

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau / Petitions Committee
Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Friday 4 May 2012

Dear Committee members

I am a working parent with two young children living in the Vale of Glamorgan, and I would like to support P-04-346: Petition on provision of early years education. I did not sign the petition as I was unaware of its existence. However, I understand that although the petition is now closed for signatures you are still collecting evidence.

I understand that you are interested in three main areas:

1) Are you able to access early years education for your 3-4 year old in a way that is convenient to you?

The answer is no, I work 4 days a week and have to be in work by 9 a.m. and finish at 5 p.m. Currently, the Vale of Glamorgan Council offers free childcare provision for state nursery schools from 9 a.m.-11.30 p.m. mon-fri. These hours have no benefit to me whatsoever as a working mum.

2) Does the provision of early years education for your 3-4 year old enhance or hinder your opportunities to work or study?

The current provision hinders the above opportunities as mentioned in my answer to question 1, the current hours offered do not make it possible for a working/studying parent to work around this provision. Ideally, the best solution would be to offer wrap around childcare for 2.5 full days rather than spreading it over 5 days. This way parents could take a part-time job or studies around these hours and be able to drop off and collect their child. Furthermore, a lot of children are missing out on attending nursery school which is invaluable to the child's development and also this prepares them well for going into school.

I am aware that this wrap around childcare is already happening in some Councils within South Wales and also in England. I'm also aware that in England where there isn't a state nursery school available, parents are given free childcare vouchers to use at private nurseries for the equivalent hours.

It does appear that parents and children who live in the Vale and other areas of South Wales are being geographically discriminated against because of where they live. It seems very unfair and inequitable.

3) Have you declined to take up provision for early years education for your 3-4 year old as it is inconvenient for you to do so? If so, what childcare provisions have you made instead?

I have 2 children, one aged 4 and one aged 17 months old. I have managed to take up this provision for my eldest child by paying a childminder to take my daughter to nursery school and collect, however, we have to put our youngest child in nursery from September so won't be able to use the current state provision when she is 3 as it's currently much more expensive to pay for private nurseries to take children to nursery school.

Finally, I would add that my eldest daughter has flourished since starting nursery school last September and thoroughly enjoys going there. It will be very disappointing and disheartening if my youngest daughter doesn't have the same opportunity when she reaches 3 because of the inequitable system applied to the Vale.

Thank you for taking the time to review this issue. I look forward to hearing from you with the results of the petitions committee.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature in black ink, reading "C Okaroh".A horizontal line drawn in black ink, ending with a small dot.

Caroline Okaroh