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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref MAP/JM/2209/19

Assembly Member
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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21 June 2019

Dear Colleague

In Taking Wales Forward we committed to providing working families with support towards meeting the costs of childcare. Our Childcare Offer provides these families with 30 hours of government-funded early education and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks per year, building on the universal provision of early education for all 3 and 4 year olds across Wales.

We have been trialling the Offer in parts of Wales since September 2017 and I am delighted that it is now available across the whole of Wales, a year earlier than scheduled. Working with our local authority partners we now have over 13,900 children accessing the Offer. That means 13,900 families are benefiting from this important support. We know from the evaluation of the first year of delivery the impact this is already having in terms of increased employment opportunities for parents, the ability to better manage their work-life balance and the benefits for families that come from increased levels of disposable income.

Importantly we are also seeing benefits for childcare providers. In 2018, we published an economic survey of the childcare sector, which showed clearly how close to the edge of sustainability many of these services operate. Given the role childcare plays in supporting the wider Welsh economy, and in direct employment, it is important that we work with the sector to address these issues and I am very pleased that many of those providers delivering the Offer are reporting positive impacts on their businesses, with opportunities to expand and grow.

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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.

Over the coming months we will be providing local authorities with more materials to promote the Offer in their areas, but I know that you will want to make sure that your constituents are able to access this funding as well. I am including with this letter some materials for parent and childcare providers, which you can use to make sure they have the information they need. Further copies will be available from the Members Research Library, in Ty Hywel.

All applications for the Offer should be directed via local authorities, and there is also more information available on our website or from my officials who can be reached on email at talkchildcare@gov.wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Julie', written in dark ink.

Julie Morgan AC/AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

FAQs for parents

What is the childcare offer? The childcare offer will provide eligible working parents with a combined 30 hours of early education and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks per year. We are currently piloting this offer across the whole of Wales.

What does it mean for me as a parent? If you have a 3 or 4 year old you are entitled to access a minimum of 10 hours per week of early education for your child during school terms (sometimes known as Foundation Phase Nursery). If you're working, you could also receive additional hours of government-funded childcare, so that you receive a combined total of 30 hours of childcare and early education per week for up to 48 weeks a year. The 48 weeks is made-up of 39 weeks of combined education and childcare during school term-time and 9 weeks of 'holiday' provision outside of school terms when the entitlement is to 30 hours of childcare.

What is early education? All children are entitled to **early education** (Foundation Phase Nursery) from the term after their 3rd birthday. All local authorities provide a minimum of 10 hours per week early education, either in the local school or in a setting like a playgroup, a day nursery or a Cylch Meithrin. During term time, this early education will be part of the childcare offer's 30 hours. During the school holidays, when there is no early education, the offer will provide 30 hours a week of childcare for eligible parents, for up to 9 weeks. Your local Family Information Service will be able to help you find a registered provider that offers the service that meets your needs. For information on the Foundation Phase please click [here](#) or search for Foundation Phase Nursery on the Welsh Government webpages,

How will I know if I'm eligible? All parents of 3 and 4 year olds can access the early education entitlement. You are eligible to receive the additional childcare if you have a child within the age range and earn on average a weekly minimum equivalent to, or more than, 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW) but less than £100,000 per year. If you are in a lone parent family you need to be working and if you are in a two parent family you both need to be working. If you are self-employed or on a zero hours contract you need to be able to prove this by providing the relevant documents. Foster carers and kinship carers may also be eligible. You can contact your Family Information Service for more information.

Can I choose any childcare provider? Yes, as long as they are willing to be part of the offer and they are registered with CIW (formerly CSSIW) or Ofsted (the inspectorates for childcare settings). They can do this by getting in touch with your local Family Information Service. Childcare providers can be outside of your area, your county or even in England if you live on the border. There is no restriction on when you can use the additional childcare hours of the offer but it is up to you to find

a childcare provider that suits your family's needs. The Family Information Service can help you by providing information on all the childcare settings.

What if my child has additional needs? The offer is available to all eligible parents but you and/or your provider may wish to contact your local authority who should be able to provide advice and details of any additional support available.

