

SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

All babies and young children, irrespective of their background, have the right to grow up in a happy, healthy and safe environment. They should have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

In Wales we want to enhance partnership, integration and consistency to our approach across all Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) providers so that all babies and young children, aged 0-5, can benefit from high-quality learning and care provision in Welsh, English or bilingually.

Our principles

Our approach to ECPLC falls into three themes:

- Access to provision which supports the child and their development.
- High quality stimulating learning and care experiences focusing on child development.
- Supporting and developing the workforce.

ECPLC Plan and ECPLC Resources

We have developed an ECPLC Plan which sets out our approach for Wales and [ECPLC resources](#) which, sets out what quality provision looks like in practice.

Prosperity for all

ECPLC aligns with the early years' commitment in the Programme for Government 'to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life'.

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015:

The ECPLC approach contributes to the 7 well-being goals and aims to make positive interventions now, to benefit people in Wales in the future.

A prosperous Wales

ECPLC focusses on the holistic development of babies and young children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs to support wellbeing and lifelong learning. We are continuing to support our existing workforce, as well as wanting to develop a more resilient, sustainable and diverse workforce, with a focus on growing childcare, playwork and teaching professions.

Childcare and playwork settings are an important part of supporting parents/ carers, to be able to work or progress further in their careers if they wish to. Access to ECPLC provision supports our drive to increase economic growth, tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.

A resilient Wales

In supporting babies and young children's holistic development, we are enabling them to be more independent and be better prepared for challenges later in life.

A healthier Wales

The early years of a child's life is a time of rapid cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and physical development. It is a time when the foundations for lifelong learning and wellbeing are laid, and quality ECPLC can make a significant impact.

Support from enabling adults, providing engaging experiences and effective environments can help children flourish and enhance their wellbeing. Babies and young children learn through play and ECPLC can provide important opportunities for both free and structured play.

ECPLC builds on and recognises the importance of working together with parents/ carers to support every baby and young child to feel empowered, cared for and nurtured.

A more equal Wales

ECPLC is a key component in creating a society that enables people to fulfil their potential irrespective of their background. ECPLC has a significant contribution to make in mitigating the impact of inequalities, such as racism, poverty, ableism, disability, adversity and other societal factors including lack of opportunities all of which can have lasting effects on individuals' lives.

We are committed to developing and growing a diverse and inclusive workforce.

A Wales of cohesive communities

ECPLC will help support children to participate effectively in their communities, helping develop a sense of belonging and wellbeing. ECPLC policy will also strengthen the connection between childcare and play settings, schools, and communities. We are committed to embedding anti-racism into everything we do, and ensuring all staff have a good understanding of different cultures, values, religions and beliefs, and the needs and barriers faced by different communities in Wales.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

High-quality Welsh medium ECPLC will provide more opportunities for children to develop, learn, socialise and play through the medium of Welsh and will contribute to our *Cymraeg 2050 targets*.

The Welsh language is embedded within the Curriculum for Wales ensuring children from English-medium, Welsh-medium families or have English or Welsh as an additional language have opportunities to progress.

Globally responsible Wales

ECPLC provides opportunity to embed a positive awareness of Welsh and other cultures as well as sustainable and responsible attitudes and behaviours not least through the Curriculum for Wales. As they grow, children begin to develop a sense belonging and identity. Having a sense of cynefin can bring positive feelings of connection with the home and the setting and as children get older this can expand to the community, Wales and the wider world. Settings that value, celebrate and build upon children's life experiences can strengthen a sense of belonging.

Long term

We will work innovatively, continuing our journey to drive greater coherence across the ECPLC landscape in Wales. Alignment to the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales, particularly early education pedagogy, and Flying Start with ECPLC, are key opportunities and provide a sound basis for our aspirations.

Prevention

ECPLC can build on the nurturing and learning parents/carers provide at home and help as a preventative measure for some Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Those working in the ECPLC sectors have a role in preventative action through supporting children and their parents.

Support from enabling adults, providing engaging experiences and effective environments can help children flourish and enhance their wellbeing.

Integration, Collaboration and Involvement

Engagement and collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders are ongoing, allowing exploration of the opportunities and challenges that developing an ECPLC approach in Wales presents. These discussions will continue to help shape ECPLC policy. The Welsh Government continues to work closely with the education, childcare and playworks sectors to ensure that they are involved in any developments. All supporting documents developed to date have been co-constructed with practitioners representing the sector.

Impact

The evidence base surrounding the early years is robust. Research suggests that high quality ECPLC provision is beneficial to all children and is particularly beneficial to those from more deprived backgrounds. Research has found that even limited, high quality

ECPLC is beneficial for a child's development, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds¹.

The foundations for lifelong learning, behaviour and wellbeing are fostered during this period with good early childhood experiences supporting development, wellbeing, social integration, academic achievement, and employability later in life.

¹ Melhuish, E., Gardiner, S., (2021) Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to age seven years, Department for Education, UK Government, available at [Early education use and child outcomes up to age 7 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-analysis/publications/early-education-use-and-child-outcomes-up-to-age-7)

SECTION 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

Implementation of ECPLC in Wales will have an impact on children aged 0-5 years old, parents/ carers and those that work in childcare, playworks and nursery education.

ECPLC Plan

An ECPLC Plan - Stakeholder Group was established in January 2023, the role of the Group was to bring together key stakeholders with expertise in ECPLC to help co-develop an ECPLC Plan.

ECPLC visual

A visual explaining what ECPLC in Wales has been developed and tested with our stakeholders.

ECPLC resources for practitioners

As part of our ECPLC approach, we have developed three documents to support practitioners in providing quality ECPLC. These are:

- A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales.
- Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales: A Reflective Practice Toolkit
- Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care: Developmental Pathways for 0-3

These documents have been co-developed by practitioners, for practitioners for all childcare and play settings and schools in Wales to adopt, should they wish to do so, and in their entirety, to support quality provision for all babies and young children in Wales.

These documents will be in draft for one year to enable engagement and feedback on how they are being implemented in practice and areas identified for further amendment including any additional supporting materials. The likely positive affect of these documents if adopted is a more in depth understanding of children's development and consistent reflective practice.

8.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

We want Wales to be a wonderful place to grow up, live and work now and in the future. Children have the right to grow up in a happy, healthy, and safe environment. ECPLC is an opportunity to strengthen children's rights. An important part of ensuring that best start to life is enabling all babies and young children to benefit from high quality, flexible and accessible childcare provision and nursery education in Welsh and/or English. Both childcare and nursery education support a child's wellbeing and provide opportunities for play, learning and development.

The most significant impacts for the people, culture and Welsh language, economy, and environment of Wales, expected as a result of the proposed action are:

People

- Babies and young children who are more resilient, independent, and better prepared for challenges later in life.
- Babies and young children supported to play, learn, develop and who are reaching their full potential in safe, caring, nurturing and learning environments supported by practitioners who understand the key principles of quality and child development.
- Support for all settings and schools to focus on the child and child development and providing high quality provision.
- Mitigating the impact of inequalities.
- Thriving, empowered and connected communities where babies and young children feel happy, safe, participate effectively and have developed a sense of belonging and wellbeing.
- Supporting those who work in the sector to thrive in their employment.
- Supporting parents/ carers, working and progressing further in their careers.
- A valued, thriving, diverse and mutually respected childcare, playwork and nursery education workforce committed to high quality. Respected practitioners in education, childcare and playwork with equally important roles in supporting babies and young children's wellbeing and development and building the foundations for their learning.
- Improved partnership working where ECPLC colleagues work together, communicate openly, and plan collaboratively, supporting a child's play, learning, care, and development and where contributions from all are as valued/valuable as each other.

Culture and Welsh Language

- More opportunities for babies and young children to develop, socialise and play through the medium of Welsh, promoting a strong Welsh ethos.
- Embedded positive awareness of Welsh and other cultures and celebrating diversity.
- Alignment of ECPLC with the principles of Flying Start, the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales, Professional standards for all school practitioners and Playwork Principles, and the Curriculum for Wales.

Economy

- Parents/carers may be able to overcome one of the main barriers that prevent them from working or progressing further in their careers.
- With accessible provision there may be an increase in economic growth, therefore helping the Welsh Government to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.
- Evidence demonstrates that investing in the early years, can reduce the need for interventions later in life to support educational attainment, health and well-being.
- There is clear evidence of disparity because of socio-economic disadvantage, by the age of three, children from poorer backgrounds can be as much as a year behind their peers. Investment in the early years can have a significant positive impact on enabling children to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential.

Environment

- Encouraging babies and young children to develop their independence and discover the world around them, including the environment in which they live.
- Opportunities to be active and play, exploring the outdoors and learning how to be part of their communities.

8.3 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- **maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,**
- **avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?**

The ECPLC approach is based upon the Welsh Government's commitment that every child has the best possible start in life and is able to reach their full potential.

ECPLC builds on and recognises the importance of working together with parents and other care givers to support every baby and young child to have the best start in life and to feel empowered, cared for and nurtured. Supporting families to ensure babies and young children have good experiences in the home is important.

We know from research that investing in high quality ECPLC can have a positive impact on children's nutrition², physical activity³ and well-being⁴.

Access to, flexible and accessible provision supports our drive to increase economic growth, tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.

ECPLC recognises, the childcare and early education sectors are key parts of the foundational economy, maintaining employment and improving resilience for the future. Schools, childcare and playwork settings are an important part of supporting parents/carers, to overcome one of the main barriers that prevents them from working or progressing further in their careers.

ECPLC policy acknowledges there are currently recruitment and retention issues within the childcare, playwork and education sector and aims to mitigate these issues by continuing to support existing staff to remain in and develop their careers in these sectors. We are also committed to further developing a resilient, sustainable and diverse workforce, with a focus on growing the professions and making childcare, playwork and teaching professions of choice. The ambition to develop a skilled childcare and play workforce that is regarded as a career of choice, is set out in the Welsh Governments 10-year Childcare, Play and Early Years workforce plan. The plan, an update of which will be published in 2024, includes actions to support recruitment and retention, skills development, and support to build capacity and capability.

On 30 June 2023, as part of our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) approach for 0–5-year-olds in Wales, a number of documents were published to support practitioners in providing quality [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care](#).

These documents developed by practitioners, for practitioners for all childcare and play settings and schools in Wales to adopt, should they wish to do so should ensure practitioners offer well-evidenced, well-informed, and successful approaches to early childhood play, learning and care and help them actively reflect on and continuously improve practice to better help all babies and young children to grow and develop.

8.4 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

² Marr C, Breeze P, Caton SJ. Examination of dietary intake of UK preschool children by varying carers: evidence from the 2008–2016 UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey. *British Journal of Nutrition*. 2022;128(10):2063–2074. doi:10.1017/S0007114521004712

³ Stacey, F.G., Finch, M., Wolfenden, L. et al. Evidence of the Potential Effectiveness of Centre-Based Childcare Policies and Practices on Child Diet and Physical Activity: Consolidating Evidence from Systematic Reviews of Intervention Trials and Observational Studies. *Curr Nutr Rep* 6, 228–246 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13668-017-0212-z>

⁴ Ole Johan Sando (2019) The physical indoor environment in ECEC settings: children's well-being and physical activity, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 27:4, 506-519, DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2019.1634238

ECPLC Plan

The ECPLC Plan will be a living document and reviewed regularly. It will be flexible to adapt to changes as policies develop.

The ECPLC Plan sets out how progress in implementation and monitoring effectiveness of the programmes during this Senedd term will be undertaken.

