

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1303
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/01015/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

13 October 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 12th September regarding Petition P-06-1303 - Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents. The mixed model of childcare provision in Wales is intended to ensure there is choice and flexibility for parents in the type of care parents use for their children, and I welcome the opportunity to set out the actions we are already taking in this regard.

We recognise that access to affordable and flexible childcare is often cited by parents, and particularly mothers, as one of the main barriers preventing them from working or progressing further in their careers. Our Childcare Offer for Wales provides up to 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare to 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks per year to support families with these costs. The scheme, initially established to support working parents, is going from strength to strength, with more families benefiting from the Offer year on year.

From September this year, and in line with our Programme for Government, we have expanded access to the childcare element of the Offer to parents who are in education and training as well as eligible working parents. Access to the early education element of the Offer is universal, and independent evaluation of the Offer consistently finds that parents believe it is helping them and their families. The most recent evaluation found that 73% of parents felt it had made it easier for them to work and 46% felt it had increased their disposable income. This last part is particularly important in the current climate, and why I am so pleased we have been able to extend the Offer to parents in education and training.

Of course, the Childcare Offer is only one programme of support for parents. I have just announced an extra [£100 million investment](#) in the childcare sector which will help to provide exceptional facilities for children across Wales as well as supporting long-term, positive impacts on the lives of children and families through the Flying Start programme. This is part of the commitment to expand early years provision to all two-year olds we set out in our updated Programme for Government and the Cooperation Agreement.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

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.

Flying Start is a developmental programme aimed at supporting children aged 0-4 in some of our more deprived communities. It comprises four elements, which when applied together support child development across their early years and ensure they reach key milestones, enabling them to achieve their potential. This includes 12.5 hours of free childcare for children aged 2-3. From September this year we have expanded delivery of all four Flying Start elements, ensuring up to 2,500 additional children across Wales will benefit from the programme. My recent announcement confirmed that from April 2023 we will be expanding the childcare element of Flying Start further, ensuring over 3,000 more families can access support with childcare.

We also recognise that summer holidays can be particularly challenging times for some families. I was therefore pleased to build on the success of the Summer of Fun in 2021 with a further £7 million this summer to fund free activities to support our young people and help families across Wales with the rising cost of living over the summer months. The Summer of Fun 2022 sat alongside programmes like the Playworks scheme, which support access to play opportunities across Wales, and the School Holiday Enrichment Programme funded by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language.

Our aim is to increase access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) provision in Wales over the next 10 years, to ensure more children and families can benefit from access to funded provision before statutory school age. However, we are conscious of the need to support and grow the sector in order to enable this which is why I included announcements about additional capital funding in my recent statements.

Ms Byrne also raises in the background to the petition that Welsh Government should “consider siting nurseries and childcare on school grounds.” This was a key feature of our previous capital funding for childcare services and will continue to be going forward.

Our Programme for Government includes a commitment to “invest in the learning environment of community schools, co-locating key services and securing stronger engagement with parents and carers outside of traditional hours”.

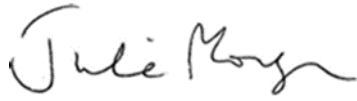
Making effective use of educational facilities for children and the local community has always been a key aim underpinning education investment through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

A £15 million Community Hubs Pilot Scheme was made available in 2019-20. Managed through the Programme, it provided capital funding for 21 pilot schemes. To date 11 have been completed, 4 are under construction and 6 are due to start. The funding was allocated on the basis of three themes; widening family and community engagement; extending the use of physical assets for community use; and co-locating services to form community hubs.

In the second wave of Programme investment, totalling £2.3 billion, one of the two investment objectives is to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources to deliver public services for our communities by 2024. This includes flexibility of assets so that space and facilities available to our communities are maximised; using their facilities to widen family and community engagement and co-locating services to form community hubs. Our robust business case scrutiny process assessment ensures a join up with wider Welsh Government ambitions for communities; and more investment in multi-use facilities, hosting Flying Start and ECEC provision, with options to also hold after school activities.

Finally, I would also like to draw your attention to the work of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's work on [Minding the Future – The Childcare Barrier Facing Working Parents](#) and the [Welsh Government's response](#) which covers many similar issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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