



Naruto City's Complete Childcare Support Package

Background and Reason for the Project

Similar to the national situation, Naruto City has not been able to halt its population decline in recent years and the birthrate has been steadily declining. The number of residents under the age of 14 has gone from 6,711 in 2016 to 5,674 in 2021, decreasing by 18.1% in just five years. A major cause of this is the decline in the number of births.

In addition, many of the residents often move out of the city or prefecture during certain stages of their lives such as for higher education, employment, or marriage. The number of people in their 20s and 30s who are of child raising age in Naruto City are in a state of decline due to more people moving out of the city than in. Geographically, Naruto City is close to Tokushima City, the prefectural capital, and is adjacent to Tokushima City's commuter town. Because of this, residents tend to choose cities and towns that have more commercial facilities and are more advantageous for high school students than Naruto City as their residential areas. Therefore, residents moving to neighbouring cities and towns has been a major issue for the city.

Project Aims

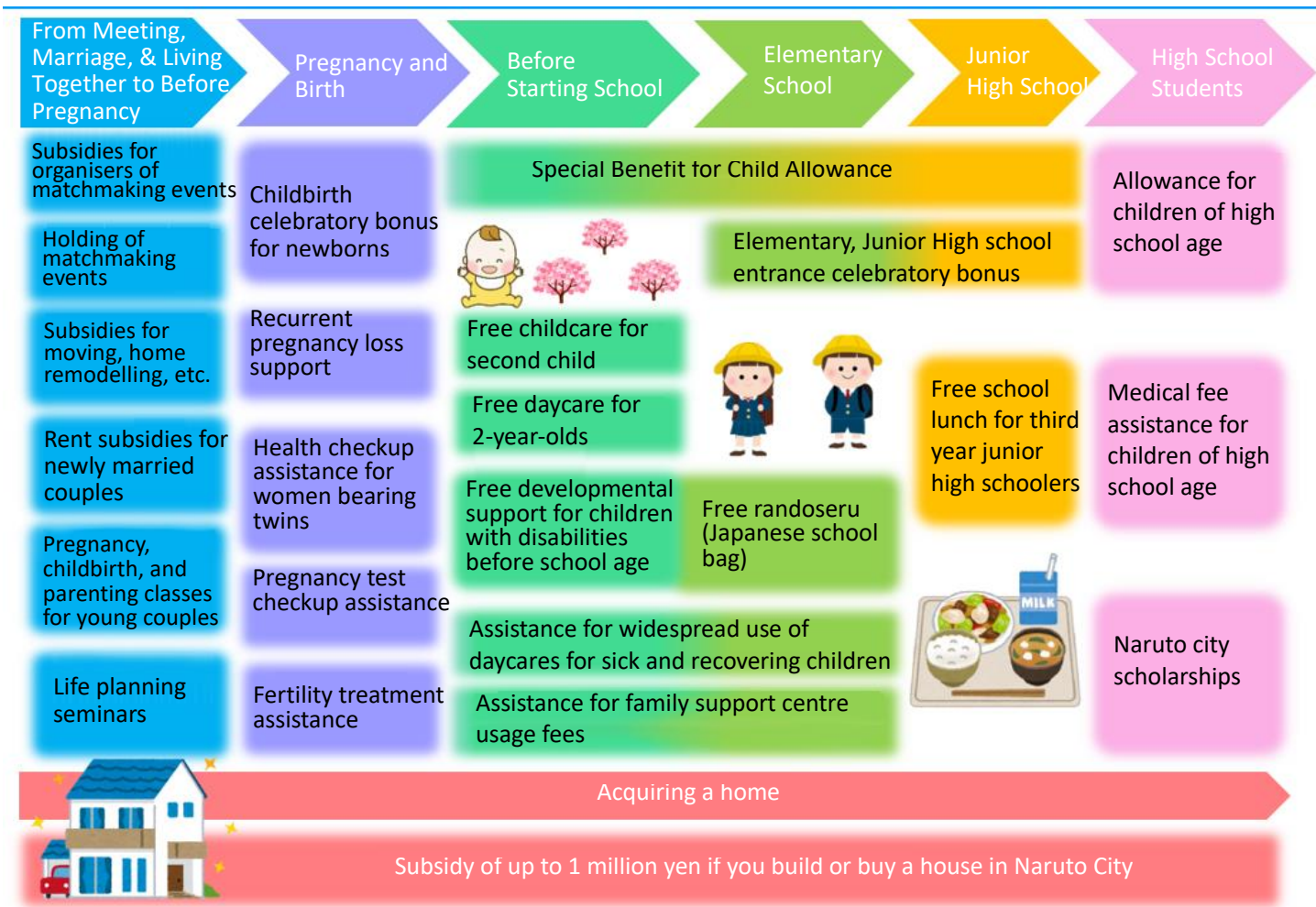
In light of this situation, the city launched the 'Naruto City's Complete Childcare Support Package' in FY2022. The purpose of this project was to transform Naruto City into a city with the best childcare support in the prefecture and to secure more permanent residents of child-rearing age. It aims to provide comprehensive support for residents of child-rearing

age through new ideas, impactful and meaningful programs, and inter-policy coordination. As the number of births and other demographic trends was greatly affected by COVID-19, the city decided to intensively implement measures that strongly support the child-rearing generation as a trump card to curb their declining population.

