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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1359 / P-06-1362
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00117/24

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

05 March 2024

Dear Jack,

P-06-1359 Offer Welsh working parents the same financial support for childcare as England

P-06-1362 Match the new childcare offer in England of 15 hours for 2 year old's from April 2024

Thank you for your letter dated 20 February 2024 regarding the debate on these petitions on 31 January 2024.

As requested, please find below a response to the four specific points outlined in your letter.

Q1 & Q2. What childcare support is currently available and to whom? How can parents access this support?

Childcare Support Funding	Summary of Support and how to access this support
Flying Start	Flying Start provides fully funded quality childcare which is offered to parents of all eligible 2-3 year olds for 2 and a half hours a day, 5 days a week for 39 weeks a year. Children living in Flying Start areas become eligible for free childcare the term after their 2nd birthday until the term after their 3rd birthday. Flying Start childcare helps to prepare children for entry to learning within the Curriculum for Wales at age 3.

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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.

	<p>Get help from Flying Start GOV.WALES</p> <p>More children are now eligible for funded Flying Start childcare services under the expansion of early years provision. The roll out of phase one of the expansion commenced in Sept 2022 and concluded in March 2023. Phase 1 included all Flying Start services being offered to around 2,500 additional children under four.</p> <p>Delivery of Phase 2 began in April 2023. We aim to extend the childcare element of Flying Start to 9,500 more children by the end of 2024/25.</p>
<p>Childcare Offer for Wales</p>	<p>The Childcare Offer, which has been available across Wales since April 2019, provides 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for eligible parents of 3 and 4 year olds for up to 48 weeks a year. During term time (39 weeks of the year) the Offer builds on the existing universal commitment to early education which provides all 3 and 4 year olds with a minimum of 10 hours per week of provision. For the remaining 9 weeks the Offer funds 30 hours of childcare per week. To be eligible for the offer, a parent must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an eligible child aged 3 or 4 years old • Meet the definition of a working parent or a parent in education or training; and • Live in Wales <p>Childcare Offer for Wales Help With Childcare Costs Wales GOV.WALES</p>

Tax Free Childcare	<p>Tax Free Childcare is a UK government scheme where working parents can get up to £500.00 every 3 months (up to £2,000 per year) for each child. If a child is disabled the amount increases to £1,000 every 3 months (up to £4,000 per year).</p> <p>Tax-Free Childcare - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>
Child Care Grant (CCG) - HE	<p>Undergraduate parents can apply for the CCG, administered by Student Finance Wales, to help cover childcare costs while they are studying. The grant covers 85% of childcare costs, up to a maximum of £189.00 per week for 1 dependent child and £324.00 per week for 2 or more dependent children. Funding is means tested based on household income. Parents are reimbursed for childcare costs based on evidence of payments made to their childcare provider on a termly basis.</p> <p>Extra help available if you are a full-time undergraduate student with children Student Finance Wales</p>
Financial Contingency Fund (FCF) - FE	<p>The FCF provides childcare support for further education students who are resident in Wales. This is a discretionary fund managed by individual further education (FE) institutions but funded by the Welsh Government. Funding generally covers around 85% of childcare costs and is targeted towards learners who are experiencing financial hardship and provides help for eligible learners who might otherwise be unable to attend college. Funding is means tested based on household income. Costs for childcare covered by the FCF is paid direct to the childcare provider by the FE institution.</p> <p>Parents would have to apply directly to their further education (FE) institute.</p>
NHS Wales Student Bursary – Childcare Allowance	<p>NHS students who are in receipt of, or who will be applying for an NHS Wales Student Bursary, can apply for financial help to pay for registered childcare. The NHS Wales Childcare Allowance pays up to 85% of actual registered or approved childcare costs to a net maximum amount of £128.78 per week for one child and £209.95 per week for two or more children.</p> <p>Student Awards Services - NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership</p>
ReACT Plus:	<p>To be eligible, an individual must be under formal notice of redundancy or be within 12 months of being made redundant. If aged between 18-24 and not in education, employment or training you can also access support. Up to £4,500 can be claimed to help with childcare or other care costs.</p> <p>The New ReAct Plus Funding in Wales - CCW-Training Academy (careerchangewales.co.uk)</p>
Universal Credit – Childcare costs	<p>Working parents claiming Universal Credit can get up to 85% of childcare costs paid back. The maximum amount per month is:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £950.92 for one child • £1,630.15 for 2 or more children <p>Eligible parents claiming Universal Credit are also able to get additional help paying their childcare costs upfront when moving into paid work or increasing their working hours. Individuals should speak to their work coach to make arrangements for their childcare to be paid in advance.</p> <p>Universal Credit childcare costs - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>
Communities for Work Plus	<p>Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) supports individuals over 20 years old who are not in employment, education or training and who are disadvantaged or under-represented in the labour market, these include women (especially lone parents), carers and parents with childcare as a barrier to employment. Childcare support is provided on a short-term basis covering such activities as attending training, interviews or employment, as well as being available for when childcare provision has broken down during the first four weeks of employment on leaving the programme (the programme is able to support a maximum of 3 months childcare). This short-term childcare support would allow the necessary steps to be taken to ensure employment is sustainable.</p> <p>For further information please contact the Communities for Work Plus team within your Local Authority or refer to the Working Wales website Working Wales Working Wales (gov.wales)</p>

