

Glyncorrwg Flying Start Play group and Croeserw flying start Play group

Overview

Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant is no longer able to deliver the Flying Start Play Groups at Glyncorrwg or Croeserw. We are extremely proud to have served the children and families in these communities for over 17 years, however, it is no longer financially viable for the charity to operate these services. We are grateful for the continued support and understanding from the communities of Glyncorrwg and Croeserw.

We have actively explored options for continuing to deliver the service, however, we have been unable to secure a solution. We gave Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council 6 months' notice in January 2015, and the service will close in August 2015 at the end of the school year. We have been in close contact with the council over this issue and appreciate the good relations that have continued as we bring our operations to a close.

This paper aims to communicate clearly the rationale for Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant's decision to cease running these services, and the actions we are taking to minimise the impact on children, parents and our staff.

People

Glyncorrwg Flying Start Play group operates five mornings per week and is used by 12 families. Twelve children attend the playgroup. This service has two permanent staff, and one casual member of staff.

Croeserw Flying Start Play group operates five mornings and five afternoons per week and is used by 20 families. Twenty children attend the playgroup. This service has three permanent staff, and one casual member of staff.

Our decision

Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant is a not-for-profit organisation. In line with recognised funding principles for the Third Sector, we seek to recover the full cost of delivering services wherever possible. This means that we seek to recover the *direct cost of the service* together with a *share of the centralised support costs* that the service attracts. We recover these costs by applying a contribution value to the contract value for the service.

To ensure that our services meet the local needs of children, young people and their families, Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant provides support that adds value to the services that we deliver. As one of the largest voluntary sector providers in the UK, we regionalise and centralise some of this support so that we can achieve efficiency savings and maintain consistently high standards.

Neath Port Talbot council receives funding from the Welsh Government to deliver Flying Start in Croeserw and Glyncorrwg. It is not financially viable for Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant to continue to operate these services on behalf of the council. There is an established formula used across Neath Port Talbot used to calculate funding for Flying Start services, however this does not cover the actual cost to Action for Children of providing these services.

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This shortfall has been the case for some time. Previously *Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant* provided other child care services in Neath Port Talbot, which allowed us to meet some of the shortfall through shared resources. These services closed in 2013/14 and, as a consequence, the Flying Start services are no longer financially viable for *Action for Children – Gweithredu dros Blant* to deliver. .

We have had open and honest conversations with representatives of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. In October 2014 we met with Neath Port Talbot's Flying Start Team to explore options for continuing the service. Unfortunately, we were not able to secure a solution. We discussed the process for providing notice to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. We gave verbal notice in October 2014, and agreed that 90 days written notice would follow at a later date once arrangements for Action for Children's withdrawal had been made. It is our understanding that the funding for a Flying Start provision in Glyncoirwg and Croeserw is still held with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

Our actions

We have taken action to minimise the impact of these services closing on children and families:

Timing

The decision to close these services at the end of the school year was made in the best interests of the children we serve. By closing the service in August we have been able to ensure that the children attending these groups complete a full year of Flying Start and to meet their target outcomes. It also allows for detailed assessments to be completed which will ease the transition for children into a new setting in September. We felt strongly this would be less disruptive to the children using these services than finishing at the end of the financial year (March), which is midway through the school year.

Communication

Once we had served notice to Neath County Borough Council, we informed the seven staff affected at the earliest possible date. We continue to support our dedicated staff working in challenging circumstances.

The Flying Start central team in Neath Port Talbot informed parents of our decision directly. Our staff continue to offer support and advice to parents during this time, and we have also written to all parents to explain what is happening.

We continue to have conversations with the local authority to make arrangements for closure. We are seeking clarity on their future plans to provide child care settings for these children so that we can assist with the transition and offer reassurance to all the children and their parents. We are also seeking redeployment opportunities for our staff within our other services where possible.

If you have a media enquiry, please contact Alastair Love at Alastair.Love@actionforchildren.org.uk or 07872 675688.

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