setting as I do not consider this a priority (Swansea 8). For another English-speaking family, the convenience of the location of an English-medium primary school and reliance on family support for childcare after school was the deciding factor in choosing early education provision (Swansea 6). A Welsh-speaking parent said that, as a family, 'we have chosen to live our lives through the medium of English because X [the father] does not speak or understand Welsh'. This family chose for their child not to attend, 'the nearest school and playgroup [that] is Welsh-medium which we didn't want for X' (Conwy Coast1).
- 4.64 A parent in Neath Port Talbot said that being able to speak Welsh would be an advantage for their child, 'but English is more important... English-medium primary schools now offer a basic level of Welsh' (NPT3). Another

parent whose child was attending English-medium provision explained that, 'my husband is keen for the children to learn additional languages in future such as French or Spanish. The children will be able to choose if they wish to learn Welsh themselves, that will be their decision' (NPT4).

*Factors that would encourage parents to make use of Welsh and bilingual provision*

- 4.65 Parents referred to factors that would encourage them to make use of Welsh- medium or bilingual education and childcare if they were unable to do so at present. These included provision of wraparound care in the nearest Welsh-medium primary school, improving transport to Welsh-medium settings, greater awareness of Welsh-medium settings in the local authority among English-speaking parents, closer proximity of Welsh-medium schools, more choice and longer opening hours in Welsh-medium settings.

*Maintaining our native language and learning English is our priority*

- 4.66 Seven parents who were speakers of languages other than Welsh and English took part in this study. They all valued their languages and their language aspirations for their child were to maintain their native language and learning English, at least while their child was young. Learning Welsh was not a particular priority for these families. An English and Thai-speaking family said that as soon as their child started nursery, 'the playgroup staff noted that her English was poor and recommended that she would benefit from extra sessions to improve her English'. However, 'the price for this was expensive and on a single wage we couldn't afford it. X has found it difficult to take on learning Welsh as she already struggles with English.' The family were uncertain of where their future lay but they were attempting to, 'keep both Thai and English traditions and ways of life for the child. They said that the mother 'will always speak Thai to her' This was an example of a family who are attempting to keep both Thai and

English traditions for their child. They hoped to re-apply for the Offer once the mother was in employment.<sup>22</sup>

- 4.67 An English and Mandarin Chinese-speaking family said that ‘Welsh-medium education isn’t for us. [Father] can’t speak Welsh nor can any of his family and I’m not sure that the girls will choose to live in Wales in the future, so they won’t need to learn Welsh. We don’t really know anyone who speaks Welsh. I think that in this area so close to England.’<sup>23</sup>

### **Issues regarding accessing funded childcare and FPN for specific groups.**

- 4.68 In this section, we draw together the findings that are relevant for specific groups within the sample.

#### *Low-income parents*

- 4.69 Some of the parents who were on a low income said that their circumstances restricted them from being able to work more hours to claim the Offer. A parent currently using Flying Start provision and hoping to qualify to use 30-hour Offer said that it was, ‘difficult to work and bring up children as a single parent’. She did not want to give up working because, ‘when my child goes to school, I hope to increase my hours’ (NPT 6). Another parent living in a Flying Start area said that she felt the government’s priorities regarding childcare were incorrect. She felt that, ‘the government should be encouraging mums or dad to stay at home to raise children rather than encouraging them to work and give their children to someone else to raise,’ and added, ‘why not give mums or dads some money to stay at home instead and spend time with their kids?’ (Ceredigion 3).
- 4.70 Another issue affecting some lower income families was that if a parent could not drive and no public transport was available, the difficulty of

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<sup>22</sup> Local Authority identifier not provided to protect identity.

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making the journey to their choice of FPN and or childcare provision, meant their child forwent its FPN or childcare entitlement.

*Families with an Additional Learning Needs child*

- 4.71 The parents who participated in this study reported a variety of children's medical conditions and special educational needs ranging from severe eczema and food allergies to delayed speech, autism and ADHD. In all cases, the child's additional needs made accessing suitable FPN and childcare provision more challenging. Nevertheless, the children's additional needs had not prevented parents from making some use of FPN and childcare provision but, in some cases, contributed to decisions not to access the Offer in full.
- 4.72 A parent whose three-year-old child had several food allergies said they were very pleased with the level of support for the child's needs provided by the Nursery. 'She has a Care Plan and sees the Paediatrician and Nutritionist occasionally. I focus on food and health because of the allergies and also sleep!' (Cardiff 2). The family were not yet using the FPN entitlement because 'a big factor also would be the schools' policy on allergies. They would have to be inclusive in terms of nutrition and my daughter's needs' (Cardiff 2).
- 4.73 A parent who was awaiting feedback after an assessment for autism said of her child, 'when he was in playgroup one of the staff mentioned some concerns. To us he's just X but then I started to notice some little things and they became more apparent as he settled in. Things like a need for a routine and knowing what's coming next a little bit more than other children.' The family were eligible for the Offer but had decided to only use FPN, which the child attends each morning, 'we thought its easier all round because X likes his routine. My dad takes him home, and they have a routine of feeding dad's fish in the garden and playing outside where possible until my husband picks him up.' (Conwy Coast 4). This family's ability to use the Offer in full was limited by their FPN setting not also providing funded childcare.

