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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee
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Dear Jenny,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee's inquiry into childcare and parental employment, and for your subsequent letter of 6 December.

Supporting children and families to access affordable childcare is a key priority for us, as demonstrated by the commitments set out within our Programme for Government. In order to honour our commitments, it is crucial that we maintain and develop the childcare and play sector, and particularly the workforce, to ensure we have a service that meets the aspirations of all those working within it and which provides high quality care for children of all ages.

The [draft budget](#) was published on 20 December and this clearly indicates that we are investing significantly in supporting our early years and childcare provision. In line with our Programme for Government commitment we will invest an additional £30m up to 2024-25 in Early Years and Childcare. This includes supporting more families with the costs of childcare where parents are in education and training, and increasing provision for two year olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision.

Alongside this we have provided an additional £40m revenue up to 2024-25 for early help and support, including for Families First and Flying Start. This includes funding towards training and development, both to maintain our current Progress for Success programme, funded from European Social Funds, and to build on that from 2023 onwards.

We will also invest a total of £70m capital up to 2024-25 in Childcare Offer and Flying Start settings, including Welsh language medium settings. You will be aware that our capital budget sits within the Education and Welsh Language MEG, alongside the budget for the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme (previously 21st Century Schools and Colleges programme). This long-standing approach allows us to better manage investment overall, and support the co-location of services. We will be continuing this

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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.

approach over the coming budget period, building on our commitment to Community Schools. This includes considering the wider use of school facilities, and I will continue to work closely with the Minister for Education and Welsh Language on both this programme of investment and the wider proposals around reform of the school day and the school year, to ensure they take account of needs of the childcare and play sector and the children who use their services.

I am scheduled to provide evidence on the draft budget allocations to both the Health and Social Care Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 13 January, which you may want to consider.

Plans to meet the commitment to provide funded childcare for two-year olds are under development, and I would be happy to share more information about those plans as they emerge.

Expanding Welsh medium provision is a key concern for us, building on our existing programmes of investment in both new settings and increasing the language skills across the workforce. We are also looking at transitions between and across funded programmes as part of our thinking, but it is important to note that the existing transition from Flying Start childcare, for example, is to the universal provision of early education, and that is consistent with our commitment to provide a simplified and holistic programme of Early Childhood Education and Care provision.

With regards to the concerns raised around recruitment and retention, and also the need to increase diversity within the workforce, the Social Care Wales 'We Care' campaign will be continuing. Discussions around how to target adverts and increase the level of information available to draw in as wide an audience as possible, and particularly from a more diverse range of potential applicants, are ongoing. The Cwlwm consortium is also continuing with their work to increase diversity across the workforce, and to improve the way in which they support children and families from a broad range of cultural backgrounds and ethnicities.

We will be including specific commitments in relation to the childcare and play sector within the Race Equality Action Plan, reflecting on the feedback from the consultation and the information shared with this Committee.

I look forward to seeing the report of the findings of your inquiry including any recommendations, and would like to thank you once again for the work you are doing in this regard and the opportunity to contribute to your considerations.

Yours sincerely



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