

# Childcare funding at 9 months

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 26 Ionawr 2026  
Petitions Committee | 26 January 2026

**Reference:** RS25/12887-5

## Introduction

**Petition Number:** [P-06-1556](#)

**Petition title:** Childcare funding for working parents when their children are +9 months

**Text of petition:** Enable parents to return to work when their newborn children are +9 months. Currently there is no funding available until they are 3 years old.

Depending on eligibility, including age, there is a range of childcare support offered in Wales and funded by Welsh Government and local authorities. This includes the Childcare Offer for Wales, Flying Start Childcare and the provision of 'early years education'.

**Flying Start Childcare is the only one of these available to children aged 2.** This is delivered by individual local authorities and has not yet been fully rolled out to give an offer to all 2 years olds across Wales.

The Minister's paper in response to this petition says:

*We remain committed to our Programme for Government commitment following the last Senedd elections in 2021- to "Deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all 2-year-olds. However, as you will know, during the period of the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru **it was accepted***



*that this would not be completed in this Senedd term. [bold is our emphasis]*

Welsh Government has a webpage about [help with paying for childcare](#). Each local authority must have a free local [Family Information Service](#) to help and advise parents on childcare options in its area.

## 1. Welsh Government action

### 1.1. Flying Start childcare for two-year-olds

In its [Co-operation Agreement](#) with Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Government announced its intention to extend Flying Start childcare to ‘deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to **include all 2-year-olds in Wales**’. How this has been delivered to date varies by local authority.

The Minister’s response to this petition says:

*Our Flying Start programme provides fully funded quality childcare for parents of all eligible two -year-olds for two-and-a-half hours a day, five days a week for 39 weeks a year. Flying Start uses more frequent, shorter sessions of childcare for younger children as the evidence indicates this is most effective, especially for disadvantaged children. [...] The first two local authorities – Merthyr and Swansea – have now announced that they have been able to make a Flying Start childcare offer to all two year olds.*

Flying Start Childcare differs from the full [Flying Start programme](#), the latter of which has three other elements and is available within defined geographical areas.

### 1.2. Childcare Offer for Wales

The Welsh Government’s [Childcare Offer for Wales](#) gives an **entitlement** of 30 hours a week for 48 weeks per year to **children age 3 and 4** of eligible working parents and some parents in education or training. The 30 hours a week is made up of:

- at least 10 hours of early years education (see below); and
- up to 20 hours of childcare.

Depending on the providers, parents can use funded childcare hours at any time during holiday weeks, night or day, including at weekends.

### **1.3. Ten hours early years education**

All local authorities have a [legal duty](#) to offer and provide free 'sufficient nursery education for all children in their area from **the first term after their third birthday** until the September after their fourth birthday'. To deliver this duty, local authorities [must offer](#) a minimum of 10 hours for 39 weeks for all children regardless of their parents' employment status. If children are entitled to the Childcare Offer (see above) then this early years entitlement is topped up to make 30 hours.

### **1.4. UK-wide childcare support / position in England**

The UK Government also provides some financial support that parents in Wales can access, depending on eligibility. For working parents this is usually the [Tax-free childcare scheme](#). The UK Government's [childcare calculator](#) is a tool for parents to check what help they could get with childcare costs.

[Comparisons are often made](#) between the free childcare offers in Wales and England. This has increased [following a commitment by the previous UK Government](#) in 2023 to provide free childcare to children of eligible working parents from the age of 9 months by 2025. This House of Commons Library briefing provides further detail: [Expanding government-funded childcare in England](#).

The Minister's paper, in response to this petition, says:

*In terms of England's childcare expansion there are reports that rapid expansion without sufficient workforce and infrastructure can lead to shortages of places in some areas and quality concerns – we are determined to avoid that. Our phased approach reflects what we've learned about the importance of sustainability and quality as part of any planned expansion.*

## **2. Welsh Parliament action**

The Equality and Social Justice Committee has undertaken [scrutiny of childcare provision](#) during this Sixth Senedd publishing two reports.

- [Minding the future: The childcare barrier facing working parents 2022](#)

- [Their Future: Our Priority? 2024](#)

During the Sixth Senedd, the Petitions Committee has considered a number of petitions about childcare including:

- [Match the new childcare offer in England of 15 hours for 2 year old's from April 2024](#)
- [Offer Welsh working parents the same financial support for childcare as England](#)
- [Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents](#)

It also rejected the following petitions as there was already a petition about this issue when these petitions were submitted:

- [Match the new childcare offer in England of 15 hours for children aged 2](#)
- [Give Welsh Parents Fair Childcare: Extend Free Hours from 9 Months, Not Just Age 3](#)
- [Free 30 hours weekly child care to 9 months child also to Welsh working parents](#)

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.