

Capital Funding linked to the expansion of the coming of 30 Hours Free Entitlement for children aged three and four years of age.

This project is a very high priority for this Government, it is linked to supporting parents to return to work. Wiltshire Council was successful with 6 bids for capital money to create new places to support the expansion of Free Entitlement from 15 hours to 30 hours for working parents of children aged three and four year olds. This project was one of only 189 projects across the country that was successful. Bids were targeted at areas of the county where it was identified there was a high need for more pre-school places. Indications from local parental surveys are that take up for 30 hours Free Entitlement will be high. Successful applicants must be able to contribute a minimum of 25% of the total cost of the project.

Unfortunately, this popular pre-school is only able to offer a limited number of hours of a week to children aged two, three and four. If this project is successful children aged two, three and four will be able to access their full allocation of Free Entitlement. Also more children will be able to access a place.

This project will bring a range of benefits for Trowbridge businesses and families: -

- Expanding and new business will need workers, the 30 hours Free Entitlement will support parents return to work and will help support the need to expand the pool of local workers. This will be beneficial to all parents planning to return to work and in particularly parents who have been impacted by cuts in benefits. This project will help provide local affordable childcare.
- The growth of housing in the area will bring more families to the area. This along with the coming of the 30 hours Free Entitlement will also increase the demand for pre-school provision. This project will also support the expansion of housing and families in the area.
- Other towns seem to attract new nursery providers into their areas, unfortunately this is not the same for Trowbridge. This project will contribute towards the need for more places for Trowbridge.
- St Michael's Pre-school has a Good Ofsted Judgement; it is important that young children have access to good quality Early Years provision. Good quality pre-school provision helps to ensure that children are "ready for school." Children's pre-school experience helps to contribute to positive outcomes in school and helps to Narrow the Gap for children in reception class. The impact of children not being ready for school can follow them through their school career. We want all children to be able to access a pre-school place locally.
- Local Authorities have a statutory duty to where reasonable ensure that there is sufficient Early Years & Childcare provision. Wiltshire Council needs to ensure that there will be sufficient nursery and pre-school provision across the county to meet the demands of the coming of the 30 hours Free Entitlement and the demand brought about by new families moving into the new housing. This project will help Wiltshire Council meet its duty.

Angela Brennan, Childcare Co-ordinator
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