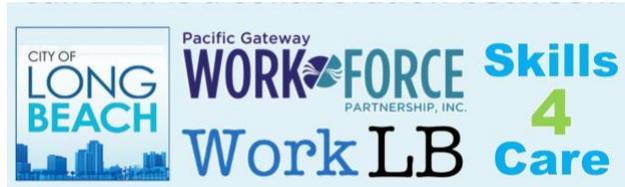


Feedback from Long Beach's pandemic childcare scheme



On October 27, the City [announced](#) its innovative “WorkLB” pilot delivering responsive, at-home, childcare to low-income essential workers. Funded by the federal CARES Act, the scheme encouraged parents to maximize informal childcare from family members, while ensuring they could book a professional to cover hours when no-one else was available.

The scheme used the “[CalFLEXI](#)” platform to align workers with the needs of each household. Non-profit partner [Skills4Care](#) re-vetted and Covid prepared a pool of 103 supply teachers, youth leaders, and other professionals who lost work in the pandemic.

127 families applied and were eligible. Each was allocated an initial 40 hours of professional care to be booked as needed. Further hours were then allotted on the basis of need with the platform administering each household's allocation. Rules of CARES Act funding required the pilot to finish by end of 2020. In total, 3,765 hours of care for a child were booked in assignments ranging in length from two hours to 36 hours in one week.

Some parents opted to use a family member or friend they trusted. That person was then formalized as an employee of Skills4Care and booked by that family only through CalFLEXI. The person was then paid weekly for the hours of care they provided. Parents who used professional childcare providers included:

Suaya Montoya (63 hours booked)

“My three boys all have Combined Type ADHT, the middle one is also autistic. I am bringing them up alone. They are incredibly precious to me; two of my other babies died at birth. I work as a caregiver for elders, there are days when I can't sleep; the boys just can't be left alone.

WorkLB was the first city program I applied for. One of the doctors we know told me about it. For days I did nothing, having three disabled kids is like being an emergency room nurse all the time. And I am studying law, I take the boys with me to classes. But eventually I went online and filled in the form. I had been up for three straight days when I received the email saying we could have more than 40 hours. It was just such a relief.

I need care at odd hours, sometimes first thing in the morning; at other times up to 10PM. We have used three providers. All were really helpful. I have always been nervous about being out in public with the boys. But one of the providers was a CNA who had worked in a psychiatric facility. He encouraged me to come on a short ‘field trip’ with the boys and it gave us all confidence. My cortisol levels have been so low because I have had dependable support.”



Emily Ghosh (35 hours booked)

"I founded and run Long Beach's biggest dog rescue non-profit; Live Love Animal Rescue. I can work from home some of the time, but need to be out on Tuesdays and Thursdays when we rehome rescue dogs. That's complicated because I am a single Mum to Aura, 5. I had a nanny I was using but she was costly and not always available when needed.

A colleague told me about the WorkLB scheme. I was allocated 40 hours and made bookings on CalFLEXI in 5-hour blocks on the Tuesdays and Thursdays when we had most dogs. I am 5 months pregnant. So, I felt nervous initially about a provider coming into the home. Also, we have two large dogs which can be scary for babysitters. But there were enough options to only book pet lovers, and everyone wore masks.

Because of my short-notice bookings we ended up using three providers, Aura absolutely loved two of them and thought the third was OK. We enjoyed reading their details online.

I made sure I stayed at home for the first hour with each person, but they were soon playing with Aura and helping with her hair. She just said "Go Mum!" I couldn't have put in the hours I did at the end of the year without this scheme. We rehomed 47 dogs. I don't know what I will do in the new year."



Aaron Xavier Photography

Joy Mendoza (92 hours booked)

"I had a baby girl by C-section in September to join my four-year old boy. My husband works in insurance and has to go to his office to check documents at times. I am an assistant analyst specializing in Workers' Compensation and was due to return to work after maternity leave at the end of 2020.

I needed time to begin transitioning back to work. My home office was turned into our nursery, but when I cleared all the children's stuff out, it was hard to get down to work with no-one to sit with them. I had to keep saying 'Mummy needs both arms'. My sister helped out when I had to leave home for appointments but she has three kids of her own so it's not easy.

My hospital forwarded me the City's email about WorkLB. It was a wonderful scheme. I booked a provider as needed and confirmed their timesheet online afterwards. We ended up using several, but they were all fantastic. I would leave them in another room making cut out shapes on the floor. I know some of them had other sources of work but were really glad of time spent with children. We provided food for them."



Ameena Shahid (99 hours booked)

“I am a nurse working nights, my husband is a Sherriff’s Deputy. We have both been maxed out with work during the pandemic. My 7-year old son is autistic and I have a two-year old daughter. I work with Covid patients, so I knew the standards I was expecting from a care provider and was reassured. I was also worried about my boy’s behavior. He is autistic and has been asked to leave two schools. I worry that he would be too much for an inexperienced provider.



On days we are both working I normally get the children in the car about 9.30PM. I drive to meet my husband at the end of his shift, before my work starts. We move the kids into his car in the parking structure and he brings them home and back to bed.

We started using providers when my husband was working a double shift. It allowed me to get some sleep. It’s a huge reduction in stress. We have used two providers; both are really bubbly and experienced. Each turned up with games and obviously loves being with kids. They have been using our backyard to build dens and create chalk art on the walls.”