

## PaCE scheme is example of our commitment to getting parents back to work – Eluned Morgan

Ahead of her appearance at the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee to give evidence to their inquiry into pregnancy, maternity and work, the Minister visited The Hair Den in Barry and met Julie Coulthard, who has been helped by the £13.5 million Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) programme.

Julie has four children, aged 26, 19, 6 and 4 years. After the birth of her youngest daughter, a relationship breakdown meant Julie, who had always balanced work and caring for her children, couldn't work and was receiving benefits. With the help of her PaCE adviser, Julie started to train as a hairdresser with ACT Training – a career she had always wanted to pursue. PaCE paid for her childcare and training, and now two years on, she is fully qualified and working 16 hours a week at the salon.

Figures show Julie's case is far from unusual. In Wales 19.1% of women who are economically inactive say it is because they are looking after family or home, compared with 6.8% of economically inactive men<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, the average price of a part-time nursery place for a childcare under two comes to £116 per week in Wales – double what Welsh families spend on groceries in a year.<sup>2</sup>

PaCE targets parents who face childcare barriers which prevent them accessing education, employment or training opportunities. Jointly delivered by the Welsh Government and the Department for Work and Pensions, there are 43 PaCE advisers in community settings, helping people find a variety of solutions to overcome childcare barriers so that they can move towards and into sustainable employment.

Eluned Morgan said:

“Our Employability Plan recognises that different people experience different barriers which prevent them entering work. For parents – and mothers in particular – we know these include the availability of jobs with flexible or suitable working hours and the cost of quality childcare, especially if they lack the skills to find work that pays enough to make these costs worthwhile.

“PaCE advisers have been very effective in finding a variety of solutions to overcome childcare barriers, including encouraging employers to consider employing PaCE participants on a part time basis to accommodate childcare commitments and helping with childcare costs so parents can undertake training to improve their employability. This is exactly the sort of individualised approach

the Employability Plan is advocating.”

Julie said:

“I’ve always worked, so when I was claiming benefits after my youngest was born I wanted to do something about it but didn’t know how to get out of the rut I found myself in. My PaCE adviser was so helpful and supportive and, rather than just finding any job, really worked to help me train to get the job I always wanted and that paid enough to make childcare affordable.

“My older two children always saw me working so I really want to make sure my youngest two see that as well. My eldest two now have decent jobs themselves and I also help look after my two grandchildren whilst my daughter is at work.”