We cannot achieve our ambition alone. We need everyone working in the ECPLC sectors to play a significant role and to undertake collective action. We will continue to engage with our stakeholders to take forward ECPLC and openly welcome any feedback on our approach in Wales.

ECPLC Resources

The ECPLC resources have been published in draft for one year, this enables engagement and feedback from the sectors on how they are being used in practice, and to continually evaluate their effectiveness. A survey and some focus group discussions will enable further feedback to be gathered and inform development of the final ECPLC resources to be published summer 2024.

ECPLC policy

As with all policy areas, we will collect data and undertake research to monitor whether programmes relating to ECPLC are being delivered effectively, and whether they are having a positive impact on people in Wales.

Engagement with both internal and external stakeholders will continue and will help ensure a successful ECPLC approach is developed and implemented. We will continue to work closely with the education, childcare and playworks sector (including working with umbrella organisations, with practitioners, local authorities, families and other key stakeholders) to ensure that they are informed and involved in any developments.

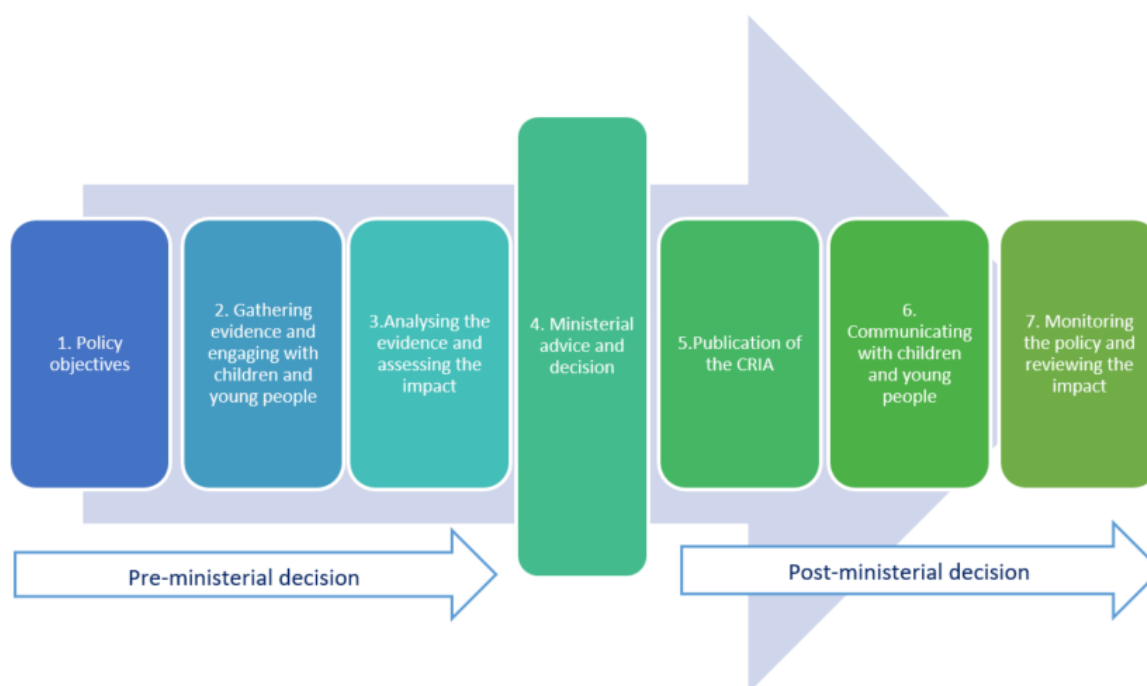
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

All completed Children's Rights Impact Assessments must be sent to the CRIA@gov.wales mailbox

The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to pay due regard to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) and its [Optional Protocols](#) when exercising any of their functions.

The CRIA process is the agreed mechanism officials should use to support Ministers to meet this duty and ensure they give balanced consideration to children's rights in their decision making. A CRIA should be used to inform ministerial advice and **must** be completed prior to a ministerial decision being made. Once a decision has been reached, your CRIA must also be published.

Please note we have an established Children's Rights Advisory Group (CRAG), comprising the Children's Commissioner for Wales's office, UNICEF, the Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People, and Children in Wales, who can be used to discuss or test your draft CRIA. Please contact the Children's Branch CRIA@gov.wales for further information.



For further advice and guidance on the CRIA process, please consult the [Children's Rights Manual for Staff](#) or contact the Children's Branch CRIA@gov.wales

Policy objectives

We want Wales to be a wonderful place for all babies, young children, their families and communities to thrive. Children have fundamental legal rights to grow up in a happy, healthy and safe environment, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our priorities are to:

- provide opportunities for babies and young children to have fun and enjoyment
- enable babies and young children to learn, develop and engage in play
- respect the rights of babies and young children
- enable babies and young children to develop and nurture strong, mutual and happy relationships between adults and children
- to make a real difference to current and future generations where everyone thrives and feels valued, regardless of background
- ensure we have a sustainable, thriving and diverse childcare, play and nursery education workforce to support babies and young children, and
- help families to be able to work
- help the economy to grow by providing sustainable childcare.

We recognise that all articles of the UNCRC are interdependent and hold equal value. There are some articles which relate specifically to these priorities:

- **Article 2 - The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say and whatever type of family they come from.**

In 2019, the First Minister launched our approach for early childhood education and care. The core aim of the early childhood play, learning and care (ECPLC) approach (formally known as early childhood education and care (ECEC) approach) is based upon the Welsh Government's commitment that every child has the best possible start in life and is able to reach their full potential. In Wales we want to enhance partnership, integration and consistency to our approach across all ECPLC providers so that all babies and young children, aged 0-5, can benefit from high-quality learning and care provision in Welsh, English or bilingually. The type of setting they attend being irrelevant if they are supported and nurtured as they need. This approach, if fully realised, would lead to more comprehensive and integrated ECPLC provision.

In 2021, Welsh Ministers published the Programme for Government. This included several commitments in relation to children. The Children and Young People's Plan, launched in 2022, shows what the Welsh Government will do to make these commitments a reality for children. The plan sets out the Welsh Government's ambition for children and young people to:

- have the best start in life.
- be treated fairly.
- be supported through education and training and beyond.
- be supported to help them feel mentally and emotionally strong.
- be supported to have a fair chance in life.
- have a good and secure home to live in.
- receive the support they need to stay together or come back together with their family, if possible.

The Plan is important because Welsh Ministers want the best for children in Wales no matter what their backgrounds are, where they come from or where they live. This means making Wales a happy, healthy, and safe place to grow up, live and to work, now and in the future. A place where children feel listened to and valued.

The Children and Young People's Plan acknowledges how the Welsh Government's plans affect children and their rights. The plan includes policies about education, safeguarding, and how the Welsh Government listens to children. This means one clear vision for what the Welsh Government's most senior decision makers will do to make sure children's rights are recognised and respected.

In March 2023, we published [Our National Mission: high standards and aspirations for all](#) a roadmap which sets out the overall vision for education in Wales with six objectives:

- Learning for life
- Breaking down barriers so that excellent education opportunities can be achieved for all
- A positive education experience for everyone, with learners supported in their wellbeing and resilience
- High quality teaching and leadership to support learners especially those who are socio-economically disadvantaged
- Community based learning
- Ensuring every learner has equal access to Cymraeg

- **Article 3 - All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child**

All those working with babies and young children in Wales have an important role to play in supporting them to be themselves, play, learn and grow.

Our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) vision encourages a workforce which is equally valued and mutually respected across childcare, playwork and education.

We want a workforce, with the skills and behaviours to provide high-quality play, learning and care for babies and young children. With the workforce being supported to achieve the necessary qualifications and undertake training to ensure ongoing development of skills and knowledge.

This is reflected in all our policies from flying Start to Curriculum for Wales with the emphasis placed on enabling adults.

- **Article 5 - Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to make decisions in the best interests of their children, if they are not able to do so themselves and Article 6 - All children have the right of life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.**

Our vision for ECPLC is underpinned on building on the care provided by parents and carers and a child's right to grow, learn and play in a happy, healthy and safe environment. ECPLC recognises the importance of working alongside parents and other care givers to support every baby and young child to have the best start in life and to feel empowered, cared for and nurtured. There are so many existing resources and programmes which complement ECPLC and support the ambition for babies and young children to have the best start in life including: [The First 1000 Days programme](#), [Healthy Child Wales Programme](#) and [Parenting Give it Time](#). The recently published [ECPLC resources](#), the [curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings](#) and [Curriculum for Wales](#) also details the importance of enabling adults.

- **Article 12 Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account**

ECPLC recognises childhood can be an exciting time for babies and young children. It can be a time for fun, exploration, discovery and curiosity. Every baby and young child is unique, and babies and young children will discover, play, have fun in their own natural way and in their own time. Enabling adults, should take the time to get to know individual babies and young children. In doing so, enabling adults can ensure they provide engaging opportunities that meet babies and young children's individual needs and interests. All should work in partnership with others to nurture, inspire and challenge all babies and young children, supporting them to develop socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. Wales advocates the importance of play and developing a child-centred curriculum, supporting a child's holistic development.

- **Article 19 - Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.**

Since devolution, Wales has been committed to the early years, supporting children and their families by ensuring they have the best possible support and start in life. Wales was the first country in the UK to appoint a Children's Commissioner, enshrining the United Convention of the Rights of Child (UNCRC) in law, advocating the importance of play and developing a child-centred curriculum, supporting a child's holistic development. ECPLC reinforces that children have a fundamental legal right to grow up in a happy, healthy and safe environment. And that children's rights are entitlements in Wales; not optional. ECPLC supports our wider early years policies and ambitions in Wales. The childcare, play and nursery education sectors have a role in preventative action through their relationship with parents, helping parents to understand and improve their knowledge of child development and parenting skills, help strengthen parent-child relationships and signposting parents to other support services. In addition, where those working in the sectors identify concerns around a child's welfare, they have safeguarding responsibility.

Since 2022, under the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 all types of physical punishment, such as smacking, hitting, slapping and shaking, were made illegal, providing children the same protection from assault as adults.

- **Article 24 - Children have the right to good quality health care and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this**

ECPLC is underpinned by the [National Minimum Standards](#) for Regulated Childcare in Wales and the Healthy eating in maintained schools [Statutory guidance](#) for local authorities and governing bodies. Article 12 states that Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. If children receive meals and/or snacks, they are safely prepared, nutritionally balanced, of good quality and appropriate in quantity following recommendations in the Welsh Government's Food and Nutrition guidance for childcare settings. The food and drink offered is varied and nutritious and meets the religious, cultural, sensory and dietary requirements of each of the children. Fresh drinking water is always freely available to children.

The Healthy eating in maintained schools statutory guidance provides guidance for local authorities and governing bodies of maintained schools (including nursery schools and pupil referral units) on complying with the provisions in the [Healthy Eating in Schools \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#) and regulations made under it. Section 4 details the requirements for food and drink provided on school premises and Section 5 – ensures drinking water is available, free of charge, on the premises of any maintained school. Additionally in September 2022, as part of the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Government commenced the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM).

- **Article 29 - Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.**

Ultimately, ECPLC focuses on the child and their needs. Babies and young children should be able to learn and develop through play, exploration, curiosity and imagination. We want high quality provision to encourage babies and young children to participate, embrace inclusivity and diversity, and provide opportunity to explore and learn about other cultures and experiences knowing that being different is good. Our vision for Wales is underpinned on high quality play, learning and care experiences bilingually and multilingually.

The Welsh Government has committed to ensuring that the needs of children are at the heart of the curriculum for Wales. At the very outset, it makes clear that schools' curricula should: 'recognise the individual learning needs and backgrounds of each learner' and that the Curriculum 'is also an important vehicle for embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the experience of learning and teaching'.

The purpose of every school and setting's curriculum is to support our children and young people to become:

- ambitious, capable individuals, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Specifically, the four purposes recognise the role of children's rights – All children and young people will be ethical, informed citizens: who respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society; and who understand and exercise their human and democratic responsibilities and rights.

Existing overarching guidance⁵ is provided for schools on:

- Learning about human rights: understanding human rights, and the sources of those rights including the UNCRC
- Learning through human rights: the development of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect human rights values
- Learning for human rights: the motivation of social action and empowerment of active citizenship to advance respect for the rights of all.

A [guide](#) for children and young people was also published alongside the Curriculum for Wales guidance, which helps help children, young people and families understand how the new Curriculum for Wales works and what was changing.

⁵ Article 2 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training sets out three main elements of human rights education

Children's rights feature in the Health and Well-being and Humanities Areas of Learning and Experiences (AoLEs). Rights are included in the mandatory statements of what matters. Rights are also included in the guidance in the descriptions of learning.

- **Article 31 - All children have a right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of activities**

Most babies and young children are curious and have an innate need to play. We are inclusively supporting all to thrive and be themselves. All children need engaging experiences that are rooted in their real-life contexts that reflect their interests, and that ignite their curiosity and desire to learn. Engaging experiences encourage play, develop confidence and social interaction independence and a strong sense of well-being.

These engaging experiences support children's social, emotional, cognitive, physical and communication development. Effective, child-centred pedagogy, which is responsive, dynamic and embedded in strong relationships, is essential to realising ECPLC. It is particularly important for us to ensure that the learning environment within every early childcare, playwork and education setting provides consistent opportunities for the following:

- play and play-based learning
- being outdoors
- authentic and purposeful learning
- physical literacy

Play and play-based learning is a fundamental right for all children. They have a strong intrinsic need to play. Through play and playful experiences, children find ways to explore a range of emotions and learn about the world they inhabit with others.

Play requires concentration and attention to detail and provides a vehicle through which children learn through perseverance and collaboration. Play is not only crucial to the way children become self-aware and the way in which they learn the rules of social behaviour; it is also fundamental to physical, intellectual and creative development. Play influences thinking and dispositions to learning, and supports feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy which impacts on confidence and independence.

- **Article 42 - The Government should make the Convention known to all parents and children.**

Children's rights are entitlements; they are not optional. The Welsh Government is committed to fulfilling the rights of babies, children and young people, through our duties placed on Ministers, and on the workforce, and through our expansive suite of programmes, committed to supporting parents, carers and their young families, to be the best that they can be and to know about children's rights and to be able to exercise them. Adults who

better understand children's rights, are able to make sure children's experiences of rights are better too.

In November 2021, the Welsh Government published a [Raising Awareness of Children's Rights Plan](#), which aims to empower children and young people to exercise their rights. The plan sets out how the Welsh Government will raise awareness of children's rights to children and young people, families and practitioners working in the public sector. Specifically, in Early Years support to understand rights in practice includes:

- Providing Information advice and support to parents and carers - The rights of the child are embedded through the Parenting: Give it Time campaign and the Family Information Service (FIS).
- Promoting Parenting Guidance - Children's Rights are embedded in universal and targeted parenting support.
- Promoting children's rights through the Flying Start Programme Work - with Flying Start Coordinators to promote a children's rights approach and support them to disseminate information to their networks.
- Supporting the Children's Rights in Early Years Network - Support this network to bring together stakeholders to share good children's rights practice.
- Gathering the views of parents and carers to inform our approach - Support Children in Wales to inform our approach to engaging parents and carers nationally.

The ECPLC team have also worked with Children's Rights colleagues internally and externally to promote the Convention and endorse that Children's rights are at the heart of everything we do in Wales. There is a wealth of information and resources available to support us in our practice.

Some of the key organisations that can support us include Children in Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. From an early age, children are finding out about their rights, often through relationships, the way in which others treat and care for them and the opportunities they receive and experience. They are also learning how to express themselves and make choices, as well as learning about their interdependence with others, and about how valued they are and what their place in the world is.

Supporting rights in ECPLC is about providing a listening and encouraging environment, establishing positive relationships, ensuring play is central and being a skilled practitioner. Children's Rights features strongly in the Quality Framework for ECPLC in Wales, the ECPLC plans and a number of resources are in the process of being co-developed with children's rights partners for parents and practitioners in respect to a child's voice - Here I am! (0-12 months), I'm exploring! (1-2 years), Look at me now! (2-3 years) and Watch me go, here I come! (3-5 years).

Equality

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care has a significant contribution to make in mitigating the impact of inequalities, whether it's racism, poverty, or other societal factors such as lack

of opportunities all of which can have lasting effects on individuals' lives. We are committed to breaking down barriers to ensure babies and young children are supported to have equal opportunity and access to fulfilling and happy childhoods. Our key principles driving the development of Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) fall into three themes:

1. Quality of provision: We are seeking to provide all babies and young children with high-quality stimulating learning and care experiences in every early education, playwork and childcare setting they attend.
2. Access to provision: Provision of support should be flexible and responsive to individual circumstances which support the child and their development, as well as enabling parents to understand the wide range of support available to them which may help them to be able to work.
3. Supporting the workforce: All professionals working within ECPLC, should be equally valued with equitable access to a package of learning and support.

The ECPLC Plan and Quality Framework have been developed to support our ECPLC vision for Wales. The Plan brings together in a clear way the work being taken forward by the Welsh Government and our partners in the childcare, playwork and nursery education sectors. The ECPLC Quality Framework, sets out what quality provision looks like in practice across the early education and childcare sector and aligns with the principles of Flying Start, the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales, Children's Rights, Professional standards for all school practitioners, Playwork Principles, the Curriculum for Wales and Developmental Pathways.

The Curriculum and Assessment Wales Act extends beyond the UNCRC duty to also develop knowledge and understanding of the rights of disabled people (UNCRC). This duty is placed on those in charge of providing teaching and learning in respect of the curriculum, including non-maintained nursery education. Human rights education forms part of the mandatory four purposes of the curriculum – purposes which are now at the heart of all learning and teaching for 3–16-year-olds. With the roll out of the Curriculum for Wales, all schools and settings across Wales will adopt a child's rights approach – placing emphasis on the central role of rights in developing our children and young people to become ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.

The Welsh Government provides core funding to Children in Wales to run the [Young Wales](#) programme, to promote and raise awareness of children's rights and the UNCRC in Wales and to enable children and young people to have their voices heard in government decision and policy making processes.

Specific efforts are made to ensure those who are most at risk of not being heard are included. Eight advisory boards have been established to represent the diverse interests of children and young people in Wales and inform key government policy areas. Membership includes representation of young carers, those with Additional Learning Needs, Neurodivergence, LGBTQ children and young people, children and young people not in employment or training, refugees and asylum seekers, and children and young people with lived experience in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

Specific project work takes place with children aged 3-10 in their primary school settings when appropriate, and in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.

Seeking the views of children in a meaningful way, enables more children to be better involved in shaping services and opportunities. The Play Sufficiency template requires all 22 local authorities to indicate how they have consulted with children. Many local authorities have developed meaningful and child-friendly ways of gathering and including the views of children, Examples include playful workshops, focus groups and neighbourhood walkabouts.

Listening to children and Young People

The Welsh Government funded Children in Wales to research and find ways of listening to babies and very young children. Children in Wales have trialled approaches with [babies](#) (0-1 years old), [toddlers](#) (1-2 years old) and [pre-schoolers](#) (3-4 years old).

As a result of the trial, the following resources have been developed:

- rights in Early Years posters provide key messages for providing positive rights based environments for [babies](#), [toddlers](#) and [pre-schoolers](#).
- [resources](#) to support people working with pre-schooler children to understand the new curriculum.
- [talking point posters](#) to support adults to listen to babies and young children.
- an infographic on the [digital rights of children](#). This helps adults understand how to respect and protect children's rights in the digital environment.

Listening to Parents and Families

Through connecting with parents, we are developing a mechanism to engage and co-produce policy with parents. Working with Children in Wales on the early stages of this work, including set up of the project [Parents Connect Wales](#); establishing a national forum to bring together those organisations and local authorities already engaging with parents; recruitment of a steering group of parents; and beginning to develop a suitable online platform to enable wider engagement. When set up, 'Parents Connect Wales' will enable us to engage and co-produce policy with parents of children of all ages, across all interests and areas of policy.

Gathering evidence and engaging with children and young people

Child development

The period from birth to five years of age is a crucial time for cognitive development. Neuroscientific research has shown that interaction with adults and opportunities for play, affect the nature of brain architecture⁶. Children's early experiences can provide either a strong or a fragile foundation for later learning, and there is evidence that high-quality

⁶ Frost, J. L. (1998). Neuroscience, Play, and Child Development.

ECPLC provision can accelerate language development, emotional and behavioural regulation and wellbeing⁷.

When we support children's holistic development during the early years, we are supporting them to grow, thrive and develop as is their right. This includes supporting babies and children to become more independent, to socialize, concentrate on their play for longer and, on entry to school, be more co-operative, accepting of differences, and better prepared for challenges⁸ later in life.

Investing in the early years of a child's life can provide the foundation for children as rights holders to thrive and fulfill their potential. It can have a positive impact on the physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing of children, with those able to access and exercise their rights less likely to require intervention later in life. It can also potentially improve socialisation, cognitive ability, educational attainment and their longer-term contribution to society.

Raising attainment

There is strong evidence that high-quality care and education provision can help to reduce the impact of socioeconomic status on child development and later life outcomes, providing an important platform for lifelong learning⁹. Evidence from longitudinal studies suggests that the impacts of ECPLC can be seen in secondary education and later in working lives¹⁰.

COVID 19

Following the pandemic, quality ECPLC is even more important to support the development and learning of the children in Wales. The Listening to Unheard Children report 2023 highlights 1.9 million children are struggling with talking and understanding words, an increase of 26% over the last two years. [The Casting Long Shadows: The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on babies, their families and the services that support them.](#)' report reveals statistics about babies and young children born or growing up through the COVID pandemic, highlighting how many young children are more at risk of harm, have delayed social skills, and have been affected by poor parental mental health. The [Social](#)

⁷ Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., ... & Leseman, P. (2015). A review of research on the effects of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) upon child development.

⁸ Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) (2003); Schweinhart et al (1993), Love et al (2005)

⁹ <https://www.seed.natcen.ac.uk/findings/longitudinal-study/impact-study-on-early-education-use-and-child-outcomes-up-to-age-five-years.aspx>

¹⁰ Heckman, James J., Seong Hyeok Moon, Rodrigo Pinto, Peter A. Savelyev & Adam Yavitz. 2010. 'The Rate of Return to the High Scope Perry Preschool Program.' *Journal of Public Economics* 94 (1–2):

[Distancing & Development study](#) examined how changes in sleep, parenting style, social interactions, screen use and outdoor activities/exercise affected young children's cognitive development during the Spring 2020 UK lockdown. Our youngest children need settings that provide supportive play environments and opportunities; remove barriers; create a sense of belonging¹¹; and have a valued, diverse, and supported workforce.

Integration, Collaboration and Involvement

ECPLC has a significant impact on other policy areas. Discussions with other policy teams and key stakeholders are an ongoing and important part of the development of our ECPLC vision for Wales. We are also working cross-governmentally to join and align various policy areas in the development of the ECPLC Plan.