- 4.74 A single parent who worked 16.5 hours a week over three days was not claiming the Offer ('I can't have it because it effects my housing benefit') reported that her child was receiving speech and language therapy (SALT) because she spoke very little for her age. The child attended playgroup and early education. The parent said, 'X chats a lot more in playgroup...I hope she comes on with her speaking' (Conwy Coast 5).
- 4.75 Another eligible parent who was not claiming the Offer said that her child had been diagnosed with a very rare illness. The child attended playgroup every morning and three afternoons a week; the parent was pleased that her child 'has the opportunity to play with other children of the same age. The mother who worked full time said she relied, 'on my sister, brother in law, mum and a childminder to take and collect the children' (Swansea 9).
- 4.76 The experiences outlined above highlight the need for all FPN and childcare providers to be able to meet the special and varying needs of ALN children in order to maximise the opportunities for parents and their children to benefit in full from the Offer provision. Further research is required to better understand the specific barriers facing ALN children's families with regard to taking up the Offer in full.

#### *Families form Ethnic Minority communities*

- 4.77 Seven parents from ethnic minority communities took part in this study. Some of the considerations they had in relation to accessing childcare and early education provision included negotiating different educational experiences compared to their own in their country of origin, attempting to replicate some of their own upbringing and maintaining cultural and language practices while managing the different social norms and behaviours expected in childcare and FPN provision in Wales.
- 4.78 A parent who grew up in China said, 'the choice of activities locally isn't as great as in XXX. When I was a child, at the weekends we spent time as a family - me, my parents and both sets of grandparents. I miss that [my

children] aren't able to have that'. The family had chosen to employ an au pair for their child rather than take up the Offer.<sup>24</sup>

4.79 A Thai parent said that it had been a culture shock when they moved to Wales, reporting that the three-year-old child had found it difficult because, 'discipline is a lot more relaxed in Thailand, and she is seen as 'naughty' here. Our problem is different in that X is seriously lacking in the social aspect of UK life, and the language problem.' The other parent who was raised in the Wales further explained that, 'Mum will always speak Thai to her and wants her to learn to read and write Thai, and she is learning to read and write in English now. Spending time with mum doesn't help the language situation and for a long time, although she understood me speaking English, she would refuse to answer in English. It's a little easier now that she is in school in the morning and can spend time with me as well in the afternoon.'<sup>25</sup>

4.80 A parent brought up in Poland who had come to Britain to study at university said that she had a strict upbringing compared to the UK. 'I was brought up in a small city, where there was lots to do, and many hobbies and activities after school. I know my children will be brought up in a different country, and in a smaller town, but I would like them to have a good choice of activities for after school. I learned English as a teenager, but my children are lucky to get two languages from an early age.' The maternal grandmother also lived with the family and provided care for the younger child when they are not attending FPN provision at school. The Grandmother did not speak much English and when the father was not at home, 'we all speak Polish. X isn't confident in English and will always answer in Polish. I don't know how she gets on in school.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Local Authority identifier not provided to protect identity.

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### *Families in rural areas*

- 4.81 Families in rural areas reported that problems stemmed from lack of availability of childcare provision. Due to a perceived lack of childcare provision in their area, parents reported that they had been unable to find suitable provision for their needs and some parents said that they were unable to return to work due to lack of provision. A parent said that she was on extended maternity leave because she was unable to find a registered, Welsh-speaking childminder for her child (Ceredigion 1). Another parent said that she would return to work and claim the Offer if she could find a nursery close by. She said she had been looking for day-care Nursery since arriving in Wales, 'but there was nothing in the area to offer this' (Ceredigion 4). In more rural areas in Clwyd Coast the lack of choice of provision was also reported. A parent in Clwyd Coast had started her own childminding business rather than continue her work as a teacher, 'so that my children would be able to access good quality, Welsh-medium childcare so I consider myself lucky to have been able to do this' (Clwyd Coast 1).

### *Single parent families*

- 4.82 Issues raised by lone parents that participated in this study included fear of losing other benefits if they applied for the Offer and a lack of knowledge about the Offer. Confidence and time to apply for the Offer was also mentioned as a barrier.
- 4.83 Lone parents explained some of the difficulties they faced in relation to early education and childcare. A lone parent who worked full-time but did not live with his child had very little knowledge of the Offer. He said, 'As a father who no longer lives in the family home, I don't feel we are being treated fairly by the system. I want the best for my child...I don't know about [the Offer] but I've seen something on television – maybe an advertisement? I don't think we can get it. It will probably affect benefits' (Blaenau Gwent 1).

4.84 Another lone parent who was in full-time employment relied mainly on her parents for support with childcare for two young children. The younger child was attending some sessions at a playgroup which was paid for by grandparents. The parent was aware of the Offer but said, 'I don't feel confident in filling in all of the necessary paperwork. I believe that I am eligible for the Childcare Offer, but I am concerned about filling in the forms.' For her, this was a barrier and prevented her from using the Offer. However, there was no urgency to claim because she felt, 'I have all the support I need, with my parent's help' (Swansea 5).

