# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **The Childcare Offer – One year on and Increasing the pace of roll out** |
| **DATE** | **26 September 2018** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care** |

This month marks a year since we began our early implementation of the Childcare Offer, providing 30 hours of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks of the year. I would like to update Assembly Members on the progress across our early implementers, and outline some of our next steps in developing and expanding the offer across Wales.

Early implementation of the offer began in September 2017 in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Flintshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Swansea. Since the beginning of this month, these authorities have been joined by Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Wrexham, Conwy and Torfaen. I am pleased at the way local authorities are working collaboratively with each other to deliver the Childcare Offer. There has been a marked focus on maximising partnership working between authorities with new implementation authorities working alongside existing local authorities to maximise learning and deliver economies of scale.

In addition to the roll-out of the Offer, we are also working closely with local authorities on a £60m Childcare Offer capital grant programme over the next three years. The aim of the programme is to support the co-location of existing Foundation Phase provision with the new Childcare Offer provision on a single site, wherever possible, and to ensure 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. I hope to make an announcement on the successful bids later this year.

I know from talking to providers and local authorities that our Childcare Offer is already making a positive difference to working parents. Feedback from eligible parents accessing the offer and childcare providers has generally been positive. Parents are reporting that it is already making a difference to their lives, reducing the strain on family income and helping ensure childcare is not a barrier to them taking up employment or increasing their hours.

However, we know that parents and providers across Wales are eager to know when our Offer will be rolled out further. That is why I am delighted to announce that, following positive discussions with local authorities and using our robust modelling, I am increasing the pace of expansion over the coming months and into 2019. Each local authority will have its own process for informing parents and further information will be available on each authority’s web site in due course. In the meantime, I’m please to update Members on progress and announce our expansion plans as follows:

**Blaenau Gwent** is working with **Torfaen** and the Offer is fully available across both authorities. **Newport** began taking applications from parents earlier this month for a number of identified wards, and I am pleased to announce that Newport has agreed to extend the Offer throughout its entire authority accepting applications from October 2018 and will deliver the Offer for the whole of **Monmouthshire** from January 2019.

**Flintshire** is already delivering across its entire authority, and is currently working with **Wrexham** to deliver the offer in some wards, with a view to rolling out full authority by January 2019. Flintshire are also working with **Denbighshire** and are planning on beginning roll-out from January 2019.

**Anglesey and Gwynedd** have implemented the Offer across their entire authorities and are working with **Conwy** who are currently delivering in some wards. I am pleased to announce that Conwy will proceed to full authority from January 2019. I am delighted that **all** the North Wales authorities will be delivering the offer to eligible parents by the beginning of 2019.

**Rhondda Cynon Taff** has been providing the Offer across its entire authority since the start of September 2018 and is working closely with **Merthyr** to deliver the Offer across that authority from January 2019. **Rhondda Cynon Taff** is also workingwith **Bridgend** who will come on board sometime during 2019.

Implementation in **Cardiff** will begin in the autumn once all the IT application systems are fully functioning and tested; firstly in a number of selected wards followed by a rollout across the rest of city. Cardiff Council will also deliver the childcare offer for the Vale of Glamorgan, and implementation is planned to begin in early 2019.

**Caerphilly** is operating the Offer across its entire authority. **Neath Port Talbot and Swansea** are currently delivering to a number of wards, and are both proposing to proceed to full authority from January 2019.

**Ceredigion** is a new delivery authority and is delivering the offer across the whole authority. We are hopeful that Ceredigion will be able to deliver for the whole of **Carmarthenshire** from January 2019 with **Pembrokeshire and Powys** coming on board from **April 2019.**

The move to a different delivery model during early implementation has enabled far greater flexibility in rolling out the Childcare Offer cross Wales. Working in partnership with local authorities, providers and other stakeholders is also shaping the Offer in readiness for 2020. Today’s announcement regarding further expansion demonstrates progress and real momentum around our Childcare Offer, making a real difference to the lives of working parents throughout Wales.