

**Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb
a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol**

—

**Equality and Social Justice
Committee**

Julie Morgan MS,
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Dear Julie

Childcare and parental employment - the Co-operation Agreement and draft budget 2022-23

Thank you for your evidence to the Equality and Social Justice Committee on November 29th regarding our inquiry into childcare. We appreciate that you were not able to elaborate on the Welsh Government's Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru as detailed discussions on the extension of the childcare offer have yet to take place.

We have now completed our oral evidence and plan to publish our report in January. Anticipating our likely conclusions and recommendations, the Committee thought it might be useful to highlight some key issues in advance of the publication of the draft budget 2022-23 on December 20th.

Childcare

We hope to see information on the necessary capital and revenue resources to extend the childcare programme to two year olds included in the draft budget, with details set out in the accompanying explanatory notes.

In light of the Co-operation Agreement to ensure equity of access for more deprived communities in the expanded provision, and with the goal of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 in mind, the Committee would like to see pilots to achieve these objectives introduced as soon as is feasible, to help inform the rollout of the expansion.

In extending childcare to two-year-olds, we would like to see a child-focussed plan to avoid some children having their childcare withdrawn on becoming 3 years old, on the grounds that children are only eligible for statutory early years education from the term after their third birthday, and the current Childcare Offer is provided only to children with working parents. We expect plans which promote seamless transfers between different provision with the wellbeing of the child the main consideration.

Given the existing staff shortages in the sector, the recruitment campaign that Social Care Wales will be undertaking will be particularly important in ensuring that there are sufficient staff to deliver



the expansion. Whatever innovative approaches are used, I hope you will ensure the campaign is tailored to attracting interest from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and men who are currently under-represented in the childcare workforce.

A training and development budget will be needed to expand the childcare workforce which has the competencies required to deliver high quality, inclusive provision and improve the status, pay and conditions of the childcare sector.

School term dates

As the Co-operation Agreement intends to “explore options around the rhythm of the school day”, and to “radically reform school term dates to bring them more in line with contemporary patterns of family life and employment”, we would like to see how you plan to expand the co-location of childcare provision on school sites where possible, and the use of sites outside of school hours for childcare.

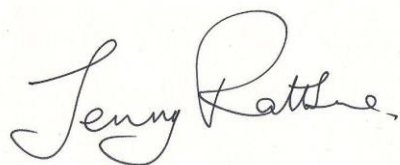
Race Equality Action Plan

In your evidence to the Committee on 29 November when referring to the Race Equality Action Plan, you stated that childcare will be “one of the parts of the strategy that we’ll be pursuing”. As the Committee heard concerns from others during its inquiry about the absence of childcare in the Race Equality Action Plan, we look forward to hearing how childcare will become a priority area within the Plan.

The Committee will elaborate on all these issues in our upcoming report on childcare and parental employment. I would welcome your response to the points raised in this letter at your earliest convenience.

I have copied this letter to Jeremy Miles as school term dates and the Welsh language fall within his portfolio.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

CC Jeremy Miles, Minister of Education and Welsh Language

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