#### *Student parents*

4.85 Parents who were undergraduate or postgraduate student are not eligible to apply the Offer.<sup>27</sup> Issues for student parents included a sense of frustration at not being able to access the Offer, especially when following vocational postgraduate training, and difficulties in navigating the requirement of following a university degree course, part-time employment and securing suitable child care provision to suit both parent and child.

4.86 Four parents who were students took part in the research. One parent, a lone parent, was also in employment for 16 hours a week. She was living in Wales but attending university in England. She explained that because, 'the way our life is - it suits me better for him to go to the nursery near my university. I'm not sure how I could get him to nursery by our house (in Clwyd Coast). It would be much longer hours and he's settled where he is. I thought I would get lots of financial support being a student, but I get some help with the house and bills, but not much help with childcare. I struggled badly for the first few months because all the money I earned went to pay for childcare. The nursery is subsidised for students but still expensive.' (Clwyd Coast 6). A parent who started a PGCE course in September 2019, had heard about the Offer, as her friend had it for her boy, 'and I thought we would be eligible for it. I really didn't think that

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<sup>27</sup> Depending on their circumstances, undergraduate student parent, could get financial assistance if they have dependent children via Student Finance Wales.

because I am a student that we wouldn't get it. It was a huge disappointment. Because my husband earns £27,000 which isn't a lot for the family, we don't get any of the help available to students or childcare credit. So, we are really stuck this year. I'm lucky that my mother can help, but I think that when I am on placement it will be too much for her to do every day' (Conwy 6). Another parent who was a student and whose partner worked a 40 hour shift pattern said they were unable to access childcare because, 'childcare is so expensive and I don't think I'm able to eligible use the Childcare Offer as I'm studying' (Newport 1). A parent who was a student nurse believed that students should receive more childcare support, 'I think the government could give a lot more support to students. Because my partner works and I don't, we do not meet the free Childcare Offer requirements. The student loans company offer to pay some childcare costs but because of my partners income we don't qualify. We simply can't afford to send her to creche or Meithrin and that's sad because I think she would love it' (Carmarthen 4).

#### *Local authority border area families*

- 4.87 Issues for families who lived in local authority border areas included difficulties and uncertainties about how and where to access childcare when working and living in two different local authority areas.
- 4.88 A student parent who was also working 16 hours per week but not claiming the Offer was living in Wales but studying and accessing childcare in England. 'The nursery gave me a flyer about the free childcare but when I asked about it, they weren't sure I could get it because I live in Wales and the nursery is in England.' (Clwyd Coast 6). Another parent reported that she had trouble accessing early education initially because each parent worked in different local authority from each other, 'there was limited choice of settings who could offer collection / drop offs which would cater for our flexible work patterns' (NPT 1).

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 In this chapter, we summarise our key findings and conclusions.

### **Parent awareness of entitlement and understanding of how to apply for the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)**

- The majority of parents who participated in the research were aware of the Offer. Many said they had received information through childcare providers, local authorities and Welsh Government websites, local radio stations and local libraries.
- Some parents said that despite being aware of the Offer, they were unaware of the process of how to access it.
- Most parents knew that all three and four year old children in Wales are entitled to at least 10 hours of early education every week and were aware of the availability of FPN provision in their area. Most parents also knew how to apply for FPN provision`

### **Knowing about and accessing family support agencies and services**

- Most parents said that they were able to access the information they needed about family support agencies and services.
- Sources of information frequently mentioned included: health professionals, childcare providers, local library, information from friends, local newspaper, and social media.
- Parents referred to a range of services and support agencies that they used locally, but for some parents, cost was a factor preventing them from using these services.
- The factors that influenced parents' use of family support agencies and services included information shared by childcare settings such as playgroups, information shared by health professionals and recommendations from friends.

### **Practical barriers to accessing the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)**

- A few parents said that they had had difficulty accessing information about the Offer. Limited contact with childcare providers could lead to lack of parental awareness of the Offer.
- A minority of parents lacked awareness of entitlement to FPN and were uncertain of where to access early education in their area. The lack of awareness was more apparent amongst parents interviewed in Swansea.
- In some research areas, parents reported that the lack of childcare provision in their area restricted their employment options.

- Some parents were not accessing their child's FPN entitlement because FPN in their language of choice was not available locally or was considered to be too far away to be practical.
- The lack of wraparound care in settings posed a barrier to accessing the Offer. Some families were not claiming the FPN element of the Offer due to difficulties in taking a child from a childcare setting to FPN provision. Other parents reported that they were unable to access the Offer fully because the cost of moving their child between FPN in school and a childcare setting was a barrier.
- Inflexibility of childcare provision and FPN was also a perceived problem for some, particularly those parents who worked shifts and irregular hours.

#### **Administrative barriers to accessing the Offer (funded childcare and FPN)**

- Several parents reported they were unable to claim the Offer due to difficulties with their employment status, for instance, working inconsistent hours or not having payslips due to self-employment.
- Completing the application form to claim the Offer was reported to be a barrier by some parents. Reported difficulties included a lack of confidence by parents to complete the application form and a perception that the application process was complicated.
- Other families perceived that the information required to complete the application form was too invasive into family privacy and they were unwilling to provide the amount of information required to register for the Offer.
- Several parents expressed frustration that they could not apply for the Offer. In some instances, this was because they were in receipt of other benefits.
- Some families reported that childcare costs (e.g. in circumstances where available playgroups or childminders were not signed up to the Offer) restricted their child's access to childcare provision.
- A significant barrier to take up was the lack of funded childcare for children under the age of three which created issues of affordability for parents with multiple children age three to four and younger. Low-income parents, in particular, preferred to work less and stay at home to look after the children, 'than use all my wages to pay for childcare.'

