

From: Councillor
Oddi wrth: Y Cynghorydd



Lynne Neagle
Chair - Children, Young People and Education Committee
The National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Your Ref/Eich Cyl
Our Ref/Ein Cyf
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Direct Dial/Rhif Union
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CJ/KP
4th June 2018
Cllr Christine Jones
01244 811556

Dear Ms. Neagle

Subject: Childcare Offer for Wales - Flintshire

I thought I would drop you a line about the free child care offer in Flintshire, I think it's probably timely too given some of the recent negative press about the offer. We recently had a welcome visits by Huw Irranca-Davies, and I was pleased to tell him about Flintshire's successful roll out of the offer and the difference its making to families her in Flintshire.

I take this opportunity to highlight the positive outcomes of the childcare offer to eligible families in Flintshire.

Financially alone, as of mid-day 1 June 2018, the Offer has made and continues to make a real difference to 804 eligible families in Flintshire, with another 48 applications currently pending a decision. Families in Flintshire are benefitting by as much as £5,535 per annum, with some with multiple births, benefitting even more. In fact, there is a member of staff in the Early Years' service with twins who has now been able to increase her working hours, and as a result this benefits the families supported through Flying Start and Families First funding.

Many Flintshire parents have confirmed a return to work or an increase in working hours as a result of being in receipt of this Offer. We have seen applications from all sectors, including the National Health Service and public services, as well as third sector and private employees. People cannot believe they are entitled to the offer, and are really grateful to be in receipt, with many saying it is helping them to plan.

As at the end of March in Flintshire we have supported 570 families, with more registering each day, as can be seen above; we paid just over £900k to childcare settings, funding the cost of childcare for 3-4 year olds. This has made a difference to the Sector in sustaining and professionalising the Sector. We think one of the strengths in Flintshire is the social care and education collaboration, using the skills, knowledge and strengths of each and linking it to other programmes including Flying Start, Childcare Grants and Foundation Phase.

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Our bespoke online system to delivering the Offer has been very successful, and as a result Flintshire has been responsible for claiming just under a third of the £2.8m claimed by EILA's in 2017-18 for childcare payments.

The collaboration between Welsh Government, EILA's and local partners is its strength designing the Guidance together, developing systems and processes together, discussing sufficiency in the sector and working towards greater sufficiency to the market.

- Families no longer feel they are working just to keep their heads above water;
- Families are choosing to work longer hours, benefitting family incomes without having to worry about higher childcare costs;
- Other parents are returning to work either via paid employment or by starting their own businesses thanks to the Offer;
- Parents have even suggested the Offer had come just in time, as they were on the verge of having to give up work as the childcare costs were too prohibitive;
- Some parents are even using the Childcare Offer to gain additional qualifications and training while still working. This may help them to improve their earning potential in the future.

The Offer also supports the wellbeing of children through positive and rich childhood experiences and also helps to address childhood poverty in a very direct way by increasing working household's disposable incomes. Something particularly welcomed by many young families. Many families have told us this has had a positive impact on their wellbeing.

Also, 183 childcare providers have registered to provide childcare through the Childcare Offer. This we believe, shows how popular the Offer is with providers as well as parents. We have received positive feedback from child care settings in regards to our communication, workshop delivery and ease of use of the system.

I give credit to Welsh Government for working well in partnership with our wonderful local team, who only came into existence May 2017, for their hard work and dedication to ensure the success of the programme locally, regionally and nationally.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Christine Jones
Cabinet Member for Social Services

Cc: Huw Irranca Davies, Minister for Children and Social Care
Neil Ayling, Chief Officer for Social Services