

Elaine Speyer

Response to P-04-346: Petition on provision of early years education

I am a parent of a 3 year old boy who accesses early years education for five mornings per week in the form of a nursery class which is attached to a local authority school in Neath Port Talbot. I work three days per week, for two of these days my son is looked after at a privately owned crèche facility, and for one day per week he is picked up from school by a family member. I am also a part time student with Swansea University, I am studying for a degree which involves attending two, two hour lessons per week.

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

I find that it is convenient for me that my son has access to early years education, as I work 9am – 5pm, my place of work is close to the school and I can drop him off from 8:40 am onwards. There is also a 'breakfast club' at the school which is a free facility and enables me to start work earlier if I need to. I have found this service vital when I have needed to work from outside of my office. However I do feel that the way that the education is provided can be quite rigid and inflexible which may not be so convenient for a parent who works outside of normal office hours, or for myself if the childcare provider did not have a pick up and drop off facility with the school. It would be more convenient if the school offered a wrap around child care service, as I do feel that it is important for a child of that age to experience school.

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

I find that what works well for me is that the childcare provider which I use has a facility which means that they can pick my son up from school. There is a small charge for this service; however this is manageable as it works out at just £1 per journey. I do know of other childcare providers in the area which charge a lot more and some who do not offer this service which I feel would be incredibly inconvenient for a working parent, as the children are only in school for 2.5 – 3 hours per day. Additionally, my son would prefer to stay in school rather than be moved from one place to another as he can get emotional during this process and at times if I have to finish work late and rely on a family member to pick my son up from crèche he will be transported around quite a lot which can be unsettling.

My son would prefer wrap around care at the school, where I would pay for him to have lunch and then go to the afternoon session, just for the three days that I work, however the school does not offer this facility. I have found that the Department for Adults Continuing Education within Swansea University has been very flexible which really helps when you have children in school. I am studying for one day per week this year, but can chose to study in the evenings or to separate my lessons so that I could do two mornings per week, there is also the option of the university paying for a registered childcare provider of my choice which really helps. I find that this flexibility makes it possible to continue in education. The only negatives that I would mention are the fact that the university will only pay for childcare whilst I am actually in the lessons, and not for study time, this means that I quite often have to rely on family. I have a friend studying with me who is a single mother with two children and very little family support. For her, one session per week with her children at a childcare facility which could be paid for by the university would help greatly for study times, as she doesn't work.

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?

N/A