

Paul Davies MS

Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

4 November 2021

Dear Paul,

### **Childcare and parental employment: the pandemic and beyond**

In my letter of August 10<sup>th</sup>, I let you know that the Equality and Social Justice Committee had agreed to scope out an inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the workplace. This work has now begun; the Committee is undertaking an inquiry into childcare and parental employment: the pandemic and beyond. The inquiry will focus on the barriers that childcare provision can present for parents, particularly women, entering and progressing in the labour market.

The terms of reference for the inquiry are provided at annex A, and details of evidence gathering at annex B.

Aspects of the inquiry which relate to your Committee's remit may be of interest to your Members. So I would like to invite your Members to consider whether there are any points they would like to raise in relation to our terms of reference, or any involvement they would like to have in our stakeholder and citizen engagement work.

#### Formal meeting evidence and scrutiny sessions

I propose that Sarah Murphy, as a Member on both our Committees, acts as a rapporteur to take forward any lines of questioning proposed by your Members at our formal evidence gathering and scrutiny sessions.

#### Stakeholder and citizen engagement

If any of your Members would like to attend the roundtable discussion or any of the planned focus groups in an observer capacity, please ask your Clerking team to liaise with mine to make arrangements. I am also happy to share with your Members the notes from these events to inform your future work.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these issues. I will keep you updated as the inquiry progresses.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Rathbone  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

## Annex A

### Terms of reference

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The terms of reference for the inquiry are to examine:

- The extent to which current childcare provision in Wales sufficiently supports parents, particularly mothers, to enter, remain and progress in employment, and what changes might be needed to improve the effectiveness of childcare provision in doing this.
- What impact the Childcare Offer in particular has had in achieving the Welsh Government's objective of "helping parents, particularly mothers, to return to work or increase the hours they work".
- The impact of limited childcare availability on Wales' productivity levels.
- How childcare arrangements have affected parental employment during the coronavirus pandemic, particularly in relation to mothers. What lessons might be applied to provide better support during any future lockdowns or increased restrictions.
- Whether Welsh Government-funded childcare provision is flexible enough to support employment of parents, particularly mothers, in different demographic groups and experiencing different circumstances.
- The impact of high-quality formal childcare provision on reducing the attainment gap, and the potential benefits of extending childcare provision to tackle inequalities.
- What Wales can learn from other models of childcare provision operating in the rest of the UK and internationally and emerging practice in terms of supporting parental employment, and the extent to which these models might be transferrable to the Welsh context.
- How financial and practical implications such as availability of childcare would need to be considered by the Welsh Government in any future policy developments to extend childcare provision.



## Annex B

### Evidence gathering

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Monday 15 November	Stakeholder evidence panels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Organisations campaigning on childcare</li><li>▪ Childcare providers</li><li>▪ Childcare provision from outside Wales</li></ul>
Monday 22 November	Roundtable discussion with organisations such as childcare providers, organisations who campaign around childcare, employers, trade unions.
Monday 29 November (TBC)	Evidence panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Children's Commissioner for Wales</li><li>▪ Equality and Human Rights Commissioner</li></ul> Scrutiny session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Deputy Minister for Social Services</li></ul>
Various dates throughout November	A series of online and face-to-face focus groups with parents and partner organisations from across Wales