

Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Is-adran Childcare, Chwarae a Blynyddoedd Cynnar
Deputy Director Childcare, Play and Early Years Division



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To: Mr Dilwyn Owen Williams,
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Mr Gwynne Jones
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Cc: Delyth Molyneaux
Marian Parry Hughes
Sioned Owen
Bethan Jones
Rachel Jones

20 March 2018

Dear Dilwyn and Gwynne,

As I'm sure you are aware, the Welsh Government has been working with seven local authorities in Wales to deliver the childcare offer since September 2017. I am very grateful for the efforts you have made to introduce the offer across Gwynedd and Ynys Môn since then, and particularly to Sioned Owen, Bethan Jones, Rachel Jones and their teams.

The Welsh Government is committed to delivering the childcare offer across Wales by September 2020. Prior to that, we would like to expand the early implementation scheme, enabling us to test the offer in as many authorities as possible before it is fully rolled out. We have been considering options for this, looking to introduce the offer across the remaining 15 local authorities in Wales and expanding the provision with our current seven partners.

These considerations have been guided by the meeting I had with Delyth Molyneaux and Marion Parry Hughes on February 5. Following these discussions, I would like to invite Ynys Môn and Gwynedd to commence delivering the childcare offer across both authorities in

April 2018.

I hope that you will welcome this decision and that you will be able to secure agreement through your internal processes as required.

Turning to the possibility of delivering the offer in more local authorities, one of the issues discussed at the meeting on 5 February was the possibility that Ynys Môn and Gwynedd could also deliver the childcare offer on behalf of Conwy County Borough Council. The Minister for Children and Social Care has recently approved this model, and consequently, I wish to invite you to commence formal arrangements so that this can take place.

We foresee that the offer will start to be rolled out in some areas in Conwy from September 2018 onwards. This will need to include formal agreements between your local authorities in accordance with your internal processes. You are best placed to decide what wider governance arrangements need to be put in place, but I would expect them to be formally agreed with Conwy in due course.

As regards the strategic delivery of the childcare offer across Wales, we wish the process to be as uniform as possible to ensure the best value for money in the process administration. Therefore, we wish the rollout of the childcare offer to be guided by the following principles:

- the process of applying for the offer should be as uniform as possible for parents;
- the process of paying childcare providers should be as simple as possible, particularly if they provide childcare for parents from more than one local authority;
- avoid duplication when developing systems and processes;
- build on current best practice and reduce differences in the methods used across Wales;
- ensure economies of scale.

In addition, you will be aware that we are in discussions with Her Majesty's Customs and Excise regarding the longer-term online application process for parents to apply for the childcare offer and for the childcare providers to receive payment. As a result we wish to reduce the cost to Wales of developing multiple processes which will end in 2020.

Under this model Gwynedd ac Ynys Môn would be responsible for: processing applications from parents across the three authorities; deciding whether or not they qualify; agree terms with childcare providers; and process their payments. We would expect Conwy to be responsible for promoting the offer among parents and childcare providers in their communities; training their Family Information Service to deal with enquiries regarding the childcare offer; and providing any information you require. I shall provide them with a separate grant to facilitate this.

We acknowledge that there will be extra costs associated with delivering the childcare offer across Ynys Môn and Gwynedd, and additional costs associated with its introduction in Conwy. I believe you have already received a grant offer letter for the childcare offer administration grant in Ynys Môn and Gwynedd for the period to September 2019. We are currently in the process of reviewing the allocations made for administration in the light of this expansion. When you and Conwy have agreed formal arrangements, I shall issue an additional grant administration letter to cover the costs of delivering the childcare offer across the three local authority areas.

In addition, you will receive grant offer letters to cover the costs of childcare and support for Children with Special Educational Needs across Gwynedd ac Ynys Môn. We need to ensure that this funding is available for Ynys Môn and Gwynedd from April onwards, and as soon as formal arrangements have been agreed with Conwy, I shall issue an additional grant letter to cover the costs of delivering in those areas. These grants will continue to be paid on a claims basis to ensure that the childcare remains fully funded by Welsh Government.

I do not underestimate the challenges of such collaboration. The Welsh Government is committed to working regionally to provide public services. You may rest assured, therefore, that we shall continue to support you in the work of delivering this programme.

The Minister for Children and Social Care will be making a Written Statement on the expansion of the childcare offer within the next few weeks. We would be grateful if you could align our correspondence and ensure that any public statements concerning the rollout of the childcare offer across Ynys Môn and Gwynedd are made in tandem with this Written Statement.

I am writing to all other local authorities in Wales to inform them of the further expansion of the childcare offer across the rest of Wales. My officials will keep in touch with you to co-ordinate this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Owain Lloyd'.

Owain Lloyd
Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Is-adran Childcare, Chwarae a Blynyddoedd Cynnar
Deputy Director Childcare, Play and Early Years Division