#### **Beliefs and behaviours that encouraged engagement with funded childcare and FPN services**

- Parents articulated differing beliefs in relation to the importance of work and using some of their FPN and childcare eligibility to re-enter the labour market.

For some, financial incentives were paramount. For others, the financial advantage of working was not a priority.

- Some mothers talked about their need to work and the mental health benefits they gained from working.
- Believing in the importance of a child's early socialisation outside the family and with the child's peer group were given as reasons for accessing the Offer or elements of the Offer by some parents.
- Many parents felt that early education was beneficial for children for social and educational reasons. Some parents expressed their views about the importance of developing early learning skills and being 'school ready' through using the Offer.
- Some parents felt that attending formal childcare and early education had a positive impact on their children's language development.
- Many parents reported that they had attended early education themselves and, to a lesser extent, formal childcare. Others had not attended early education or childcare at all before starting school. Whatever the parents' childhood experiences, it was clear that they did shape the parents' views but that other factors were often also at play in their decisions as adults around their own child's education and childcare.

### **Beliefs and behaviours that limit engagement with funded childcare and FPN**

- Beliefs about childcare and early education that limited engagement varied according to parents' views about what experiences were most important to children, their views about who should be responsible for raising young children, and their cultural values.
- One of the most frequent reasons for not using the Offer was a belief that keeping childcare within the family was important. Some parents reported that they did not want to take their child to formal childcare provision because they preferred that their child received care provided by a family member, or family members were eager to provide care.
- Some parents believed that children were too young to start going to school at three years of age even if FPN involved learning through play and also expressed a preference for delaying the age for full-time education.
- Some parents who did access part time FPN for their child had strong beliefs that children should not, in addition, be placed in childcare provision and that any additional childcare was best provided by family members.
- Cultural values and practices regarding early education and childcare were also mentioned as reasons for not accessing the Offer – both FPN and funded

childcare. These were values based on beliefs that childcare and early education / socialisation should be the responsibility of parents, and the wider family.

### **Language issues and their impact on parents' childcare and FPN choices**

- Parents discussed their knowledge about the availability of early education and childcare in their language of choice in their local area. The availability of Welsh-medium early education and childcare provision varies across Wales. There was a perceived lack of adequate Welsh-medium childcare provision in some areas.
- For some parents, the availability of Welsh-medium early education for their child was important for several reasons such as integrating within the local community and gaining work. Welsh-medium early education and childcare was not an important consideration for other families, although most were content for their children to learn some Welsh.
- Parents referred to factors that would encourage them to make use of Welsh-medium or bilingual early childhood education and care if they are unable to do so at present. These included provision of wraparound care in the nearest Welsh-medium primary school, improving transport to Welsh-medium settings, greater awareness of Welsh-medium settings, closer proximity of Welsh-medium schools, more choice and longer opening hours in Welsh-medium settings.
- Seven parents who were speakers of languages other than Welsh and English took part in this study. They all valued their own languages and their language aspirations for their child were to maintain their own language and learn English, at least while their child was young. Learning Welsh was not a priority for them at this stage in their child's life.

### **Issues regarding accessing funded childcare and FPN for specific groups**

- Some parents who were on a low income, said that their circumstances restricted them from being able to work more hours to claim the Offer.
- Parents who participated in this study reported a variety of children's medical conditions and additional learning needs ranging from severe eczema and food allergies to delayed speech, autism and ADHD. In all cases, the child's additional needs made accessing suitable FPN and childcare provision more challenging. Nevertheless, the children's additional needs had not prevented parents from making some use of FPN and childcare provision but, in some

cases, due to lack of appropriate wraparound care, contributed to their not accessing the Offer in full.

- Parents from ethnic minority communities mentioned how different educational experiences are now compared to their own, and were keen to replicate some of their own upbringing.
- Families in rural areas reported that problems stemmed from lack of availability of childcare provision. Due to a perceived lack of childcare provision in their areas, parents reported that they had been unable to find suitable provision for their needs and some parents said that they were unable to return to work due to lack of provision.
- Issues raised by lone parents included fear of losing other benefits if they applied for the Offer, a lack of knowledge about the Offer. Confidence and time to apply for the Offer was also reported as a barrier.
- Issues for families who live and work in different local authority areas included difficulties and uncertainties about how and where to access childcare.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 The following recommendations are informed by findings that have emerged from the research into parent beliefs, behaviours, and barriers regarding childcare and early education.

### *Recommendation 1*

- 6.2 The research indicated that there was confusion among some of the parents interviewed, about differences between childcare and early education. A clearer guide to the differences between childcare and early education in the information provided to parents by LA's and in Welsh Government marketing and communication campaigns would be useful.

