

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/01399/15

Chris Davies MP
Member of Parliament for Brecon
& Radnorshire
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

July 2015

Dear

Foundation Phase Early Education for 3 and 4 year-olds in Wales

I am writing in response to your email of 14 July referring to the concerns raised by your constituent in relation to childcare and free early education provision for three and four year-olds in Crickhowell.

As in England, Welsh local authorities have a statutory duty to make available a free quality part-time early education place for all children, from the term following their third birthday. In planning this provision, local authorities take into account the needs of the individual child and their parents as identified in their local sufficiency assessment, as well as the level of provision they already have in place.

In Welsh local authorities, 3 and 4 year-olds can receive their early education entitlement in schools or non-maintained settings (private day care nurseries or playgroups) and this is delivered on a 'sessional' basis. Powys County Council inform us that they have made the early education sessions available in approved non-maintained settings that are registered childcare providers in order to ensure that parental demand for education places is met and also to provide flexibility for working parents who require wrap-around childcare around the early education entitlement, as many school nursery classes do not have this facility on-site or nearby. The additional costs associated with childcare are payable by parents, and financial assistance for childcare may be available through working tax credits / other benefit related payments.

There appears to be a misconception that the funding for Foundation Phase for 3 and 4 year-olds is available to subsidise childcare costs. However, this is not the case - it is specifically to deliver early education provision, whether that provision is in maintained schools or non-maintained private childcare settings. Delivery arrangements (the number of hours per day – the “session”), funding and payment arrangements for the Foundation Phase early education entitlement are agreed between the local authority and the setting. Parents only pay for the hours their child is receiving childcare in the setting – which is a private arrangement agreed between the parents and their childcare provider.

As provision in the _____ is a matter for the local authority, I would advise that contact Karen Swann (Karen.Swann@powys.gov.uk) or Jennifer Deakin (Jennifer.Deakin@powys.gov.uk) at Powys County Council (tel. no. 01597 826111) to discuss her concerns further.

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