# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE**  | **Update on the Childcare Offer for Wales** |
| **DATE**  | **11 April 2018** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies AM, Minister for Children and Social Care** |

In September 2017, we began delivery of our Childcare Offer in seven early implementer local authorities across Wales. Our offer, which commits the Welsh Government to 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, is an ambitious one. This programme of early implementation is central to ensuring the offer meets the needs of children, parents and providers once rolled out across Wales in September 2020.

I would like to update Assembly Members on the progress across our early implementers, and outline some of our next steps in developing the offer.

Early implementation of the offer is underway in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Flintshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Swansea. Up until now, Blaenau Gwent has been the only local authority piloting the offer across the whole authority. In the others, the offer has been available in agreed areas, enabling us to test a range of aspects and issues impacting delivery and take-up. Learning from these early implementers will be important in helping us fine-tune policies and systems prior to a wider roll-out. We appointed NatCen and Arad back in August 2017 to undertake a rigorous and independent evaluation of the early implementation. Their findings will help to inform the future implementation of the childcare offer.

New parents continue to apply for the childcare offer with a further 959 applications received during the Spring term. Feedback from eligible parents accessing the offer and childcare

providers has generally been positive, and the early implementer local authorities continue to promote and raise awareness of the offer.

In December 2017, I announced that we would be expanding the eligible areas within the early implementer local authorities. We now believe there is a strong case for further expansion, and I am pleased to inform members that we are planning to extend the offer to the following areas:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Local Authority** | **Expansion Areas** |
| **Anglesey**  | To be available across the whole local authority from April 2018.  |
| **Gwynedd** | To be available across the whole local authority from April 2018. |
| **Caerphilly** | To be available across the whole local authority from April 2018. |
| **Rhondda Cynon Taf** | To include the wards of Brynna, Llanharan, Llanharry, Talbot Green, Graig, Rhydyfelin Central, Taff’s Well, Treforest and Hawthorn with immediate effect. To include all remaining areas within the authority by September 2018.  |

Discussions are also ongoing with Flintshire and Swansea with a view to rolling out the offer to all remaining areas within those authorities as soon as possible.

I am very grateful to the early implementer local authorities for their efforts in delivering the childcare offer to date. I would also like to thank the childcare sector for their support including the positive way they have worked with us to ensure there is a good awareness of the childcare offer. The second phase of our successful #TalkChildcare campaign is about engaging further with childcare providers, through online questionnaires, focus groups and direct consultation.

We have committed to fully roll-out the Childcare Offer by September 2020. The funding to support the childcare offer increases to £25m in 2018-19, and to £45m in 2019-20. This will allow us to expand and test aspects of the delivery of the offer in new local authorities from September 2018 onwards. I will update members in due course on a rolling programme of delivery for further early implementation of the childcare offer across Wales.

This Statement is being issued during recess in order to keep Members informed. Should Members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns, I would be happy to do so.