Will I have to pay for anything? The childcare offer funds a maximum of 30 hours of early education and childcare per week. The funding from the government is for the education and care the professionals within the setting provide. It does not include food, transport or off-site activities that incur an extra charge and providers will be able to charge you for these. The cost of transport will depend on where you live and how far they have to travel. Providers should not charge more than £7.50 per day for food or £4.75 for half a day (including lunch).

Do I have to use all 30 hours per week? No. You can choose how much of the 30 hours you use. However, if you do not use all of your 30 hours in one week, you cannot use them in another week. You cannot swap education hours for childcare hours, or childcare hours for education hours. You can pay for additional hours of childcare yourself based on a private contract between you and your childcare provider.

How do I apply? You can apply for the offer, including your early education entitlement place, through your local authority. If you are not entitled to the additional childcare hours, you can apply for your early education place through your local authority. Contact your local Family Information Service for more information.



The Childcare Offer Q&As for providers

What is the childcare offer? The childcare offer will provide working parents with 30 hours of early education and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks per year. The offer will build on children's existing early education entitlement (or sometimes known as Foundation Phase Nursery) during term time, and provide 30 hours of childcare for 9 weeks of the school holidays.

What does it mean for me as a provider? Providing you are registered with CIW (formerly CSSIW) or the equivalent in England, you could receive funding from your local authority for eligible 3 and 4 year olds accessing the offer in your setting.

Do I need to deliver the Foundation Phase to deliver the childcare element of the offer? No. Some children will continue to access early education in maintained settings, or funded non-maintained settings who are not delivering the offer. Childcare providers do not need to deliver both the early education and childcare elements of the offer. For information on the Foundation Phase please [click](#) here or search for Foundation Phase Nursery on the Welsh Government webpages.

Do I need to be able to deliver the offer for 48 weeks per year to take part? No. Parents can access the offer through different providers that best suit their circumstance. Providers who only offer term-time provision or provision only in school holidays can still deliver the offer.

Do I need to be open for 30 hours each week to take part? No. Parents are able to use more than one provider to access their hours.

How much will I get paid? All providers will receive a rate of £4.50 per hour for children receiving the childcare element of the offer. Payment rates for the early education element of the offer are decided by local authorities.

How do I sign up to take part in the Childcare Offer and where can I find out more information on the Offer? You should contact your Family Information Services who will be able to provide you with full details of the Offer and how to sign up as a provider.

What if a child has additional needs that I cannot cater for? You should contact Family Information Services who may be able to provide advice and details of any additional support available.

Can I charge parents a top-up rate? No. You cannot charge hourly top-up rates if you'd normally charge more than £4.50 per hour.

What happens if I usually charge for sessions not hours? If you normally charge parents for a full or half day's childcare the childcare offer will fund the number of hours included in a session. For example if you usually charge full-day rate for children attending from 8-6, the offer will fund you £4.50 for 10 hours and the parent will have used 10 hours of their weekly entitlement. It does not matter if a parent drops off their child late or picks them up early.

Can I charge for food and additional activities? Yes. If necessary, you can charge parents for additional elements such as food, transport and off-site activities which incur a cost. The Welsh Government guidelines in respect of setting additional fees under the offer for a full day care session (approximately 10 hours) are that parents should not be charged more than £7.50 per day (this would include three meals at £2 per meal and 2 snacks at a charge of 75p per snack). For a half day session (approximately 5.5 hours) parents should not be charged more than £4.75 (two meals at £2 per meal plus a snack at a charge of 75p per snack). For sessional care where a meal is not provided but children receive a snack, guidelines are that parents should not be charged more than 75p per day for snack provision. Providers should not charge parents who access the offer more for any additional elements than they charge parents who are not accessing the offer and will be considered to be in breach of contract if they do so.

How will I get paid? You should claim funding for the hours a child has registered with you under the offer from your local authority.

What if a child doesn't show up? If a child cannot attend a booked session for reasons such as illness you will still be paid for the hours booked. However, if parents repeatedly book hours that the child does not attend you will need to inform your local authority.