ECPLC development requires widespread engagement with a range of stakeholders, ensuring development in an integrated and collaborative way. The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with the sector (including working with umbrella organisations and directly with providers, local authorities and other key stakeholders) to ensure that they are informed of developments. Considering this, wherever possible, steps will be put in place to ensure accessible information is provided.

The [ECPLC Quality Framework \(ECPLC QF\)](#), and [accompanying resources](#) (ECPLC resources), was co-produced with a wide variety of stakeholders from both an education and childcare perspective. These resources were developed for practitioners by practitioners who work with babies and young children and their families everyday.

The ECPLC resources will be in draft for a year whilst we gather feedback from the sector on any improvements needed.

Similarly, a group of representative stakeholders have co-developed and been sighted on the ECPLC plan to ensure the work being taken forward by the Welsh Government and partners in the childcare, playwork and nursery education sectors is clearly brought together and everyone working in the sectors can understand the part they play. We have worked with childcare practitioners, schools, working group, CREY Network, Children's Commissioner's Office and Children in Wales.

High quality ECPLC is that which has the interests of the child at its core, and an emphasis on supporting children's exploration within a nurturing and safe environment¹².

¹¹ Tyrie, J. Knight, C. Borrás, M (2021) Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 82/2021

¹² Council of the European Union (2018) *COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Accompanying the document Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*. Brussels

No negative impacts are envisaged for this piece of work.

For advice on participatory work with children and young people, please contact the Children's Branch. We have an established relationship with Children in Wales, who may be able to help you work with children and young people through their Young Wales programme.

Analysing the evidence and assessing the impact

- Using the evidence you have gathered, what impact is your policy likely to have on children and young people? What steps will you take to mitigate and/or reduce any negative effects?
- How does your proposal enhance or challenge children's rights, as stipulated by the UNCRC articles and its Optional Protocols? Please refer to the [articles](#) to see which ones apply to your own policy.

UNCRC Articles or Optional Protocol	Enhances (X)	Challenges (X)	Explanation
<i>Article 2 - The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.</i>	X		<p><i>Our ECPLC vision will likely have a positive impact as it looks at developing and delivering a consistent approach to care, nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality play-based education and childcare opportunities, for all babies and young children aged 0-5 years old and their families, regardless of their needs and background. It focuses on the holistic development of children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs to support wellbeing and lifelong learning.</i></p> <p><i>Access to ECPLC is important as it can help support early identification of need, early intervention and positive</i></p>

		<p><i>transition and progression to education.</i></p> <p><i>There are a number of programmes and policies which come under the umbrella of ECPLC and will have their own assessments as appropriate. Just to highlight two examples have been included below:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• The Childcare Offer is supported by the Additional Support Grant (ASG). In 2023/24, this is a £2m fund which Local Authorities may access to support children identified as having an additional support need to allow them to access the childcare element of the Offer (the early education element being the responsibility of the school). This is a demand led grant so if an LA goes over their grant allocation, we will seek additional funding for them. To draw down from this fund, parents must be in receipt of the Childcare Offer.</i> <p><i>We have deliberately kept a loose definition of 'additional support need' as the age of the children involved often means that they have not yet received a specific diagnosis or have had an assessment by the Local Authority ALN panel. Though quite often sometimes a request for funding through the ASG</i></p>
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			<p><i>acts as a trigger for the Local Authority responsibilities under ALN legislation to start.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Flying Start programme supports children and families in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The programme aims to make a decisive difference to the life chances of children aged under four in the areas which it runs. There are four core components; part-time, high-quality childcare; enhanced health visiting; parenting support; and speech, language and communication support. Our Programme for Government commits us to continue our support for our flagship Flying Start programme. And, in line with the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, we have extended this commitment to deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision. This is part of the Welsh Government's wider vision for developing a fully integrated ECPLC</i>
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			<p><i>system in Wales.</i></p> <p><i>The provision of funded, high quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds, is integral to Flying Start and this is why we have chosen to expand the provision of early years childcare services via this programme.</i></p>
<p><i>Article 3 - All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.</i></p>	<p>x</p>		<p><i>Our ECPLC vision will likely have a positive impact as we are encouraging everyone working in the sector to play a part and to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>develop a deeper understanding of child development and the importance of play.</i> • <i>gather views through our consultations and research proposals.</i> • <i>undertake training opportunities provided to upskill, develop new skills and refresher courses.</i> • <i>actively promote the Welsh language.</i> • <i>actively develop and grow a diverse workforce.</i> • <i>work together to deliver the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, embracing diversity and celebrating different cultures.</i> • <i>work together on policies, guidance and supporting materials.</i> • <i>work with the National Academy for Educational Leadership to support and provide information</i>

			<p><i>to senior leaders about the importance of early years.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>support the promotion of Out of School Childcare with parents and the wider community.</i> • <i>support babies and young children by sharing information to support smooth transitions.</i> • <i>increase partnership working across the play, learning and care sectors.</i> • <i>support changing perspectives on childcare and the value of working in childcare, playwork and nursery education.</i> • <i>respond to children's developmental needs, prioritise early intervention, and support children who may have additional learning needs</i> • <i>support transition between early years settings and schools</i> • <i>understand what it means to realise the rights of babies and young children in practice</i> <p><i>The ECPLC Quality Framework draws together the various requirements for delivering the type of high-quality provision needed in Wales. Leaders and practitioners from across the childcare and playwork settings and schools should use the framework to guide provision; parents/carers can use it to</i></p>
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		<p><i>better understand provision on offer to their child and local authorities can use it to support development and improvement of provision.</i></p> <p><i>Using the ECPLC Quality Framework should ensure we offer well-evidenced, well-informed and successful approaches to ECPLC and help us to actively reflect on and continuously improve practice to better support all babies and children.</i></p> <p><i>The Curriculum for Wales allows practitioners within schools and settings the flexibility to provide a curriculum which meets the needs of their children in their specific context. This allows practitioners to adapt the curriculum in their school/setting to best support the needs and interests of their children and communities.</i></p> <p><i>The Welsh Government's ambition to develop a skilled childcare and play workforce that is regarded as a career of choice, is set out in our 10-year Childcare, Play and Early Years workforce plan. The plan includes actions to support recruitment and retention, skills development, and support to build capacity and capability. We remain committed to delivering against the actions within that plan and will be publishing a review and refresh of the Plan in 2024.</i></p>
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<p><i>Article 5 Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly. Article 6 Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.</i></p>	<p>x</p>	<p><i>Our ECPLC vision will likely have a positive impact as ECPLC builds on and recognises the importance of working together with parents and other care givers to support every baby and young child to have the best start in life and to feel empowered, cared for and nurtured.</i></p> <p><i>Supporting families to ensure babies and young children have good experiences in the home is important. We want to build on the care and nurturing babies and young children receive from their parents and/or carers. The ability to access high-quality education and childcare is central to our vision for supporting babies and young children in their early years. This includes provision being accessible, as well as being inclusive to support all children regardless of any additional learning needs or their backgrounds.</i></p> <p><i>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALN Act) and code confer specific rights for children and families with Additional Learning Needs to have their additional needs in education planned for and protected.</i></p> <p><i>We know that having accessible childcare supports parents and carers to gain good, stable, employment which allows them to improve their family's</i></p>
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		<p><i>circumstances and help to tackle poverty. Schools, childcare and playwork settings are a crucial part of our local economies.</i></p> <p><i>Our Parenting. Give it time campaign supports parents and carers by focusing on positive parenting and early intervention support. A dedicated bilingual website, along with advice and information guides, provide tips on common parenting concerns. The Family Information Service also provides information, advice and support to parents and carers. For families who may need some extra support, Families First programmes can offer early help with problems to help avoid them escalating.</i></p> <p><i>Developing children's speech, language, communication and reading skills are particularly critical for our youngest children. 'Talk with Me' is our commitment to supporting children's Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) development. Promoting SLC in the early years can reduce the impact of social disadvantage through life.</i></p> <p><i>We want babies and young children to discover the benefits of bilingualism or multilingualism. Supporting babies and young children to access Welshmedium and/or bilingual childcare and nursery education provision is integral to helping increase the numbers</i></p>
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			<p><i>moving into Welsh medium education. It can also offer support for the transmission of the Welsh language in the home.</i></p> <p><i>ECPLC is a key priority for the Welsh Government, and our current policies already do much to ensure our provision is focused on child development and supporting families, including the:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>flagship Flying Start programme,</i> • <i>the expansion of childcare and early years provision to all two-year olds in Wales</i> • <i>the Childcare Offer for Wales which delivers 30 hours of funded early education and childcare for the 3-4 year olds of working parents and parents in education for 48 weeks a year</i> • <i>Curriculum for Wales</i>
<p><i>Article 12 Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>x</i></p>		<p><i>One of the key features of effective development, play and early learning for all babies and young children is the quality of adult interactions.</i></p> <p><i>Enabling Adults who:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>are warm, attentive, and responsive to babies and young children.</i> • <i>are skilful, observant, and interested in babies and young children and how they develop.</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>use knowledge and understanding of child development to support all children.</i> • <i>use knowledge and understanding of how babies and young children learn to plan experiences and environments.</i> <p><i>Enabling adults, are a fundamental part of ECPLC. Having up-to-date knowledge and understanding of child development and using this knowledge and understanding is essential to successfully and sensitively meeting;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>babies and young children’s individual needs</i> <p><i>supporting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>babies and young children’s rights</i> • <i>babies and young children’s holistic development</i> • <i>babies and children’s enjoyment</i> <p><i>enhancing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>babies and young children’s well-being</i> • <i>cynffin for all babies and young children</i> <p><i>During the design process for the Curriculum for Wales, there was full consultation with a range of schools and settings to ensure the curriculum</i></p>
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			<p><i>arrangements were accessible for all children, including settings delivering funded nursery education and groups with an ALN focus. In addition, a toolkit for practitioners to use in supporting them in their curriculum design (including drawing on learner voice) has been developed.</i></p> <p><i>Several resources are in the process of being co-developed with children's rights partners for parents and practitioners in respect to a child's voice - Here I am! (0-12 months), I'm exploring! (1-2 years), Look at me now! (2-3 years) and Watch me go, here I come! (3-5 years).</i></p>
<p><i>Article 19 - Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.</i></p>	<p>x</p>		<p><i>Our ECPLC vision states that Children have fundamental legal rights to grow up in a happy, healthy and safe environment, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</i></p> <p><i>ECPLC can build on the nurturing and learning parents and carers provide at home and/or help as a preventative measure for some Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs and other sources of childhood adversity represent a real risk to babies and young children having the best possible start in life. They, and the trauma associated with these experiences, can negatively impact a child's</i></p>

		<p><i>development. It is important that schools and settings, and those working within them, understand the association between childhood adversity and trauma, and developmental progress and outcomes. The ECPLC: Reflective Practice Toolkit (Toolkit) has been developed to support individuals and teams to reflect on the quality of ECPLC, including reflecting on the quality standard of, all babies and young children are safeguarded from harm, abuse and neglect. The ECPLC Wales Quality Framework details:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• what support and guidance is available for settings and schools? Including local authority safeguarding teams who can support settings/schools. and be contacted for advice and guidance for any queries or reporting concerns.</i><i>• Child Centred practice and ACEs and working in a trauma-informed way.</i><i>• Effective indoor and outdoor environments must meet all safeguarding expectations to ensure the safety and protection of all children.</i> <p><i>The Wales Safeguarding Procedures detail the essential roles and responsibilities for practitioners to ensure that they safeguard children and adults</i></p>
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			<i>who are at risk of abuse and neglect.</i>
<p><i>Article 24</i></p> <p><i>Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.</i></p>	x		<p><i>ECPLC is underpinned by the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales and the Healthy eating in maintained schools statutory guidance for local authorities and governing bodies.</i></p> <p><i>There are also provisions in the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009 and regulations made under it.</i></p>
<p><i>Article 29 -</i></p> <p><i>Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.</i></p>	x		<p><i>Child-centred practice places babies and young children at the heart of everything we do. Observing and understanding the individuality and uniqueness of each baby and child alongside understanding and embedding child-centred practice, we can provide opportunities for children to develop holistically in an environment that truly values who they are.</i></p> <p><i>The ECPLC QF iterates that supporting rights in ECPLC is about providing a listening and encouraging environment, establishing positive relationships, ensuring play is central and being a skilled practitioner.</i></p> <p><i>ECPLC recognises that communication is fundamental to babies and young children's development and an effective</i></p>

