



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1556  
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/00681/25

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

09 December 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter seeking my views on Petition P-06-1556 Childcare funding for working parents when their children are +9 month from Kathryn Parry.

We recognise childcare costs can be a significant expense, especially alongside the rising cost of living. Our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) approach in Wales places the child and child development at the heart of everything we do. We know investing in ECPLC can have a positive impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children. It can also potentially improve educational attainment and a child's longer-term contribution to society.

The Welsh Government continues to invest heavily in childcare and early years provision. We are making an additional £50m available in 2025-26, taking the total budget to more than £150m to sustain and grow high-quality childcare in Wales. We have deliberately focused our resources on our most disadvantaged communities in the first instance and worked out from them in order of disadvantage.

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. Parents are able to supplement these hours if they need additional childcare provision. 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.

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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.

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. We are keen to learn lessons, including from other countries experiences, when shaping our own policies. 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.

During 2023–24 and 2024–25, we invested £46 million to expand Flying Start, supporting over 13,400 children and families across Wales, exceeding our targets. Over 10,000 children have taken up a Flying Start childcare place, with take-up rates above 80% in 2024-25.

Phase 3 of the expansion began in April 2025, supported by an additional £25 million as part of a wider £50 million investment in childcare for 2025–26. This brings the total childcare budget to over £150 million and will enable thousands more children to benefit, while ensuring the sector has the workforce and capacity to deliver provision sustainably. The number of children reached by Phase 3 Flying Start will depend on take-up rates, but we would expect Phase 3 to reach more than 4,000 additional children in 2025-26.

As you will be aware that we also provide the Childcare Offer for three and four year olds. This is more generous than the equivalent offer in England, covering 48 weeks of the year rather than 38 and applying to parents in education and training as well as those in work. You will also be aware that all government policies are kept under review for consideration in the next electoral cycle and all parties are currently developing offers for the next Senedd term.

I hope the Petition Committee find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden', written in a cursive style.

**Dawn Bowden AS/MS**

Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Children and Social Care