### *Recommendation 2*

- 6.3 Although many parents were aware of the Offer, it was apparent from the research that current information sharing methods did not reach all parents of three and four year old children in Wales. Limited contact with childcare providers could lead to a lack of parental awareness of the Offer. If a parent was out of the system by caring for their own child or relying on informal childcare such as grandparents, less awareness of the Offer was likely. Further consideration of communication methods regarding the Offer by LAs and Welsh Government may aid take-up.

### *Recommendation 3*

- 6.4 LA's should consider the diversity of communications that may be required to ensure hard-to-reach groups are able to make informed decisions about whether they take-up the Offer. This could include translation of information into a variety of languages and contacting support officers that work with communities to provide information.

### *Recommendation 4*

- 6.5 The research indicates that many parents valued the importance of a child's early socialisation outside the family and with the child's peer group. Many parents reported their belief that early education was beneficial for children for social and educational reasons, the importance

of developing early learning skills and being 'school ready' through using the Offer. These aspects of FPN provision should be highlighted in communication materials provided by LA's, Family Information Services and Welsh Government.

#### *Recommendation 5*

- 6.6 Completing the application form was reported to be a barrier to some parents which prevented them from applying. There was also a perception that the application process was complicated. Administrators should ensure that application forms are as user-friendly as possible and ensure that more support is available help those families that need assistance with completing the application process.

#### *Recommendation 6*

- 6.7 The research indicated that parents in some circumstances encountered administrative barriers which prevented them from accessing their full entitlement to childcare and FPN. Several parents reported they were unable to claim the Offer due to difficulties with their employment status, for instance, working inconsistent hours or not having payslips due to self-employment. Parents working in precarious employment such as zero hours contracts or inconsistent working hours found it difficult to engage with the Offer. Not having payslips or being able to prove working hours was problematic for some self-employed parents. The Offer should be delivered to accommodate a wide range of employment and training circumstances. When confirming eligibility for the Offer, consideration should be given by LA's to differing employment circumstances and whether the Offer can be designed to be used flexibly by those in precarious employment situations.

#### *Recommendation 7*

- 6.8 A significant barrier to take-up was the lack of funded childcare for children under the age of three which created issues of affordability for parents with multiple children aged three to four and younger. To increase take up of age targeted government funded early childhood education and care, the

Welsh Government should consider what assistance could be provided to families with more than one child who are close in age in these circumstances

*Recommendation 8*

- 6.9 There appears to be unmet demand for childcare in some geographical areas and for Welsh medium early childhood education and care. The Welsh Government and LA's may wish to further consider childcare sufficiency nationally and locally, and what they may be able to do to support sustainability and growth in the sector.

*Recommendation 9*

- 6.10 Experiences reported in the research highlight the need for FPN and childcare providers to be able to meet the special and varying needs of ALN children in order to maximise the opportunities for parents and their ALN children to benefit from the Offer provision. The potential barriers that limit the ability of families with ALN children to access the Offer in full and would warrant further investigation in research funded by Welsh Government.

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## Annex A: Privacy Notice



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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### **Qualitative study of parent beliefs, behaviours and barriers regarding childcare and early education**

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The Welsh Government has commissioned IAITH: Welsh Centre for Language Planning to undertake research on the reasons why parents of children aged 3-4 choose not to take up formal childcare and early years foundation phase nursery education.

The aim of this research is to understand the reasons why parents choose not to take up these services and what motivates parents to make choices around early years education and care.

As part of this research, IAITH will be gathering information through an ethnographic style approach. This means that they will join you during your normal daily activities to try and understand your views and feelings towards early childhood education and care. This will be through day to day conversations with you or your community researcher may ask if you'd like to take part in an informal interview.

The Welsh Government is the data controller for the research. However, IAITH will delete any personal data provided through the informal conversations and interviews and anonymise the raw data, before it is shared with Welsh Government.

The information collected during the project will be included in a report published on the Welsh Government website and possibly in other publications by IAITH and Welsh Government.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. However, your views and experiences are important in order to help inform Welsh Government policies.

The contact for this research at is Kathryn Jones at IAITH: Welsh Centre for Language Planning.

E-mail address: [kathryn.jones@iaith.cymru](mailto:kathryn.jones@iaith.cymru)

Telephone number: 01745 222 053 (direct line)

## PRIVACY NOTICE

### What personal data do we hold and where do we get this information?

Personal data is defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as ‘any information relating to an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified by reference to an identifier’. Special category data such as ethnic group or religious belief has additional protection under data protection law.

You have expressed an interest in being part of this research after hearing about the project from someone else, seeing an online post about the project or by talking directly to one of IAITH’s community researchers. If you are willing to take part in the research and contact IAITH by phone or email you are asked to provide contact details (your name, phone number, home address and email address if you have one).

As part of this research we will also be collecting the following personal information:

- Ethnicity
- Religious Belief
- Whether or not you or your child have any long term health conditions
- Whether your child has a special educational need (SEN)

IAITH will only use your email address, home address and telephone numbers for the purposes of this research.

When the researcher makes notes about their observations and during informal conversations and interviews, any personal data will be anonymised and pseudonyms rather than real names will be used.

If you raise a query or complaint and provide personal data requesting a response, the researcher will forward the request only to the relevant official and subsequently delete it from the research data.