		<p><i>environment that is communication rich will provide opportunities for babies and young children to express and communicate their needs, thoughts and feelings verbally and non-verbally.</i></p> <p><i>Children’s rights are at the heart of everything we do in Wales and there is a wealth of information and resources available to support us in our practice. Some of the key organisations that can support us are Children in Wales and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales. The Children’s Rights resources which are currently being co-developed with children’s rights partners for parents and practitioners in respect to a child’s voice - Here I am! (0-12 months), I’m exploring! (1-2 years), Look at me now! (2-3 years) and Watch me go, here I come! (3-5 years) will feature QR codes to detailed information including published Children in Wales Resources on trialled approaches of listening to babies and very young children. The Talk With Me: Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Delivery Plan covers the Welsh Government’s national drive to promote SLC development, primarily aimed at children from 0–4 years, 11 months. This document describes the Welsh Government’s programme of work and arrangements to further promote and support</i></p>
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		<p><i>SLC development throughout Wales.</i></p> <p><i>At the very outset, it makes clear that schools' curricula should: 'recognise the individual learning needs and backgrounds of each learner' and that the Curriculum 'is also an important vehicle for embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the experience of learning and teaching'.</i></p> <p><i>The four purposes are at the heart of the learning and experience of all children and young people in Wales, specifically, the recognition of the role of children's rights – All children and young people will be ethical, informed citizens: who respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society; and who understand and exercise their human and democratic responsibilities and rights.</i></p> <p><i>This curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings seeks to engender in practitioners and children a sense of belonging and pride, celebrating the diverse culture of modern Wales and helping children develop a sense of cynefin. Having a sense of cynefin can bring positive feelings of connection with the home and the setting and as children get older this can</i></p>
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			<p><i>expand to the community, Wales and the wider world.</i></p> <p><i>ECPLC provides opportunities for practitioners, families and communities to raise and embed awareness of the vibrant diversity of Welsh culture as well as sustainable and responsible attitudes and behaviours by working together, sharing good practice and understanding each individual child and family. As they develop, children begin to develop a sense of how they fit in to the many groups to which they belong, and of their importance within them.</i></p>
<p><i>Article 31 - All children have a right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of activities</i></p>	<p>x</p>		<p><i>ECPLC recognises childhood is precious, that babies and young children constantly play, learn and grow. ECPLC is not about creating a new type of early years setting. It is about developing and delivering a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high quality play-based education and childcare opportunities, for all babies and young children aged 0-5 years old. Babies and young children are curious and have an innate need to play. We are supporting them to thrive and be themselves. We are committed to: the importance of children's right to play and the significant contribution play makes to supporting socialisation, building resilience, enabling babies and</i></p>

			<p><i>young children to make connections, crucial for positive wellbeing, and supporting learning and development.</i></p> <p><i>Effective, child-centred pedagogy and Play and play-based learning is a fundamental right for all children and is an integral part of the Curriculum for Wales.</i></p>
<p><i>Article 42 Governments should make the Convention known to all parents and children.</i></p>	X		<p><i>Childrens Rights features strongly in the ECPLC Quality Framework , the ECPLC Reflective Practice Toolkit, the ECPLC Developmental Pathways for 0-3 and the ECPLC plans. Several resources are being co-developed with children’s rights partners for parents and practitioners in respect to a child’s voice - Here I am! (0-12 months), I’m exploring! (1-2 years), Look at me now! (2-3 years) and Watch me go, here I come! (3-5 years).</i></p>

A formal Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as we are committed to ensuring babies and young children are supported by enabling adults to have fulfilling and happy childhoods.

For further information on the [UNCRC](#) and its Optional Protocols, please visit the [Children’s Rights Intranet Page](#).

Ministerial advice and decision

In formulating Ministerial advice in respect to ECPLC officials have paid due regard to the rights of children as set out in the UNCRC. Evidence shows that high quality early years provision is crucial to the outcomes for children. ECPLC focuses on the importance of quality and access to provision. A policy Integrated Impact Assessment is being continuously

developed alongside the wider development of ECPLC policy with publication of section 1 and 8 and the Children's Rights Impact Assessment due to be published alongside the Plan.

The ECPLC resources will also be in draft form for one year to enable engagement and feedback on how it is being implemented in practice and areas identified for further amendment including any additional supporting materials, will be subject to further ministerial advice.

In the future we would like to explore ways to engage and co-produce policy with parents through '[parents connect Wales](#)', support children and young people participation group to ensure the voice of children and parents is accounted and obtain views from parents on what information they would find useful in relation to ECPLC.

Publication of the CRIA

- *Following the ministerial decision, the CRIA should be published on the Welsh Government website.*

- *Send sections 1 and 8 of your IIA and the CRIA (Annex A) to your departmental web manager for publishing.*

- ***All** completed CRIAs must also be sent to the CRIA@gov.wales mailbox.*

For further information and support on this process, please visit the [Children's Rights Intranet Page](#) which contains a range of resources.

Communicating with Children and Young People

Wales is on a journey to implement a high-quality, integrated, rights-based approach to ECPLC. We have not sought the view of children and young people at this stage as the ECPLC plan is concerned with bringing together in a clear way the work the Welsh Government and our partners in the childcare, play and education sectors are already doing relating to ECPLC. The ECPLC QF draws together the various requirements for delivering the type of high-quality provision needed in Wales. The audience are those who work in childcare, playwork and early education, from practitioners to strategic leaders, as well as parents and carers. The Children's Commissioner for Wales office has been sighted on both the ECPLC plan and ECPLC resources.

We have sought the views of those who work closely with babies and young children and co-

developed the plan and co-produced the ECPLC.

If your policy affects children and young people, remember to produce child-friendly versions of any public document relating to your proposal. Please contact the Children's Branch for further advice.

Monitoring and Review

It is essential to revisit your CRIAs to identify whether the impacts that you originally identified came to fruition, and whether there were any unintended consequences.

Where you are taking forward secondary legislation, it will not be sufficient to rely on the CRIA for the primary legislation; you will need to update the CRIA to consider how the details of the proposals in the regulations or guidance may affect children.

The policy lead can revisit the published version of their CRIA, rename it as a review of the original CRIA, and update the evidence of impact. The reviewed impact assessment should be presented to Ministers with any proposals to amend the policy, practice or guidance. This review CRIA should also be published.

The CRIA is a living document. As we receive feedback from stakeholders in respect to amendments to the ECPLC resources and feedback on the ECPLC plan we will review and update the CRIA accordingly and provide advice to Ministers on possible next steps.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on people with protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010.

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) has a significant contribution to make in mitigating the impact of inequalities, whether it's racism, disability, poverty, or other societal factors such as lack of opportunities all of which can have lasting effects on individuals' lives. We are committed to breaking down barriers to ensure babies and young children are supported to have fulfilling and happy childhoods through our ECPLC vision. Our key principles driving the development of ECPLC fall into three themes:

1. **Quality of provision:** We are seeking to provide all babies and young children with high-quality stimulating learning and care experiences in every early education, playwork and childcare setting they attend.
2. **Access to provision:** Provision of support should be flexible and responsive to individual circumstances which support the child and their development as well as enabling the parents to understand the wide range of support available to them which may help them to be able to work. It is recognised that some children and their families may require specific/additional support when accessing provision.
3. **Supporting the workforce:** All professionals working within ECPLC should be equally valued.

An ECPLC Plan and a suite of ECPLC resources have been developed to support our ECPLC vision for Wales. The Plan brings together in a clear way the work being taken forward by the Welsh Government and our partners in the childcare, playwork and schools. The ECPLC Quality Framework, sets out what quality provision looks like in practice and aligns with the principles of flying start, the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales, Professional standards for all school practitioners, Playwork Principles, the Curriculum for Wales and Developmental Pathways.

By the age of three, children from poorer backgrounds [low-income households, children with experience of poverty] can be as much as a year behind their peers¹³. For children living in families with at least one child under five, there is a distinct gap between poverty rates for young children growing up in White, Indian and Chinese families, which stood at around 30%, and most other ethnic groups, which often exceed 50%.¹⁴

¹³ Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) (2003); Schweinhart et al (1993), Love et al (2005)

¹⁴ [Changing patterns of poverty in early childhood - Nuffield Foundation](#)

This gap increases steadily over time and the social, emotional and economic impacts can last a lifetime with very high costs to the individual, their community and at a national level. As illustrated by PISA 2015 data, those children who attended early childhood education for at least two years performed on average better than others at age 15²⁰. Generalised and equitable access to ECPLC is an essential feature of good quality provision which contributes to reducing the attainment gap.

High quality childcare provision can have a positive influence on a child's development and help them develop to their full potential. The [evidence](#)¹⁵ tells us that; "certain household characteristics, including protected characteristics, increase the chances of children experiencing poverty and disadvantage", "lone parent households were most likely to be in relative income poverty (at 38%)". "90% of lone parent are women". "There is a 40% likelihood of people whose head of household is Black, Asian or minority ethnic living in relative income poverty. This compares to a 22% likelihood for those whose head of household comes from a white ethnic group". "While 31% of children who lived in a family where there was a disabled person were in relative income poverty compared with 26%" of those in families where no-one was disabled.

Delays to development during the preschool period show a significant socio-economic gradient, with economically disadvantaged children being significantly more likely to show signs of cognitive and language delays.¹⁶ Evidence suggests children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds benefit more from quality childcare and that it can help redress both developmental disadvantages and the attainment gap¹⁷.

Promoting equity and appreciating both children's and the workforce differences are an important part of the ECPLC Plan, which supports a child centred approach valuing differences and embedding equality and diversity at the core of all childcare settings.

Implementing our ECPLC approach for Wales is a long-term ambition, which will go beyond this Senedd term. The ECPLC plan is a living document. It will be flexible, adapting as policies develop and reviewed regularly. We will collect data and undertake research to monitor if programmes are being delivered effectively and are having a positive impact on all children's needs in Wales. This data will also be used to shape the ongoing reviews of the ECPLC impact assessment.

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP)

¹⁵ [Relative income poverty: April 2021 to March 2022 | GOV.WALES](#)

¹⁶ [Improving the Early Learning of Children Growing Up in Poverty: A Rapid Review of the Evidence \(plymouth.ac.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ European Commission (2018) *Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*. Brussels.

We want all children to build the foundations of their learning through ways that come naturally; through play, experimentation, curiosity and imagination.

We and key partners are working to support the development of actions within the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan for the childcare and play sector. The Action Plan also includes actions and goals for education as a whole, including schools, further education and higher education.

Cwlwm partners are developing a range of training resources and good practice guides for the sector to disseminate and embed key principles of an anti-racist approach.

