

Dear Chair,

10th May 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to present evidence in the follow-up inquiry on childcare in Wales for the Equality and Social Justice Committee. In response to your additional questions, I have set out my reply below.

How do you think Wales can maintain focus on other aspects of Flying Start aside from childcare?

From my experience working within Flying Start prior to academia, and my work with the early years sector since being at the university, the key is co-location of services and an integrated approach. From my time in practice, we shared an office with the local health visitors, there was a purpose built room used for family engagement, meetings and assessments; there was a hot desk on site where family support/parenting, social workers, speech and language therapists, advisory teachers and others all regularly based themselves. This meant that a true coordinated approach supporting children and families could take place. Additionally, we were fortunate enough to be based in a school, meaning that transitions, information sharing and family engagement were highly effective (children often had siblings in the school).

What is needed are integrated centres where children and families can access all of the services they need, where services can communicate regularly with each other through shared space and co-ordination of services. Currently, community focused schools are a great example of this from an education perspective and the number and impact of community focused schools is gaining momentum.

There is opportunity to drive this forward by aligning to the ethos and principles of *Curriculum for Wales*, the *Curriculum for funded non-maintained Nursery Settings* and the *Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care*. All of these documents identify the importance of collaboration, multi-agency working and parental engagement. There is also opportunity to drive forward a more integrated ECEC by making these curricula and guidance documents statutory across all childcare provision.

Services need to be co-located and collaborating within the community they work in for them to engage with and work in partnership with families effectively. Childcare is a key part of this through having daily contact with children, families and their communities.

You touched on childcare training by way of evening classes or weekend studies – are these proving popular? Is there a particular demographic that prefers to learn by way of evening classes/weekend study?

Our early years team within UWTSD developed an innovative 2-year accelerated degree programme in [early years education and care](#), this programme has an option of students obtaining a practice qualification alongside their academic degree allowing them to obtain a recognised qualification to work in the sector (on Social Care Wales list of approved qualifications).

To date, we are the only institution offering the 2-year accelerated degree. The practice element is not unique to UWTSD or unique to the 2-year programme and a number of HEI institutions in Wales offer the practice element alongside the academic degree.

Our students are able to fit study around their work and home life on the 2-year flexible accelerated programme. Students attend lectures in the evening and occasional weekends from September through to July. Our students are predominantly those working in schools, settings or with children or families in another capacity. We have a large widening access demographic within our 2-year programme and students are generally those who would not have engaged in a traditional form of HE/FE study. The programme is available through the medium of English or Welsh and we currently deliver in Carmarthen, Swansea, Cardiff and Birmingham. This mode of delivery is providing popular and we have a large annual intake in comparison to our traditional 3-year day delivery method. I strongly believe that this model would suit a degree apprenticeship route if funding were made available to develop a degree apprenticeship in Early Years Education and Care. Particularly if graduate leadership in settings was endorsed to align us with other home and European countries who are developing a high quality early years provision in this way.

Our institution also has a second programme aimed at teaching assistants delivered as a part-time Foundation degree in [Inclusive Education](#). We have also recently developed a Masters/Professional Doctorate in [Children's, Young People's and Community Services](#) designed to enable those working in the sector to further develop their own knowledge and expertise. These programmes are also delivered during the evenings and weekends so students can fit study in around work and other commitments.

Please contact me if you have any further questions or would like any further information.

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