### What is the lawful basis for using your data?

The lawful basis for processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task; that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government. Some of the data we are collecting are called ‘special category data’ (in this case ethnicity, religious belief and details of any long term health conditions or your child’s

special education need(s) (SEN(s)) and the lawful basis for processing this information is that it is for statistical or research purposes.

Participation is completely voluntary. Research studies such as this are important for the Welsh Government to collect information and actionable evidence about its ability to deliver government priorities. The information collected in this research, for example, might be used to:

- support improvements to services;
- allocate money to Local Authorities and others; or
- support wider research into the provision of services to you and your child, or others.

### **How secure is your personal data?**

Personal information provided to IAITH is always stored on a secure server. The data can only be accessed by a limited number of researchers working on this project. Any paper recorded research notes and observations are kept under lock in IAITH offices. IAITH will only use this data for research purposes. IAITH has cyber essentials certification.

IAITH has procedures to deal with any suspected data security breaches. If a suspected breach occurs, IAITH will report this to the Welsh Government who will notify you and any applicable regulator where we are legally required to do so.

All data gathered through this research will be reported in an anonymised format. It will not contain your contact details and any identifiable information will be removed. IAITH will use the information gathered to produce a report that will be published on the Welsh Government website. This report will not include any information that could be used to identify individual participants.

### **How long do we keep your personal data?**

IAITH will hold personal data during the contract period, and any personal data not already removed during data collection and data analysis will be deleted by IAITH within three months after the end of the contract. This includes your contact details.

IAITH will only provide Welsh Government with an anonymised dataset which will not include information that could identify you.

### **Individual rights**

Under GDPR, you have the following rights in relation to the personal information you provide as part of this project. You have the right:

- to access a copy of your own data;
- for us to rectify inaccuracies in that data;

- to object to or restrict processing (in certain circumstances);
- for your data to be 'erased' (in certain circumstances); and
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Phone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113. Website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

### **Further Information**

If you have any further questions about how the data provided as part of this study will be used by the Welsh Government or wish to exercise your rights using the General Data Protection Regulation, please contact:

Name: Katrina Morrison

E-mail address: [katrina.morrison@gov.wales](mailto:katrina.morrison@gov.wales)

Telephone number: 0300 025 8528

The Welsh Government's Data Protection Officer can be contacted at:

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ, Email:

[DataProtectionOfficer@gov.wales](mailto:DataProtectionOfficer@gov.wales).

## Annex B: Data Collection Instruments



### 1 Manylion Gweinyddol Administrative Matters

<b>Ardal</b> Area:	<b>Cod y teulu</b> Family Code:	<b>Yn byw mewn ardal Dechrau'n Deg?</b> Living in Flying Start area?  <b>Y / N</b>	<b>Teulu wedi cael hysbysiad preifatrwydd?</b> Was family given privacy notice?  <b>Do / naddo</b> Yes / no
<b>Statws</b> Status:  <b>drafft / terfynol</b> final	<b>Gwiriwyd gan</b> Checked by:		<b>Gwiriad terfynol</b> Final Check:
<b>Data personol yn anhysbys:</b> Personal data anonymised:	<b>Ydi</b> Yes  <b>Nac ydi</b> No	<b>Gwiriwyd gan</b> Checked by:	<b>Gwiriad terfynol</b> Final Check:
<b>Gwaith maes 1 – be a lle?</b> Fieldwork 1 – what and where?	<b>Gwaith maes 2 – be a lle?</b> Fieldwork 2 – what and where?	<b>Gwaith maes 3 – be a lle?</b> Fieldwork 3 – what and where?	

## 2 Gorolwg Overview

Ardal Area:		Child with first language - Other	Child with first language -English	Child with first language -Welsh	Child with SEND	Travellers	Minority ethnic community background	Low income parent(s)	Non-W-speaking parent(s) -Other	Non-W-speaking parent(s) English	Welsh-speaking parent(s)	Two parent household	One parent household	Non CCO eligible parent(s)	Eligible parent(s) not accessing CCO	Targed Target	
1																	
2																	
3																	
4																	
5																	
																	<b>Cyfanswm Total</b>

### 3 Proffil teuluol Family profile

<b>Agwedd Aspect</b>	<b>Manylion Details</b>  <i>Dim enwau/rhifau cyswllt/cyfeiriadau/cyfeiriadau e-bost i'w cynnwys / No names/  contact numbers/addresses/email addresses to be included</i>
<b>Lleoliad a math o gartref</b> Location and type of home – area, name of village / town <i>(no address)</i> , length of time in current home	
<b>Aelwyd Household</b> – one or two parents, other adults	
<b>Siblingiaid Siblings</b> - number and age of children, position among siblings of the 3-4 year old child	

<p><b>laith (ieithoedd) y rhiant /oedolion</b></p> <p>Language(s) of parent(s) / adults</p> <p>Welsh-speaking, non-W speaking, English, BSL, other languages</p>	
<p><b>laith/ieithoedd y plentyn</b> <b><i>Language(s) of child</i></b> and other children in the home</p>	
<p><b>Defnydd iaith ar yr aelwyd ymysg aelodau'r teulu</b></p> <p>Language use in the home amongst family members</p>	
<p><b>Amgylchiadau arbennig – plentyn</b></p> <p>Special circumstances – child (explain without providing detailed descriptions of medical conditions)</p>	

