

£60m programme to develop new childcare settings across Wales

Ministers are committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The 30 hours will be made up of the existing minimum of 10 hours of Foundation Phase and up to 20 hours of childcare with a registered provider.

The Childcare Offer is currently being roll-out across Wales, and will be available across the country by 2020.

The £60m grant programme, which will be spread over three years (2018-2021), will be focussed primarily on supporting the co-location of existing Foundation Phase provision with the new Childcare Offer provision on a single site, wherever possible.

This will involve either establishing new childcare settings or refurbish existing ones to ensure they meet the required standard that would be expecting of a setting delivering the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer.

The programme will ensure the Childcare Offer is available to parents across Wales by ensuring there is sufficient childcare in the right areas, with a specific focus on developing new provision in areas that currently lack childcare services, in particular rural and disadvantaged areas.

The funding will also support the childcare sector in other ways, including:

- Supporting the growth and sustainability of the childcare sector across Wales, helping to create high-quality jobs in the sector;
- Improving the physical quality of childcare settings;
- Supporting the expansion of Welsh medium provision, in line with the Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy; and
- Supporting SEN and ALN provision.
- Local authorities have been invited to bid for the funding.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"I'm really pleased to announce a significant £60m Welsh Government investment in new childcare settings across Wales, which will ensure parents across the country are able to access high quality, government-funded childcare places. This will not only ensure their children are given the very best start in life, but it will go a long way to help reducing the strain on family income and helping ensure childcare is not a barrier to them taking up employment or increasing their hours.

"This investment will help ensure the 30 hours offer is as clear and easy as possible for working parents to understand and children

to access. As part of this, we need to enable parents, wherever possible, to be able to drop off their children and pick them up from the same site and access a seamless 30 hours of childcare, although wrap around provision will continue to be an important part of the answer for some children and parents.”

The investment will help deliver the Welsh Government’s commitment to introducing Community Learning Centres which provide extended services with childcare, parenting support, family learning and community access to facilities built around the school day.