



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1303  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/01219/22

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

14 December 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 14 November regarding Petition P-06-1303 - *Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents*. You referred to further correspondence from the petitioner in response to my letter to the committee of 13 October and raised specific points in relation to the sufficiency and availability of childcare provision. You also asked what plans were in place to provide universal support for parents who require childcare provision.

We know that access to affordable and accessible childcare and early years provision is important in enabling parents and carers to work or access education and training and can help tackle poverty and reduce inequalities. It also has a key role in supporting the wellbeing, learning and development of children. However, I appreciate that currently, finding appropriate childcare can be difficult for some families, particularly in certain areas or for those who work irregular hours.

Your letter asked how Welsh Government will ensure sufficiency of provision across the whole of Wales. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure, as far as possible, that sufficient childcare is available in their areas to help parents to work or access education and training. To help them meet this duty they undertake Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) which look at the supply of and demand for childcare. As part of the assessment local authorities also need to consider the availability of childcare to support parents working atypical hours and improving the availability of Welsh medium provision. The assessments must also look at the barriers parents face when accessing childcare including the specific barriers faced by particular groups of parents for example, lone parent families, low-income families and families from Black Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds. Local authorities

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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.

produce actions plans to address any gaps in provision which have been highlighted within their CSA. The CSAs are carried out every 5 years with the most recent being carried out this year.

The CSAs help to inform Welsh Government's work with local authorities and third sector childcare organisations to increase the sufficiency and availability of childcare provision across Wales. Through the childcare and play element of the Children and Communities Grant we provide funding to local authorities to help address identified gaps in CSAs. In addition, we provide funding to the Cwlwm childcare consortium, made up of the five leading third sector childcare organisations in Wales, to enable them to work with Welsh Government, local authorities and childcare providers to increase the availability of high-quality, accessible, affordable, and flexible registered childcare and play work services throughout Wales.

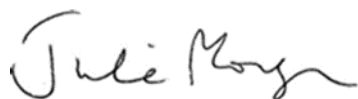
Furthermore, as part of our work taking forward [The Anti Racist Wales Action Plan](#) Welsh Government are working with people from Black Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds to understand and address the barriers these communities face when seeking to access childcare.

You also asked how Welsh Government would ensure provision is available earlier in the morning and later in the evening and for those who work different hours. The structure of the childcare sector with most providers sitting within either the private or third sector means that it is for individual settings themselves to determine the pattern of hours they provide. Although we work in partnership with local authorities and the third sector organisations to encourage settings to meet the needs of parents or carers working atypical hours this is ultimately a business decision for individual settings to make. Some providers such as child minders offer more atypical provision depending on their own personal circumstances and is often the childcare type of choice for many parents, especially in rural parts of Wales, where child minders are better able to support parents' specific requirements. In recent years however there has been a decline in the number of child minders across Wales. To help inform our understanding of the situation, Welsh Government have commissioned an independent review into child minding. The findings from the review which are due to be reported in the new year will help determine how we can best support this area going forward.

Turning to your question about what plans are there to provide universal support for parents who require childcare provision. As set out in our collaboration agreement Welsh Government's ambition is to provide good quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to all children in Wales. In my previous response I referred to our commitment to fund childcare for more families where parents are in education and training or on the edge of work and to continue our support of the Flying Start programme, along with delivering a phased expansion of early years provision for all 2-year-olds, with a focus on Welsh medium provision. In addition, we have already embarked on a journey to adopt an ECEC approach for children in Wales aged 0-5 to ensure children get the best possible start in life. An education and care system responsive to individual circumstances with a focus on settings best placed to deliver quality outcomes for children is the basis of our ECEC aspirations. Work is currently underway to develop an ECEC Action Plan, which will set out our vision for Wales and the actions we will take as part of the journey to achieving this vision.

When I visit settings and talk to parents, carers and childcare providers themselves I hear first-hand the challenges they are facing on a daily basis. I understand and appreciate how difficult this can be and will continue to work with our Cwlwm partners and local authorities to find solutions to help overcome these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Julie Morgan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Julie' and the last name 'Morgan' clearly distinguishable.

**Julie Morgan AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Social Services