



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-643, P-04-645
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00961/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

7th September
2015

Dear Bill,

Thank you for your letter of 6 August, regarding the petitions to Save Flying Start in Glyncorrwg (P-04-643) and Croeserw (P-04-645). You requested my response to information received from the petitioner and Action for Children.

I fully understand the concerns laid out in the petitioner's correspondence, however, Flying Start is not being removed from Glyncorrwg or Croeserw. The Flying Start Programme consists of four key elements and it is only the Childcare element currently being disrupted, whilst Neath Port Talbot Council seek to secure an alternative provider. The situation has been discussed at considerable length and my officials support the Council's approach to secure quality replacement childcare in the affected communities in the longer term, whilst offering a range of alternative provision in the short term. The Council intends to temporarily increase delivery of all other aspects of the programme in these communities.

Due to the timescale required to procure alternative childcare provision and to achieve registration by CSSIW, it is not practical for the Council to do this before confirmation of the Welsh Government's budget for 2016-17 and subsequently, the Flying Start budget allocation. As you will be aware, the Spending Review announcement by the UK Government will not be made until 25 November. This means the Welsh Government will not be advised of its budget consequential until this time and though we are hopeful of an earlier indication of overall allocations, it does mean I am unable, at this time, to give any Local Authority a firm indication of the level of Flying Start funding for 2016-17.

The Council has been exploring two different options for replacement provision, is continuing to do so and will be in a position to act as soon as they receive confirmation they have adequate budget to do so. In the meantime, the Council has written to the families affected and has offered the possibility of childcare provision in other Flying Start areas from September as a temporary replacement. A number of families have taken up this offer.

My officials have been aware of the information noted within Action for Children's correspondence for some time and have been in constant dialogue with the Council. It is unfortunate a situation has occurred where the Council and Action for Children were unable to reach an agreement on funding. The financial agreement between the Council and Action for Children would have been set out clearly and agreed by both parties when the childcare provision was initially procured.

I note Action for Children's comments about being unable to fulfil their childcare provision commitments in Glyncoed and Croeserw due to the amount of funding they received from the Council. The Local Authority operates consistent funding levels to all of its Flying Start childcare providers across the County.

Lastly, your correspondence asked me to explain how the funding for Flying Start is calculated and whether there has been a recent assessment to determine if the funding is sufficient to cover costs. The Flying Start Revenue Grant is allocated to each Local Authority on the basis of a formula. The grant allocation to each Local Authority is based on the number of 0-3 years olds in the most disadvantaged Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wales. Each Local Authority is then allocated a quota of children (the Cap) based on this percentage figure applied to the number of children the Welsh Government wishes to include in the Flying Start programme each year (36,000 in 2015-16). It is for Local Authorities to determine how to utilise the funding available to deliver the four key elements of the programme within the budget available.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lesley Griffiths', written in a cursive style.

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty