

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**13 November 2012**

---

**Questions from Councillors**

**From Cllr Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division**

**To**

**Cllr Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council**

**Question 1**

Has there been a delay in rolling out the additional Government funding for free pre-school nursery education, and if so why?

**Response**

There has been no delay in the rolling out of the provision of free pre-school nursery education in Wiltshire.

Children are eligible to receive 15 hours a week of free entitlement to childcare for 38 weeks of the year in a nursery or pre-school of their choice from the term after their third birthday until they go to school. The take up of this entitlement is very good in Wiltshire with over 95% children accessing childcare. This take up is above the national average. Some parents prefer to keep their children at home with them. We currently have sufficient places for parents to access childcare in Wiltshire.

This free entitlement is gradually being extended to the most disadvantaged 2 year olds in the country. Wiltshire has had a target of 90 places for two year olds. This will be extended to 800 places by September 2013 and 1500 by 2014. This provision is not a legal requirement until September 2013.

Wiltshire is meeting its planned roll out of these places. Our target to place 400 children by September 2012 has been reached. Currently 432 disadvantaged two year old children have nursery places for between 10 and 15 hours a week. The criteria used to identify children has been widely publicised and health visitors use the referral form to apply for a placement. The criteria used are primarily financial, with children living in workless households given priority. Other criteria highlight children in need and include children looked after, those on child protection plans and whose parents have substance misuse issues. The referral form includes the requirement to gather evidence of need on a Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

A multi-agency panel agrees the children eligible for the funding and the early year's team works closely with nurseries to find the most appropriate pre-school setting for the child. We have had no difficulty in finding suitable places for the children.

Parents are supported by an outreach worker from their local children's centre to offer the whole family parenting and family support.

From September 2013, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will inform the parents that are eligible, directly and they will apply to pre-schools and nurseries themselves. The local authority will publish a list of approved pre-schools, nurseries and childminders.