

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Dr Dai Lloyd MS
Chair
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

SeneddHealth@senedd.wales

30 July 2020

Dear Dai,

Thank you for your letter to the First Minister dated 3 July regarding the committee's inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on health and social care in Wales. As the Minister responsible for this portfolio, I have been asked to respond.

Responding to the pandemic has required significant changes to the way in which the health and social care sectors operate across Wales. The health and social care workforce in Wales has risen to these challenges at every stage.

You ask specifically about childcare provision for school-age children of critical workers over the summer period.

During the immediate response to the virus, we put in place arrangements to ensure critical workers could access childcare. As you note, for school-age children of critical workers and vulnerable children this was largely provided within schools, and run by members of the education workforce. Alongside this, we put in place the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme for pre-school age children.

These measures were necessary to ensure critical workers could go to work and to keep the number of children in settings low at that particular time; we could not direct parents to use registered childcare because settings did not have the space available to accommodate the numbers of children safely and in line with the requirements around distancing.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

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.

As our understanding of the virus has evolved, and in particular our understanding of the impacts on children, we have been able to make changes to the regulations and guidance which enabled all school pupils to check in and catch up at school ahead of the summer holiday and childcare settings to expand their services safely.

Since 22 June, childcare providers across Wales have been able to increase their operations, opening services to more children. Across Wales, there are more than 3,500 childcare settings with a capacity to provide almost 79,000 childcare places. A number of these settings closed at the outset of the pandemic but the majority are now open and accepting children.

The summer sees dedicated holiday play and activity schemes, which further boost capacity. Alongside this, we have enabled families to come together to form extended households, allowing more informal childcare to be provided.

While the childcare sector is increasing its operations, the recovery has been varied and there are differences in capacity and availability. We are working with local authorities and the childcare sector to ensure services, which can operate do so, and we recently amended our regulations to enable childcare settings to operate from community centres and places of worship.

We announced £2.6m towards the provision of childcare and play opportunities for our more vulnerable children over the summer. Several local authorities have been able to combine that provision with wider summer schemes which support critical workers, and we are looking at what more we can do to support this work.

Our health and social care workers have played a significant role in our response to the virus to date, and we are grateful to them for all that they have done and continue to do. I look forward to the committee's findings.

I am copying this letter to the First Minister and to the chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

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Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services