The refreshed [Criteria for accreditation of ITE programmes in Wales](#) explicitly requires all programmes of Initial Teacher Education which awards qualified teacher status in Wales to be anti-racist and provide student teachers with the tools to create anti-racist learning environments for our children and young people. We remain committed to increasing the numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic teachers in the workforce and updated our [Initial teacher education Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic recruitment plan](#) (first published October 2021) in April 2023. We are continuing to provide for students entering eligible ITE programmes, a financial incentive to encourage individuals from ethnic minority communities to train, enter and remain in the teaching profession (the [Ethnic Minority Initial Teacher Education Incentive Scheme](#)).

[Diversity and Anti Racism Professional Learning \(DARPL\)](#) was launched in 2022. DARPL brings together a diverse team of providers with lived and professional experience with a Welsh perspective in raising multi-disciplinary racial consciousness.

Through professional learning, resources, live events, consultation and the virtual campus, DARPL provides support for those working in educational settings in Wales, to develop an understanding of anti-racism. This should then lead to development of anti-racist practice. DARPL supports practitioners at each step of their anti-racist journey through a professional learning continuum. Leaders, practitioners, wider school staff and learners need to be supported from the outset of developing whole-school approaches to fully embed new ways of working to ensure Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic contributions and presence are embedded and sustained within the Curriculum for Wales. Having a workforce that understands anti-racism is the first step to achieving this.

Work is underway to extend the DARPL virtual campus to childcare, play and early years.

We are committed to supporting a strong, diverse and inclusive workforce through our various workforce programmes and strategies such as the Early Years Childcare and Play Workforce Plan.

Additional Learning Needs

Early identification, intervention and prevention is a key principle of our Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform. Since 2021 maintained schools (other than special schools) have been required under the ALN and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act to designate an ALN Co-ordinator (ALNCo) with responsibility for co-ordinating additional learning provision for

pupils with ALN. In addition, all local authorities have been required to designate an Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (Early Years ALNLO) to lead on the local authority's support of children with ALN who are under compulsory school age (5 years) who are not attending maintained schools. A third statutory role is also in place in Local Health Boards in the form of a Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO). The DECLO has responsibility for co-ordinating the Local Health Board's functions in relation to children and young people with ALN.

The Early Years ALNLO plays an important role in helping ensure early identification of needs, facilitating early intervention, supporting prompt provision of additional support, and contributing to a positive transition to education.

The ALN Code for Wales describes the strategic role of the ALNCo and Early Years ALNLO and sets out the experience and expertise that the ALNCo and Early Years ALNLO should have. From 1 January 2022, children who were on the SEN system have started to move into the ALN system in year groups, which include learners below statutory school age. To support this, we have published [practitioner, technical, and parent and child guidance on implementation](#). We have also developed the national ALN professional learning pathway.

A child with additional learning needs deserves the same rights to grow, learn, engage and reach their potential as any other child. Each child will have their own unique set of strengths and difficulties. Appropriate adjustments can maximise their learning potential and reduce distress which gives the potential to thrive in early years and childcare settings.

Supporting families to ensure babies and young children have good experiences in the home is important. We want to build on the care and nurturing babies and young children receive from their parents and/or carers. The ability to access high-quality education and childcare is central to our vision for supporting babies and young children in their early years. This includes provision being accessible, as well as being inclusive to support all children regardless of any additional learning needs or their backgrounds. Access to ECPLC is important as it can help babies and young children socialise with other children and adults, have fun, be creative and enjoy learning new things. It can also help to support early identification of need, early intervention and support positive transition and progression to education.

We know that having accessible childcare supports parents and carers to gain good, stable, employment which allows them to improve their family's circumstances and is the most effective way of tackling poverty. Schools, childcare and playwork settings are a crucial part of our local economies. Through our communication and engagement activities and working with our partners, we want to support families and communities to see the benefits in accessing quality care and education for them and their child.

Record of Impacts by protected characteristic:

Please complete the next section to show how this policy / decision / practice could have an impact (positive or negative) on the protected groups under the Equality Act 2010. (Please refer to the EIA guidance document for more information.) It is important to note any opportunities you have identified that could advance or promote equality of opportunity. This includes identifying what we can do remove barriers and improve participation for people who are under-represented or suffer disproportionate disadvantage.

Lack of evidence is not a reason for *not assessing equality impacts*. Please highlight any gaps in evidence that you have identified and explain how/if you intend to fill these gaps.

Protected characteristic or group	What are the positive or negative impacts of the proposal?	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)	How will you mitigate impacts?
Age (think about different age groups)	<p>Positive. The ECPLC plan focuses on supporting all babies and children from 0-5 from all backgrounds across three themes of Quality, Access and Workforce whilst the ECPLC Quality Framework for practitioners specifically focusses on what high quality provision should look like in any education and care setting they attend.</p> <p>We also want to support parents, regardless of their age</p>	<p>ECPLC focuses on supporting babies and young children aged 0-5, regardless of their background¹⁸. This is a key point for brain development, with crucial milestones for cognitive, social, physical, communication, emotional and behavioural ability which, if missed, can negatively impact longer term life chances. Evidence has shown that ECPLC has the most impact at this stage. Our ECPLC approach for Wales means developing and</p>	<p>Each programme stated in the ECPLC Plan will have their own Integrated Impact Assessments that should be reviewed as policy develops.</p> <p>The ECPLC Plan and the ECPLC Quality Framework and supporting documents have been co-constructed/co-developed by practitioners for practitioners with feedback being sought to continuously improve the resources developed.</p>

¹⁸ Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) (2003);

	be able to access ECPLC provision.	delivering a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality play-based education and childcare opportunities, for all babies and young children aged 0-5 years old.	
Disability (consider the social model of disability ²¹ and the way in which your proposal could inadvertently cause, or could be used to proactively remove, the barriers that disable people with different types of impairments)	<p>Positive. The ECPLC plan focuses on supporting all babies and children from 0-5 across three themes of Quality, Access and Workforce. The ECPLC Quality Framework specifically focusses on what high quality provision should look like in any education and care setting they attend, regardless of their disability.</p> <p>We also want to support parents to access ECPLC provision for their children regardless of their disability.</p>	<p>ECPLC is underpinned on provision being accessible, as well as inclusive to support all babies and young children.</p> <p>We want to support treating all children equitably, whatever their home life, first language, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender and gender expression and whether they are disabled or non-disabled.</p>	<p>We are committed to the importance of early identification of Additional Learning Needs, facilitating early intervention, supporting prompt accessible provision of additional support, ensuring that provision is accessible and contributing to a positive transition to education.</p>
Gender Reassignment (the act of transitioning and	We want to support parents, regardless of their gender to be able to access ECPLC provision.	Provision being accessible, as well as being inclusive to support all babies and	The programmes and policies that are within the ECPLC vision/plan will have an impact on this area which will

Transgender people)	Positive. We want our workforce to thrive, be equally valued and mutually respected.	children regardless of their gender.	have its own IIA to support this.
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Positive. We want our workforce to thrive, be equally valued and mutually respected.</p> <p>We also want to support parents to access ECPLC provision and be supported in understanding their child's development.</p>	<p>We want to attract the right people into the childcare, playwork and education sector with the skills and behaviours to provide high-quality play, learning and care opportunities for babies and young children. We need to ensure training and qualifications are accessible for our workforce and are based on effective practice and standards. We need training which supports the workforce to fully understand how babies and young children learn and develop, and we want to support the existing workforce to gain the skills they need to progress in their careers and access more employment opportunities.</p>	<p>The programmes and policies that are within the ECPLC vision/plan will have an impact on this area which will have its own IIA to support this.</p>
Race (include different ethnic minorities, Gypsies and	Positive. ECPLC has a significant contribution to make in mitigating the	Provision being inclusive to support all babies and children	We are embedding anti-racism into everything we do, and ensuring all staff have

<p>Travellers and Migrants, Asylum seekers and Refugees)</p>	<p>impact of inequalities, whether it's racism, poverty, disabilities or other societal factors such as lack of opportunities all of which can have lasting effects on individuals' lives. We are committed to breaking down barriers to ensure babies and young children are supported to have fulfilling and happy childhoods.</p> <p>ECPLC also supports the workforce regardless of their race or background.</p> <p>We also want to support parents, regardless of their race or background to be able to access ECPLC provision.</p>	<p>regardless of their racial backgrounds.</p>	<p>a good understanding of different cultures, values, religions and beliefs, and the needs and barriers faced by different communities in Wales. Respecting those practitioners in education, childcare and playwork have equally important roles in supporting babies and young children's wellbeing and in helping to build the foundations for their future development. ECPLC is committed to embedding an equality and inclusive approach into everything we do through championing best practice and developing policy and resources with key stakeholders.</p> <p>The ECPLC Reflective Practice Toolkit that has been developed as part of the suite of ECPLC resources. The ECPLC Reflective Practice Toolkit supports practitioners to reflect on their own understandings and practices to support all babies and young children's learning and development.</p> <p>Whilst we have some way to go in</p>
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			<p>embedding anti-racism into everything we do, we will work closely with our stakeholders to raise awareness, support the sector by encouraging training opportunities and working in partnership with families and the community. We have also gathered feedback from our Anti-Racist Community Mentors who have been integral in ensuring that what we produce is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Through DARPL we are ensuring the workforce has access to appropriate professional learning to support practitioners.</p>
<p>Religion, belief and non-belief</p>	<p>Positive. The plan focuses on supporting all babies and children from 0-5 accessing high quality provision in any education and care setting they attend, irrespective of their religious or non-religious beliefs.</p> <p>ECPLC also supports the workforce regardless of their</p>	<p>Provision being inclusive to support all babies and children regardless of their religion, beliefs and non-beliefs.</p>	<p>Embedding anti-racism into everything we do, and ensuring all staff have a good understanding of different cultures, values, religions and beliefs, and the needs and barriers faced by different communities in Wales. Respecting those practitioners in education, childcare and playwork have equally important roles in supporting babies</p>

	<p>religion/beliefs/non beliefs.</p> <p>We also want to support parents, regardless of their religion/beliefs/non beliefs be able to access ECPLC provision.</p>	<p>and young children's wellbeing and in helping to build the foundations for their future development. ECPLC is committed to embedding an equality and inclusive approach into everything we do through championing best practice and developing policy and resources with key stakeholders.</p> <p>The ECPLC Reflective Practice Toolkit that has been developed as part of the suite of ECPLC resources to support practitioners to reflect on their own understandings and practices to support all babies and young children's learning and development.</p> <p>Whilst we have some way to go in embedding an inclusive and anti-racism approach into everything we do, we will work closely with our stakeholders to raise awareness, support the sector by encouraging training opportunities and working in partnership with families and the community. We have also gathered</p>
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			<p>feedback from our Anti-Racist Community Mentors who have been integral in ensuring that what we produce is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Curriculum for Wales - Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) within the new curriculum will encourage children and young people to respect their own rights and culture and those of others. They aim to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to realise their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives</p>
Sex / Gender	Positive. The plan focuses on supporting all babies and children, regardless of their gender from 0-5 accessing high quality provision in any education and care	Provision being inclusive to support all babies and children regardless of their gender.	The programmes and policies that are within the ECPLC vision/plan will have an impact on this area which will have its own IIA to support this.

