CABINET STATEMENT

# Written statement: Summer holiday childcare and play provision

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Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in Wales, our schools and childcare providers have played an important role in ensuring children have safe care, particularly children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

As we look ahead to the start of the summer holidays, we want to thank our local authorities and our childcare and education workforce for all their efforts during this difficult and uncertain time.

All school-age children currently have the opportunity to check in, catch-up and prepare for the summer and September. Schools have worked incredibly hard to offer face-to-face lessons for all pupils in smaller groups to ensure they have some dedicated time with teaching staff and their classmates ahead of the summer break.

At the same time, we have enabled childcare providers to increase their operations to support working families as more workplaces open, while putting in place measures to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus as much as possible. As childcare services continue to increase their operations, we believe there will be sufficient provision for those who need it.

From today (6 July), two separate households will be able to join together to form an exclusive extended household – this is an important step forward in reuniting families but will also help support families with informal childcare arrangements and other caring responsibilities. More information about extended households is available at: **https://gov.wales/extended-households-will-enable-families-be-re-united**

As schools prepare to close for the summer, we are now setting out the arrangements for summer holiday childcare and play provision.

We will make £1.6m available from the local authority emergency hardship fund to enable local authorities to enhance their childcare and play opportunities for children and young people aged five to 16 to provide for all those who need additional support over the summer. Local authorities are best placed to use services available to them to help those most at risk in their areas.

A further £1m has been allocated from the education budget to fund support for children and young people over the school summer holidays to help them re-engage with education, giving them the opportunity to take part in activities, which they may have missed out on while not at school, including socialising with their peers and physical activity.

We will work with the Welsh Local Government Association to determine how this funding will be allocated. We would like to see it targeted towards those children who have missed out the most while they have not been able to attend school and particularly towards the needs of vulnerable children in deprived communities.

Altogether, a further £2.6m will be invested to support local authorities provide childcare support and play provision for children during this year's school summer holidays.

We will also continue to fund free school meals for all eligible children over the summer holidays. Wales was the first UK country to make this commitment.

We announced on 9 June, the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme will continue to be available to the end of August. Children of critical workers and vulnerable children under five will receive funded care in childcare settings. Wales is the only part of the UK providing funded childcare to pre-school aged children who are more vulnerable and are facing particular challenges at this time, supporting them and their families.

We will be reviewing the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme over the summer. A final decision about this scheme and the Childcare Offer for Wales will be made before September. We will keep Members updated.

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