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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair
Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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30 January 2024

Dear Jenny,

Many thanks for your letter as Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee in which you set out your plans to hold a follow-up inquiry into childcare and parental employment.

Your letter provides a helpful structure for the evidence paper which I will forward separately to support the oral evidence that I shall provide to the Committee on 11 March.

Childcare and parental employment have long been key issues for the Welsh Government. By way of background information to assist the Committee, you might wish to note recent progress.

Commitment to expand 12.5 hours free childcare per week to all two-year-olds, with an emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.

- Delivery of Phase 2 began in April 2023. In total, Phase 2 of the expansion will allow more than 9,500 more two-year-olds to access FS childcare once the expansion is running at full capacity.
- By the end of November 2023 (the most recent figures) an additional 4,195 2-year-old childcare places have been offered to parents in Wales. This equates to 85% of the 2023-24 target.
- In 2024-25, the target for Phase 2 is to support 5,522 additional 2-year olds with access to high quality childcare.

Childcare Offer - General Take-Up

- There were 12,873 children taking up the Childcare Offer in October 2023. This represents a take-up rate of 57% of estimated eligible parents. The Autumn term take-up rate of 57% does represent a slightly higher than usual rate (on average 55%) and we will be monitoring levels to understand whether this is indicative of an overall trend during the Spring and Summer terms.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Childcare Offer - Expansion to parents in education and training

- By the end of the academic year 22/23, 675 additional families were supported because of the expansion of the Offer to include eligible parents in education/training.
- The success of the promotion work has so far seen the number of parents in education and training, supported by the Offer jump to 1,100 during the first term of this new academic term – compared to just under 200 during the Autumn term for 2022/23.

Childcare Offer Impact

- The latest independent evaluation findings, published in March 2023, once again found the scheme has been supporting parental employment. Parents surveyed reported a range of positive impacts from accessing the Offer:
 - 75% of parents reported that the Offer had made it easier for them to undertake their work;
 - 37% of parents reported that they would be working fewer hours had the Offer not been available to them – this impact was greater for parents earning under £26,000 per year (42% reported that they would be working fewer hours without the Offer);
 - 10% of parents said they would be in a job with fewer career progression opportunities, and a further 10% said they would not be working at all, if the Offer had not been available to them.

I am hoping that prior to my attendance at Committee, I will be in a position to share with you copies of the Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) Plan in Wales (High level and detailed versions). The Plan has been developed around the themes of quality of provision, access to provision and supporting and developing the workforce. By focussing on these themes, the plan aims to support the development and delivery of a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality, inclusive, play-based childcare and education opportunities.

I hope that you find the above useful and I look forward to being able to help the Committee take forward its inquiry into this important area of work.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

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