

Thank you for the invitation for Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to submit evidence to support the Committee's inquiry into the general principles of the Childcare Funding (Wales) Bill.

To help inform the Committee's considerations, we have set out below the context in which CIW registers, regulates and inspects Childcare and Play in Wales. We have detailed some basic information about the sector and our activity within it.

We have commented on the terms of reference for the inquiry where appropriate for CIW to do so.

The role of CIW

We register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales. We decide who can provide services; take action to ensure services meet legislative and regulatory requirements; and investigate concerns raised about regulated services. We carry out our functions on behalf of Welsh Ministers. Our independence is protected through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Chief Inspector and the relevant Welsh Ministers.

The sector

Childcare and Play services regulated by CIW as at 31 March 2018

	No. of Services	No. of Places
Childcare and Play	4,167	83,817
Child Minder	2,212	16,261
Children's Day Care	1,955	67,556
Crèche	27	657
Full Day Care	757	31,605
Open Access Play Provision	50	3,534
Out of School Care	419	15,984
Sessional Day Care	702	15,776

Childcare and Play services: inspections performed by CIW (1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018)*

	No. of Inspections
Childcare and Play	1,474
Child Minder	633
Children’s Day Care	841
Crèche	7
Full Day Care	441
Open Access Play Provision	17
Out of School Care	150
Sessional Day Care	226

* Please note that the number of inspections does not include Registration inspections.

The current frequency for inspections is set out below:

	Inspection frequency
Child Minder	36 Months
Children’s Day Care	
Crèche	36 Months
Full Day Care	24 Months
Open Access Play Provision	36 Months
Out of School Care	36 Months
Sessional Day Care	36Months

The committee should note the CIW will begin to publish ratings for all new inspections of Childcare and Play services in early 2019 against each of the four inspection themes. The themes are:

- Well-being;
- Care and Development;
- Environment; and
- Leadership and Management.

The ratings for each theme will be:

- Excellent;
- Good;
- Adequate; or
- Poor.

There will be no overall rating for the service.

We view it as extremely positive that parents and carers will increasingly be able to make choices based on a clearly expressed judgement about the quality of performance against our four inspection themes.

Terms of reference

1. The general principles of the Childcare Funding (Wales) Bill and whether there is a need for legislation to deliver the Bill's stated policy objectives.

The primary purpose of the Bill is to provide funding for childcare that supports the Welsh economy, by helping parents, particularly mothers, to return to work or increase the hours they work. The primary concern of CIW is the quality and safety of Childcare and Play services and the outcomes they achieve for children. Consequently, we are not in a position to comment on the major policy objective of the Bill. The Bill has a number of additional purposes, including improved childhood experiences. There is a wealth of evidence that highlights the positive impact of good quality care for children. Achieving positive outcomes will be dependent on the take up of the childcare offer; the choices made by parents and carers; and the quality of the services that they use.

2. Any potential barriers to the implementation of the key provisions and whether the Bill takes account of them.

Successful implementation of the key provisions of the Bill will largely rest on the availability of the right kind of childcare, at the right time and in the right place, for those parents and carers who want to take up the funding available.

3. Whether there are any unintended consequences arising from the Bill.

Care will need to be taken to ensure the implementation of the Bill does not undermine the delivery of the Foundation Phase in funded non maintained settings, for example, by incentivising providers to respond to the demand for the offer at the expense of the Foundation Phase.

4. The financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum).

No comment.

5. The appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the Explanatory Memorandum).

No comment.