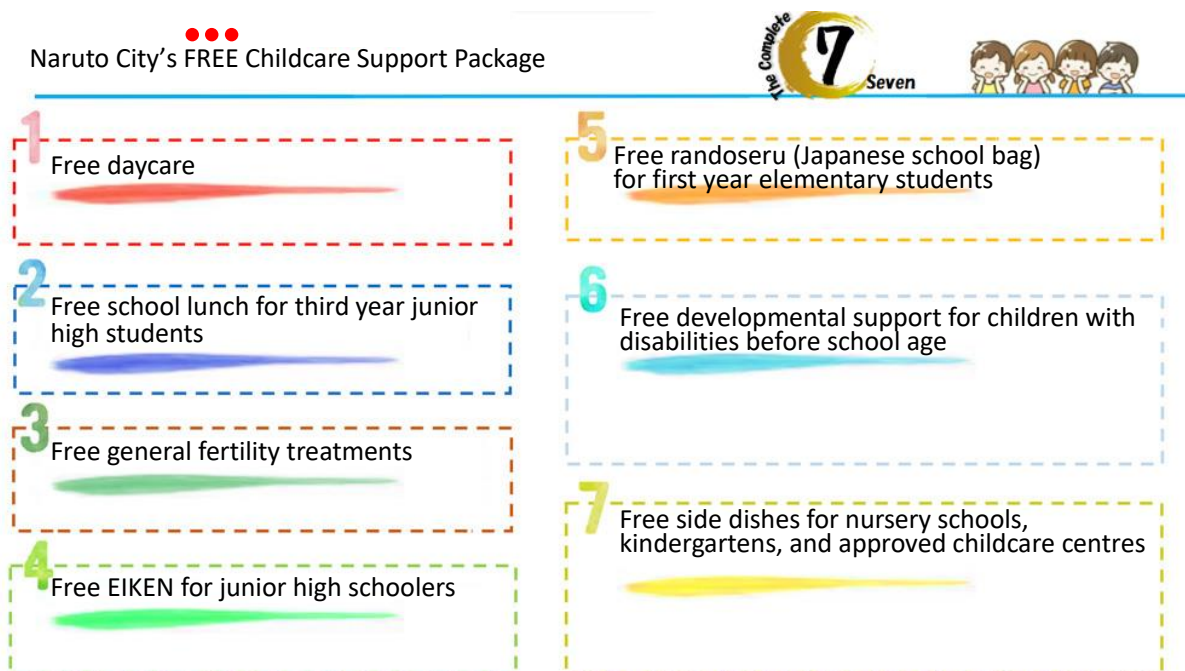
Project Outline

The 'Naruto City's Complete Childcare Support Package' designated the four-year period of FY2022 to FY2025 as a 'period of intensive implementation of measures to promote an increase of households raising children'.

Support measures have been prepared for people at various life stages, starting from when people first begin a relationship, to meet their individual needs and help support them with childcare and settling down in the city. The current measures are as follows. In particular, there are some programs that are completely free and promoted as the '7 Free Initiatives'.



Detailed view of Naruto City's Complete Childcare Support Package



The 7 Free Initiatives

Features and Innovations

The phrase 'Complete Childcare Support' indicates the city's stance of providing seamless support for children and those of child-rearing age. The city is striving to share information in an easy-to-understand manner by visualizing the entire project as a package, rather than individual goals.

In addition, the contents of the project are not fixed, but flexibly and proactively reviewed. In the first year, the city started with 15 initiatives and a budget of 178 million yen, but in the second year, FY2023, they were able to initiate 24 of them with a budget of 325 million yen, almost double the amount in the first year. The project is constantly evolving as they move forward.

The city considers the needs of those of child-rearing age to be important when reviewing the content of their programs and conducts a survey every year as a reference when reviewing the programs. In addition, in FY2023, the new 'Naruto Uzukko Academic Achievement Improvement Package' project was launched. This project implements Naruto City's unique and distinctive education, from pre-school to junior high school graduation (entering high school), aiming to improve the children's academic abilities as they prepare for the future.

Results of the Project

As this is still the second year of the project, it is difficult to verify its exact effects, but the city is beginning to see improvements in the number of new residents moving in and out and the number of births.

Until now, Naruto City's population decline due to residents moving out of the city had been in the triple-digits for 12 years from 2016 to 2021, with the largest decrease being 406 people in 2018, and an average decrease of 297 people yearly over the last five years. By 2022, that number was cut down to 86, a significant improvement from the previous years, especially for children aged 0 to 14, which increased

by 38. In addition, while the overall number of births in Tokushima Prefecture decreased by about 3%, Naruto City saw a slight increase with 245 births in FY2021 and 250 in FY2022.

Through these figures, Naruto City recognizes that there has been a positive effect that can be seen from the implementation of the project so far.

Issues, Problems and Responses

According to the results of the survey conducted in October 2022 among approximately 3,000 households raising children, 47% of respondents were aware of the project. This shows that there is still a need to raise further awareness of the project both within and outside the city.

Currently, a new 'Childcare PR Advisor' has been commissioned by the city to work on strategic public relations. Under the advice of the Childcare PR Advisor, in addition to paper media such as pamphlets, they are actively posting information on social media such as X (formerly known as Twitter) and LINE, as well as through traditional media such as TV and newspapers, and other web media. They are also connecting with tourist businesses and others to share information and encourage further collaboration.

In addition, the national government, prefectures, and neighbouring cities and towns have indicated they will also expand their policies for childcare support programs.

For this reason, the city is reviewing the program contents in response to the changes in the circumstances surrounding the city. They also realize the need to continue to work on implementing projects and publicity so Naruto City will be recognized as a place where people want and choose to live.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of this project, the city must flexibly and proactively revise

the project content in response to changes in the needs and circumstances of child-rearing households. A survey of child-rearing households shows that the implementation of this project has resulted in an improvement in satisfaction from the previous survey in all 14 items related to childcare support.

Naruto City will continue to add, modify, and revise their programs based on the needs of households raising children in order to further evolve them and increase the overall number of families in the city.

Reference URL

<https://www.city.naruto.tokushima.jp/kurashi/kodomo/package/>

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