<p><b>Amgylchiadau arbennig - rhiant/rhieni</b></p> <p>Special circumstances – parent(s)</p> <p>(explain without providing detailed descriptions of medical conditions)</p>	
<p><b>Ethnigrwydd</b> Ethnicity</p> <p>(note if parent(s) were born in / always lived locally or moved from another part of Wales or from another country, do parent(s) self-identify as being Welsh / 'non-Welsh'?</p> <p>Ask: What is your ethnic group? And show the list of ethnic groups to choose from (see Section 6)/ <b>Gofynnwch: Beth yw eich grŵp ethnig?</b></p>	

<p><b>A dangoswch y rhestr o grwpiau ethnig iddynt ddewis categori (gw. Adran 6)</b></p>	
<p><b>Credoau Crefyddol</b> Religious beliefs  (note any relevant information e.g. self-define as member of religious group / attend places of worship)</p>	
<p><b>Galwedigaeth rhiant / rhieni</b> Parent(s) occupation – current and previous employment / unemployment  Where do they work? How far is travel to work? Working hours/shift work?</p>	
<p><b>Addysg rhiant/rhieni</b> Parent(s) education – place, level, medium of education</p>	

<p><b>Teulu estynedig – y fam</b>  Extended family – maternal  Who, living where, frequency  and type of involvement</p>	
<p><b>Teulu estynedig – y tad</b>  Extended family – paternal  Who, living where, frequency  and type of involvement</p>	
<p><b>Defnydd iaith gyda'r teulu estynedig</b>  Language use with extended family  Who? When? What language(s)?</p>	
<p><b>Rhwydweithiau cymdeithasol/cymunedol pwysig eraill yn lleol</b>  Other significant social / community networks locally –</p>	

friends, neighbours, shared community	
<b>Mudoledd / Mobility</b> Place of birth, place of childhood / upbringing	
<b>Diddordebau a gweithgareddau cymunedol</b> Interests and community activities	

**4 Gwerthoedd ac arferion** Values and practices

<b>Agwedd</b> Aspect	<b>Manylion</b> Details
	<i>Dim enwau na data personol i'w cynnwys / No names or personal data to be included</i>
How would you describe your family life at the moment?	

What does a typical <b>day</b> look like for [child aged 3-4]?	
What does a typical <b>week</b> look like for [child aged 3-4]?	
Do you have a typical daily routine? Parents/family	
How do you feel about looking after your child and working/looking for work/ any other responsibilities?	
Does anyone else ever look after X for you? Who, when, where? How do you feel about these arrangements?	
Do you manage to get the support you want / need to help raise your child?	

What's important to you about the way you're raising your child?	
Would you say that you are trying to bring your child up in the same way as when you were a child? Why / why not? What's the same? Different?	
What are your hopes and dreams for your child?	
Have you ever thought about using childcare?	
What do you think about education? Preschool/Primary schools Any plans? Where? What age?	

## 5 Cwestiynau ymchwil – rhestr wirio Research questions check list

<p><b>Cwestiynau ymchwil LIC</b></p> <p>Welsh Government research questions</p>	<p><b>Cwestiynau ‘Aide memoire’</b></p> <p>‘Aide memoire’ questions</p>	<p><b>Tystiolaeth, gwybodaeth a dyfyniadau</b></p> <p>Evidence, information and quotes</p> <p><i>Dim enwau na data personol i’w cynnwys / No names or personal data to be included</i></p>
<p>What are the influencing factors in determining why some parents/carers choose not to take their child to Foundation Phase Nursery?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know that all 3-year-old children in Wales are able to have 10 (12.5) hours of early education every week?</li> <li>• Do you know where you can access early education</li> <li>• Have you thought about taking your child to the early education in (local school) or (nursery/cylch meithrin)?</li> <li>• What made you decide not to take your child to early education in a school or nursery/ cylch meithrin?</li> <li>• What do you know about the early education in schools?</li> <li>• What do you think about the early education in schools?</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think 3-4-year olds should (not) go to early education? Why?</li> </ul>	
<p>What are the influencing factors in determining why some parents/carers who are eligible for the Childcare Offer choose not to take it up?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know how to get information about the Childcare Offer in Wales? Do you know if you are eligible for the Childcare Offer?</li> <li>• Do you know where you can access childcare in your area?</li> <li>• What do you know about the Childcare Offer outside the school system in nursery/cylch meithrin?</li> <li>• What do you think about the Childcare Offer outside the school system in nursery/cylch meithrin?</li> <li>• Are there any reasons why you do not want to use the Childcare Offer?</li> </ul>	
<p>What are the influencing factors in determining why some parents/carers who are not eligible for the Childcare Offer choose not take up formal childcare?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you use childcare if you were eligible for the Childcare Offer?</li> </ul>	

