

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



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Lynne Neagle AM  
Chair, Children, Young People and Education  
Committee National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

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Dear Lynne,

Following my recent appearance Committee session 2 October 2019, I agreed to provide you with some further information beyond the answers provided to some of your questions.

During discussions I confirmed that by the end of July almost 16,000 children across Wales were accessing the Childcare Offer, with 29% taking up their provision in Welsh language or bilingual settings. I was asked to provide the number of children accessing the Offer in Welsh language settings, without including the bilingual settings.

This is something we do want to know, and have been trying to calculate from the termly datasets for the Offer, which, while anonymous, go to an individual record level in their detail. However, due to the way data for the Offer is currently captured by the different systems used to administer it, and the difficulties in classifying the language of childcare provision, we do not have an accurate all Wales picture of separate 'Welsh' and 'bilingual' provision delivered through the Childcare Offer.

We are working with Care Inspectorate Wales and the local authorities to improve this data and provide a more detailed picture of language provision delivered through the Offer in future.

The Committee also asked for further information on the costs associated with HMRC administering the Offer as compared to the cost of local authorities administering it. The estimate provided by HMRC for the annual cost of undertaking the eligibility checks was £2m per annum, to include system support and a bilingual helpline. The estimated current cost of the equivalent service by local authorities is £1m, based on 40% of delivery authorities' time being spent on this part of the service. The main difference in the level of services provided at these costs is that parents will need to provide evidence of pay under the current process that would not be needed for salaried parents if we were using the HMRC system. Self-employed and other non-standard parental situations would require manual intervention whichever system was used. The Business Case estimated the

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

[Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales](mailto: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.

differential time cost to parents of manually uploading standard pay details would be some £0.4m.

The Committee has requested information on the rates of take-up of Flying Start childcare offers. Before addressing the query relating to take-up rates it may help the Committee if I set out the annual account management process for Flying Start.

Each Local Authority submits a Flying Start delivery plan before receiving formal confirmation of their grant award for the year. These plans are scrutinised and agreed by Account Managers as formal records of a Local Authority's annual programme delivery intentions. In July the annual Flying Start statistical bulletin is published which allows for year-on-year comparison of data. Formal account meetings with Local Authorities usually take place in November and coincide with the publication of Term 1 Flying Start Data. These data sets are used at account meetings to identify trends, areas of concern and good practice alongside progress. If significant delivery concerns are identified additional discussions will take place between Account Managers and local Flying Start teams.

In view of the Committee's specific concerns relating to take-up rates of Flying Start childcare, my officials have sought clarification from Ceredigion and Denbighshire in advance of formal account monitoring activity. As I mentioned during the evidence session, there are a range of factors that may influence take-up and, for the Local Authorities in question, these include the transient nature of some families and a family's choice whether to take up the offer of childcare or not.

Finally, there was discussion at Committee on the work of the Early Years Transformation Programme. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide more information on this work, and some indicative timescales.

As I mentioned during the Committee session, there are eight PSBs undertaking a programme of work to establish what it will take to create a more joined up responsive early years system locally, focussing on the coordination of services, planning, commissioning and how best to identify and address needs.

The programme is at an early stage with pathfinders at different stages of development. The work the pathfinders are undertaking will help shape a national framework for transforming the early years, by testing what the core components of a system are. This work, alongside a programme evaluation which started in September which will take at least 12 months to complete, will help inform future decisions.

I trust the Committee will find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely



**Julie Morgan AC/AM**

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