Q3. How childcare support will be rolled out to other families in the future including specific timescales?

- Our Programme for Government commits us to continue our support for our flagship Flying Start programme. And, in line with the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, we have extended this commitment to deliver a phased expansion of early years childcare provision to include all two-year-olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.
- Delivery of Phase 2 began in April 2023 and spans two financial years (2023-24 and 2024-25). We expect to support more than 9,500 additional two-year-olds across Wales to access quality Flying Start childcare during Phase 2, and we are well on track to deliver that. The Welsh Government has achieved its latest target for Phase 2 with an extra 4,500 childcare places offered during 2023-24.
- The funding for Phase 2 will increase from £21.65m in 2023-24 to £24.3m in 2024-25, which will allow even more children to benefit from the high quality childcare provided by the expansion programme.
- The Welsh Government is facing the toughest financial situation we have faced since devolution. As a result of these pressures, we are not currently in a position to confirm any new developments to childcare beyond 2024-25. However, we will

continue to review the Childcare Offer and the Flying Start programme and we remain committed to making further progress on our commitment to extend early years provision, as resources allow.

Q4. How the Childcare Offer is promoted to encourage eligible parents to access this support?

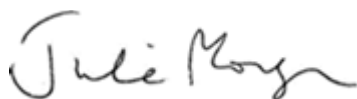
- The Welsh Government has developed a national marketing campaign promoting the Childcare Offer for Wales in partnership with SBW. The aim of the campaign is to promote the Childcare Offer to parent and providers, encouraging take up from parents and providers to sign up to deliver the Childcare Offer.
- The national campaign raises awareness of the Offer through various social media platforms which include targeted advertising for parents and Providers. This includes Radio Advertising, Google Adverts, TikTok, Facebook and a Welsh Government Communications Media Toolkit for local authorities to use to raise awareness through their own social media.

Each of the 22 local authorities receives funding for the Childcare Offer for Wales via an administration grant. Part of the remit of the grant is to promote the Offer through marketing and communications messaging to all potentially eligible parents within their local authority area. This includes:

- Ensuring that staff working in the Family Information Service team are able to provide information on the Offer.
- Raising awareness of the Offer via tweets/Facebook posts issued their own channels, which the Welsh Government can then share more widely
- Face to face contact with parents – for example, stalls at shows, events, etc, in order to promote the Offer locally.
- The creation of leaflets and posters using the Childcare Offer communications media toolkit which is provided by the Welsh Government.
- Local advertising via billboards, bus shelters/sides of buses, train stations, stadium advertising etc.
- Raising awareness of the Offer via childcare providers, schools, GP surgeries and libraries.

I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,



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