	<p>setting they attend. ECPLC also supports the workforce regardless of their sex/gender.</p> <p>We also want support parents, regardless of their sex/gender be able to access ECPLC provision.</p>		<p>Curriculum for Wales - Relationships and Sexuality education (RSE) is a statutory requirement in the new curriculum. High quality RSE has an important role to play in supporting learners in recognising healthy, safe relationships and understanding, and developing respect for differences between people. It will enable learners to manage risks, express ideas and emotions, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and take on different roles and responsibilities. The learning and experience in this Area can support learners to become healthy, confident individuals. This also includes learning about gender and harmful stereotypes and how to treat everyone with respect and kindness,</p>
<p>Sexual orientation (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual)</p>	<p>Positive. We want our workforce to thrive, be equally valued and mutually respected.</p> <p>We also want parents, regardless of their sexual orientation to</p>	<p>We want to attract the right people into the childcare, playwork and education sector with the skills and behaviours to provide high-quality play, learning and care opportunities for babies and young</p>	<p>The programmes and policies that are within the ECPLC vision/plan will have an impact on this area which will have its own IIA to support this.</p> <p>Curriculum for Wales</p>

	<p>be supported in accessing provision.</p>	<p>children. We need to ensure training and qualifications are accessible for our workforce and are based on effective practice and standards. We need training which supports the workforce to fully understand how babies and young children learn and develop, and we want to support the existing workforce to gain the skills they need to progress in their careers and access more employment opportunities regardless of their background.</p>	<p>We want all children and young people to grow up healthy, safe and happy. Relationships and Sexuality education (RSE) will enhance the new curriculum's focus on health and well-being, and one of the purposes of the new curriculum is that all young people leave education as "healthy, confident individuals", this includes being able to form relationships based on mutual trust and respect.</p> <p>Inclusivity is a key principle that underpins our vision for RSE. Learners will also be given a much broader understanding of sexuality that is fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ learners and includes wider issues such as consent, domestic abuse and respecting diversity. This is inclusive to ensure all learners see themselves and each other in what they learn about RSE.</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>Positive. We want our workforce to thrive, be equally valued and mutually respected.</p>	<p>We want to attract the right people into the childcare, playwork and education sector with the skills and</p>	<p>The programmes and policies that are within the ECPLC vision/plan will have an impact on this area which will</p>

	<p>We also want to support parents be able to access ECPLC provision.</p>	<p>behaviours to provide high-quality play, learning and care opportunities for babies and young children. We need to ensure training and qualifications are accessible for our workforce and are based on effective practice and standards. We need training which supports the workforce to fully understand how babies and young children learn and develop, and we want to support the existing workforce to gain the skills they need to progress in their careers and access more employment opportunities.</p>	<p>have its own IIA to support this.</p>
<p>Children and young people up to the age of 18</p>	<p>Positive - help babies and young children socialise with other children and adults, have fun, be creative and enjoy learning new things. It can also help to support early identification of need, early intervention and later support positive transition and progression to education</p>	<p>The plan focuses on supporting all babies and children from 0-5 accessing high quality provision in any education and care setting they attend. It should enrich their childhood and support them now and in the future.</p>	<p>The recent publication of the ECPLC resources focuses on what quality provision looks like to support all babies and young children aged 0-5 to grow, develop and learn. This reflects the Curriculum for Wales ethos.</p>

<p>Low-income households</p>	<p>Positive. The plan focuses on supporting all babies and children from 0-5 as well as their parents/carers accessing high quality provision in any education and care setting they attend, regardless of socio-economic backgrounds. It also provides recognises the additional, targeted support (on the basis of individual and place-based socio-economic deprivation) to support equitable provision and outcomes.</p>	<p>Provision being inclusive to support all children regardless of their backgrounds. Flying Start is the Welsh Government's flagship early years programme. It continues to make a real difference to the lives of children in some of our most disadvantaged communities and the Welsh Government has reaffirmed its commitment to continue to support the programme throughout this term of government. In line with the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, we have extended this commitment to deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.</p>	<p>We know from independent evaluation evidence that Flying Start is having a positive impact on families' lives and has been life-changing for some "high need families".</p> <p>The Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG) provides funding for non-/maintained settings to provide particular support to children from low income households, as well as those in the care of the local authority, to achieve at the same level as better-off peers.</p> <p>Guidance for schools/settings on the use of PDG for children ages 5-15 from low-income households highlights the crucial role ECPLC has to play in tackling the impact of poverty on child development, including attainment, at an early stage.</p> <p>Early years settings, primary schools and practitioners are directed to existing Welsh Government guidance Early Years Pupil Development</p>
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			Grant: Guidance and the Education Endowment Foundation's Early Years Toolkit .
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Human Rights and UN Conventions

Do you think that this policy will have a positive or negative impact on people's human rights? (*Please refer to point 1.4 of the EIA Guidance for further information about Human Rights and the UN Conventions*).

Human Rights	What are the positive or negative impacts of the proposal?	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)	How will you mitigate negative Impacts?
Human Rights including Human Rights Act and UN Conventions	Positive	The ECPLC plan is child-centred putting child development and rights at the forefront.	We are committed to developing a valued, thriving, diverse and mutually respected childcare, playwork and nursery education workforce committed to high quality.
Conventions on the Rights of the Child	Positive	The ECPLC plan is child-centred putting child development at the forefront.	We will encourage everyone working in the sector to play a part and to; develop a deeper understanding of child development and the importance of play; gather views through our consultations and research proposals; undertake training opportunities provided to upskill and develop new

			<p>skills and refresher courses.</p> <p>We will continue to co-produce and co-develop our policies and resources with key stakeholders.</p>
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Equality and discrimination are inextricably linked to human rights. Socio-economic disadvantage has the potential to blight a person’s ability to access and enjoy the human rights available to them in the UK, through a mixture of domestic law **the Human Rights Act 1998**, retained EU law and international human rights law. Such disadvantage can result in long-term inequalities in education, health, life satisfaction, prosperity and participation in public life.

Approaching implementation of the Socio-economic Duty in the correct way will help public bodies to maximise their contribution to addressing such inequalities, and also to meet their obligations under the **Human Rights Act 1998** and international human rights law, including **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. It will be for public bodies to understand where they can achieve the greatest impact, however those bodies covered by the Duty will be required to give due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome as a result of socio-economic disadvantage through the decisions that they take. Many of these decisions would be expected to impact on children and young people.

It is unlawful for public bodies in Wales to act incompatibly with the **European Convention of Human Rights**. Public bodies also have obligations as part of the state to consider, observe and give effect to international human rights treaties signed and ratified by the UK. Altogether, there are seven international human rights instruments which have been ratified by the UK, all of which have socio-economic relevance.

EU/EEA and Swiss Citizens' Rights

Part 2 of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, along with the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement and Swiss Citizens Rights Agreement ("Citizens Rights Agreements") give EU, EEA¹⁹ and Swiss citizens who were lawfully resident in the UK by 31 December 2020 certainty that their citizens' rights will be protected.

The Citizens Rights Agreements are implemented in domestic law by the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 (EUWAA)²⁰

Eligible individuals falling within scope of the Citizens Rights Agreements will have broadly the same continued entitlements to work, study and access public services and benefits, in as far as these entitlements have derived from UK membership of the EU as well as its participation in the EEA Agreement and the EU-Swiss Free Movement of Persons Agreement.

Subject to certain limited exceptions²¹, individuals will need to have applied for a new residence status (either pre-settled or settled status) through the EU Settlement Scheme. The deadline for making such an application expired on 30 June 2021.

Policy considerations to take into account:

- Have you considered if your policy proposal will impact EU, EEA or Swiss citizens whose rights are protected by the Citizens Rights Agreements?
- If there is the potential for any negative impact on such EU EEA or Swiss citizens, how will any such impacts be eliminated or managed if management is deemed appropriate?
- Is legal advice required?

Please consider the impacts of your policy on the areas below, indicating whether the impact is positive or negative and any action required to eliminate potential negative impact. Please note the basis for your answer, including where legal advice has been sought and please also indicate where a right is not relevant for your policy:

Residency – the right to reside and other rights related to residence: rights of exit and entry, applications for residency, restrictions of rights of entry and residence;

Not relevant to policy

¹⁹ The EEA includes the EU countries as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

²⁰ Sections 5 and 6 of EUWAA.

²¹ E.g. where an individual has Irish citizenship (including dual British and Irish citizenship) or where they had indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK)

Mutual recognition of professional qualifications –the continued recognition of professional qualifications obtained by EU/EEA/Swiss citizens in their countries (and already recognised in the UK);

The childcare and playwork workforce does not fall under the recognition of professional qualifications Act (. However, under the renew and refresh workforce plan any person who would like to work in childcare and early years in Wales must hold a qualification that is listed on Social Care Wales' [qualification framework](#).

If their qualification is not on the list, Social Care Wales will need to assess whether it can be accepted. They do so by mapping the individual's qualification against the Welsh equivalent.

At the end of the process, SCW advise on whether the individual's qualification is acceptable. Where there is a small shortfall in equivalency SCW can support the development of an action plan so that the individual can be employed as a qualified member of staff. Where there is a more significant shortfall, SCW may determine that the person cannot be employed as a qualified member of staff without undertaking the CCPLD.

More information about this can be found here: [International early years and childcare qualifications | Social Care Wales](#).

Any specific questions on international qualifications or this process should be sent to: InternationallyQualified@socialcare.wales.

School teachers in Wales are a regulated profession and fall under the Professional Qualifications Act. International schoolteachers, including EU/EEA/Swiss teachers, can apply to the Education Workforce Council (EWC) to have their qualifications recognised and thereafter register should they meet the requirements. Further information can be found at <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/registration/practitioners-trained-outside-wales>

Access to social security systems – these include benefits, access to education, housing and access to healthcare

Not relevant to policy

Equal treatment – this covers non-discrimination, equal treatment and rights of workers;

As mentioned above, our ECPLC vision supports our ambition for a supported workforce that thrives, be equally valued and mutually respected. The ECPLC plan focuses on supporting all babies and children from 0-5, and their families.

Workers rights - Workers and self-employed persons who are covered under the Citizens Rights Agreements are guaranteed broadly the same rights as they enjoyed when the UK was a Member State. They have a right to not be discriminated against due to nationality, and the right to equal treatment with UK nationals.

(Frontier workers (those citizens who reside in one state and regularly work in another) can continue working in the UK if they did so by the 31 December 2020).

Not relevant to policy however our ECPLC vision supports our ambition for a supported workforce that thrives, be equally valued and mutually respected.