<p>Do parents/ carers understand how to apply for the FPN?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know how to apply for a place in early education in your local school or in full day care?</li> </ul>	
<p>Do parents/carers know how to apply for the Childcare Offer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know how to apply for the Childcare Offer?</li> </ul>	
<p>How do parents/carers decide which services and/or entitlement(s) they engage with? How did they find out about these services? And what influences these decisions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What services and support agencies are available to help parents with young children locally? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you use any of them? If so, which ones?’</li> <li>○ How did you find out about these services?</li> <li>○ How did you decide which ones to use?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>What socio demographic and cultural influences have a bearing on parents/carers choosing not to access early</p>	<p>ANSWER FROM ANALYSIS ACROSS SAMPLE OF FAMILIES</p>	

education and childcare?		
Aside from practical implications, what perceptions / preconceived ideas do parents/carers have of early education and childcare, and do these expectations create reluctance and/or barriers to engaging with these services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about early education?</li> <li>• What do you think about childcare?</li> <li>• Has anything put you off the idea of early education for your child?</li> <li>• Has anything put you off the idea of childcare for your child?</li> <li>• Did you ever go to early education when you were 3-4?</li> <li>• Did you ever go to childcare when you were 3-4?</li> <li>• Do any of your friends take their children to early education / use childcare?</li> <li>• Do you think that the childcare in this area (town / village / Local Authority) would be suitable for your child?</li> <li>• How does childcare here compare with childcare in (other place / other country)?</li> <li>• How does early education for children aged 3-4 here compare with (other place / other country)?</li> </ul>	
What hinders (and helps, or could help) parents/carers to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything that stops you from using early education or childcare?</li> </ul>	

engage with early education and childcare services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything that would help you to use early education or childcare?</li> </ul>	
<p>Are certain issues surrounding early education and childcare more prominent for certain groups? (Socioeconomic status / ethnicity) – Are certain issues more prominent for certain groups?</p>	ANSWER FROM ANALYSIS ACROSS SAMPLE OF FAMILIES	
<p>What, if anything, would make parents/carers reconsider taking their child to an early education or childcare setting? And what would convince them to continue to do so regularly?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything that would make you think again about taking your child to early education or childcare?</li> <li>• Is there anything that would convince you to continue to do so regularly?</li> </ul>	

<p>If parents have used early education or childcare, to what extent has provision delivered against any expectations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have used early education or childcare in the past, was there any reason why you stopped?</li> <li>• What had you expected early education to be like? Did your child enjoy going? Did it work well for you? Did it turn out to be as you expected? If not, why not?</li> <li>• What had you expected childcare to be like? Did your child enjoy going? Did it work well for you? Did it turn out to be as you expected? If not, why not?</li> </ul>	
<p>To what extent do language-related factors influence parents' / carers' choices about early education and care?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What languages do you want your child to speak at this age? In the future?</li> <li>• Does the language of the early education and childcare that's available locally affect your choices about early education and childcare in any way? How?</li> </ul>	
<p>What factors have a bearing on parents' / carers' wishes to access Welsh-medium or bilingual provision? And to what extent do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about early education and childcare through the medium of Welsh?</li> <li>• Do you know if Welsh-medium or bilingual early education is available locally?</li> <li>• Do you know if Welsh-medium or bilingual childcare is available locally?</li> </ul>	

<p>these factors influence decisions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you like your child to be in Welsh-medium or bilingual early education and childcare now?</li> <li>• If Welsh-medium or bilingual early education and childcare are not available locally, does this affect your decisions about childcare and early education?</li> </ul>	
<p>What are the factors that hinder and facilitate access to Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, and to what extent do these influence decisions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any reasons why you don't use Welsh-medium or bilingual early education or childcare?</li> <li>• Are there any things that would help you to make use of Welsh-medium or bilingual early education and childcare?</li> <li>• Do these factors affect your decisions about early education and childcare?</li> </ul>	
<p>What perceptions do parents / carers have about Welsh-medium and bilingual early education and childcare?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about Welsh-medium or bilingual early education and childcare? Why is that?</li> </ul>	
<p>When making decisions about childcare and early years provision, to what extent are parents/ carers guided by a long-term aspiration in terms of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think that being able to speak and use Welsh is important for your child in the future?</li> <li>• Does this affect your choices about early education and childcare?</li> </ul>	

the Welsh language abilities of their child?		
What, if any, do parents/carers perceive to be the medium- to long-term impacts of childcare and early education for their child, and their family more widely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think that going to childcare or early education has / would have an impact on your child in any way (in the medium to long term)? Positive or negative impact? How?</li> <li>• Do you think that using childcare or early education has/ would have an impact on your family in any way? Positive or negative impact? How?</li> </ul>	

**Unrhyw sylwadau eraill / any other comments**

## **6 Ethnigrwydd Ethnicity**

[Ethnic group, national identity and religion](#)

Researcher to ask:

### **What is your ethnic group?**

Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

#### **White**

1. Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
2. Irish
3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
4. Any other White background, please describe

#### **Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups**

5. White and Black Caribbean
6. White and Black African
7. White and Asian
8. Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe

**Asian/Asian British**

- 9. Indian
- 10. Pakistani
- 11. Bangladeshi
- 12. Chinese
- 13. Any other Asian background, please describe

**Black/African/Caribbean/Black British**

- 14. African
- 15. Caribbean
- 16. Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe

**Other ethnic group**

- 17. Arab
- 18. Any other ethnic group, please describe