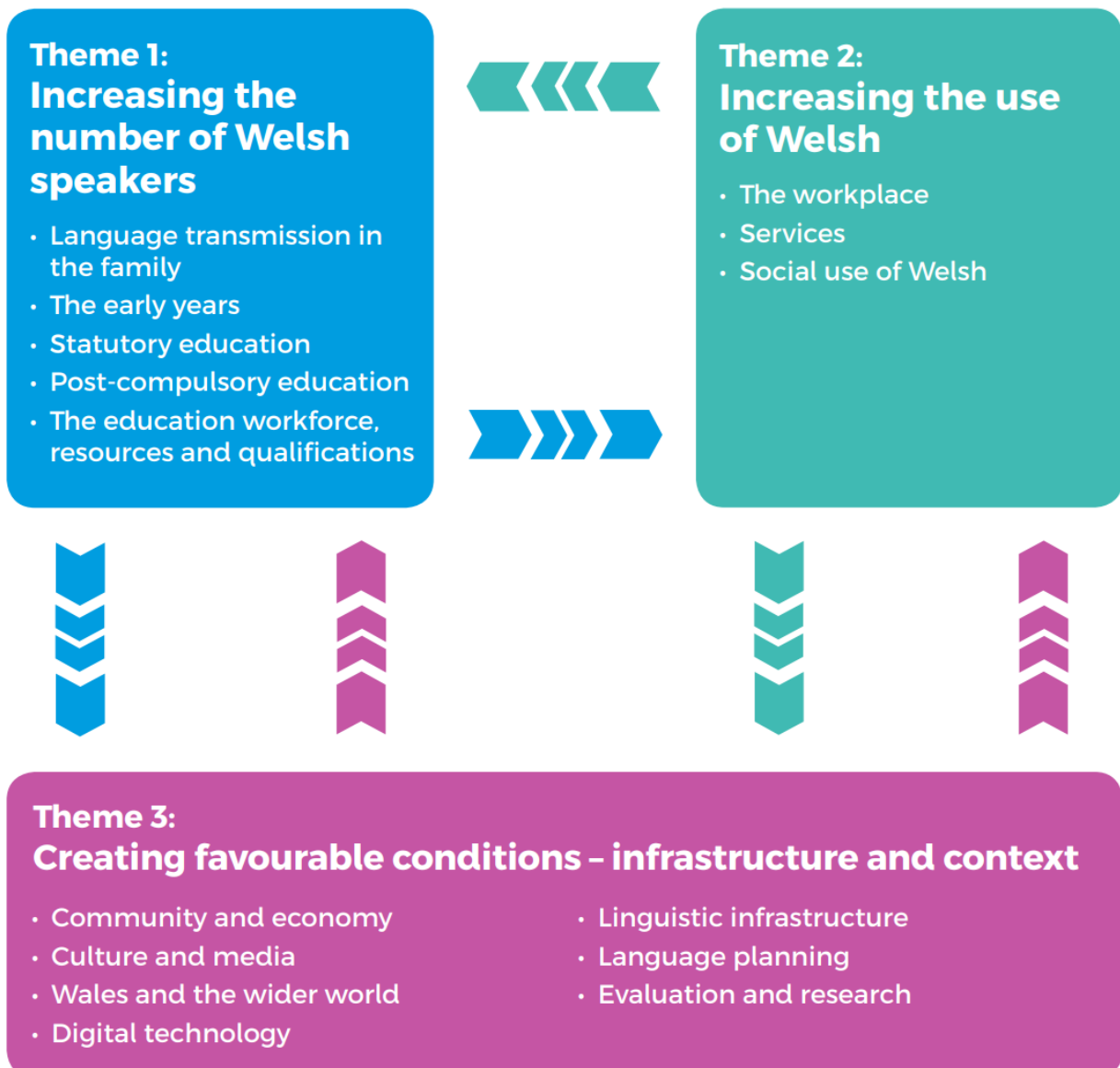
WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Cymraeg 2050 is our national strategy for increasing the number of Welsh speakers to a million by 2050.

The Welsh Government is fully committed to the new strategy, with the target of a million speakers included in its Programme for Government. A thriving Welsh language is also included in one of the 7 well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

We also have a statutory obligation to fully consider the effects of our work on the Welsh Language. This means that any Welsh Government policy should consider how our policies affect the language and those who speak it.

The *Cymraeg 2050 strategy* has three interrelated themes:



The headings under each theme outline the scope of activities that can affect the language.

As a general rule, if your policy has the potential to impact on people, it will impact in some way on Welsh speakers and therefore on the Welsh language.

1. Welsh Language Impact Assessment reference number (completed by the Welsh Language Standards Team, email: Safonau.Standards@gov.wales):
2. Does the proposal demonstrate a clear link with the Welsh Government's strategy for the Welsh language? – [Cymraeg 2050 A million Welsh speakers](#) and the related Work Programme for 2021-2026? [Cymraeg 2050 work programme 2021-2026](#)

The Welsh Government's vision is to see the Welsh language thrive, with an increase in the number of people who both speak and use the language in their daily lives. Both this strategy and the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act state that the Welsh language is a strategic priority for the Welsh Government. *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*, highlights the importance of the early years sector as a point of early entry to immersion education, and to increase demand for Welsh-medium education.

As part of our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care vision in Wales, we want babies and young children and their parents/carers to discover the benefits of bilingualism or multilingualism. Promoting early language development in the Welsh language will contribute to the strategy: *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*. Raising awareness amongst parents of a child's early language development and the benefits of raising children bilingually supports the Welsh Language Strategy.

Supporting babies and young children to access Welsh medium and/or bilingual childcare and nursery education provision is integral to helping increase the numbers moving into Welsh medium education. It can also offer support for the transmission of the Welsh language in the home. Our expansion of Flying Start childcare helps to support this, by supporting Welsh medium settings to become Flying Start providers, as well as encouraging existing Flying Start settings to move towards greater use of the Welsh language.

We want to ensure there is sufficient Welsh medium childcare and play opportunities, including after school and in the holidays, to enable families to access the provision they want. As part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments process, local authorities must consider the supply and demand for Welsh medium childcare and analyse and address any gaps in provision. Local authorities must ensure that these assessments are clearly linked to their local authority plans for growth and continuity in Welsh medium education as set out in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. The local authorities are also required to undertake Play Sufficiency Assessment

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care further supports our ongoing commitment to building a bilingual, inclusive and diverse childcare, playwork and education workforce.

High-quality Welsh medium provision will provide more opportunities for children to develop, socialise and play through the medium of Welsh and will contribute to our *Cymraeg 2050* targets.

Developing children's speech, language, communication and reading skills are particularly critical for our youngest children, where the building blocks for early language development begins with developing their attention, listening and understanding skills. Our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) vision will continue to support families to introduce and use Welsh at home, pass on the Welsh language to their children, and support children's linguistic, social and educational development, for example, through the free sessions offered by Mudiad Meithrin's *Cymraeg i Blant / Cymraeg for Kids* programme. We will also create new initiatives, building on our existing work to support Welsh language transmission and use in families, using the latest techniques to change behaviours. ECPLC will continue promoting the benefits of Welsh medium early years provision to non-Welsh speaking families from all backgrounds.

3. Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on the Welsh language and explain how you will address these impacts in order to improve outcomes for the Welsh language. How will the proposal affect Welsh speakers of all ages (both positive and/or adverse effects)? You should note your responses to the following in your answer to this question, along with any other relevant information:
- ◆ How will the proposal affect the sustainability of Welsh speaking communities²² (both positive and/or adverse effects)?
 - ◆ How will the proposal affect Welsh medium education and Welsh learners of all ages, including adults (both positive and/or adverse effects)?
 - ◆ How will the proposal affect services²³ available in Welsh (both positive and/or adverse effects)? (e.g. health and social services, transport, housing, digital, youth, infrastructure, environment, local government etc.)
 - ◆ How will you ensure that people know about services that are available in Welsh and are able to access and use them as easily as they can in English? What evidence / data have you used to inform your assessment, including evidence from Welsh speakers or Welsh language interest groups?

²² These can be close-knit rural communities, dispersed social networks in urban settings, and in virtual communities reaching across geographical spaces.

²³ The Welsh Language Strategy aims to increase the range of services offered to Welsh speakers, and to see an increase in use of Welsh-language services.

- ◆ What other evidence would help you to conduct a better assessment?
- ◆ How will you know if your policy is a success?

A strong sense of belonging can help to create positive feelings of connection between babies and young children and their home, as well as their school or setting, and which can also be extended to their community and to Wales and the wider world. Schools and settings that value, celebrate and build upon past and present experiences from the child's home and their community, can strengthen a sense of belonging. Schools and settings should ensure children feel safe and secure within their environment and show genuine care and provide emotional support.

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government and Cooperation Agreement commitments regarding expanding childcare provision to all 2-year-olds in Wales supports our long term Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care vision in supporting babies and young children, their families and the workforce in providing opportunities to learn and use Welsh.

All local authorities are required to prepare and implement Welsh in Education Strategic plans (WESP) to increase Welsh medium education in their areas. To support the planning process, each WESP has seven outcomes and the first outcome is focused on increasing the number of nursery children/three year olds who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Each local authority has agreed a specific target increase during the 10-year lifetime of the WESP.

In 2017 Cymraeg 2050 set the target to expand early years provision in Welsh to 150 more nursery groups over 10 years as an access point to Welsh medium education. For the last 6 years, the Welsh Government has funded Mudiad Meithrin to lead on this expansion through its Set up and Succeed / Sefydlu a Symud (SAS) programme. The initial target of 40 new groups established by 2021 was achieved, and work on the current target to establish a further 60 new provisions during the current Senedd term is well under way with early indications that the target will be surpassed.

Expanding Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point to Welsh medium education is one of the key aims of our Welsh Language Strategy, Cymraeg 2050. The importance of the Welsh language strategy is further highlighted with the Welsh Government's long-term aim being "for our early years provision is to reach a position where children under five have had sufficient contact with the Welsh language to be able to start on their journey towards fluency". We also fund Cwlwm, the Childcare consortium, to provide activities to support the expansion of Welsh medium childcare and early years provision. We have for example provided funding to support Croesi'r Bont, which offers language support for new Welsh medium settings and English medium settings looking to introduce or improve Welsh language provision.

Access to Welsh medium childcare and play gives children the opportunity to socialise and play through the medium of Welsh (for some children, exposure to the Welsh language will not have been possible during lockdown). Support for Welsh medium settings will also support Welsh medium education as children who attend Welsh medium childcare are more likely to progress to Welsh medium schools than those attending English medium provision. Strengthening of Welsh medium settings also means that settings will be in a position to offer a service to Welsh speaking families or to families where there is an appetite for the children to be bilingual, even if the parents are not. In situations where this is happening, children are able to continue with their day to day lives and activities whilst speaking their first language (in the case of Welsh speaking families) or children in non-Welsh speaking households have the added benefit of childcare through the medium of Welsh, further supporting their learning and development and future employment choices.

It must be recognised however that recruiting and retaining Welsh speakers to work with children in the childcare, playwork and early education sector is an ongoing challenge. The childcare and play sector as a whole is facing recruitment and retention issues, these are exacerbated for Welsh medium provision given the smaller pool of potential recruits who have Welsh language skills. However, the Welsh Government are focused on supporting expanded childcare provision through the medium of Welsh. We are investing in:

- staff to gain Level 3 and Level 5 Welsh-medium childcare qualifications.
- more Welsh-medium play and after school clubs to train in playworks qualifications.
- settings through Croesi'r Bont which offers language immersion support for new settings.

These actions, coupled with investment in new, dedicated Welsh-medium settings via our Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme and programmes such as Sefydli a Symud will allow us to attract more Welsh speakers into the Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care workforce, and provide opportunities for Welsh learners and Welsh speakers within the existing workforce to improve their language skills; and supporting continuous professional development for Welsh speakers within the workforce.

The review and refresh of the 10 Year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce plan provides the Welsh Government the opportunity to make clear our ongoing commitment to the childcare and playwork workforce and to building a bilingual workforce. It will highlight the actions that have been completed to date to achieve this aim and those that are continuing as part of its 10-year vision.

The review and refresh will show how we are supporting an increase in Welsh medium provision in a range of ways and recognises challenges such as the recruitment and retention of Welsh speakers. Business Wales also provides business [support](#) and advice to the childcare and play sector. Business Wales have developed a series of sector specific [expert sessions](#) and a resource pack which includes Welsh Language use.

The [Welsh in Education 10-year Workforce Plan](#) sets out the actions that we will take in partnership with a range of organisations and stakeholders to increase the number of teachers able to teach Welsh as a subject or through the medium of Welsh, to develop the Welsh language skills of our education workforce and to ensure that our leaders are equipped with the knowledge and skills to strategically plan and develop the Welsh language within our schools.

We have consulted on proposals that will form the basis of a Welsh Language Education Bill. The intention is to introduce the Bill during this legislative year (2024). The Bill will take steps to enable all pupils in Wales to become independent Welsh speakers through the statutory education system.

We've published our [policy](#) to help those who can speak Welsh to do so with their children and enable those families where there is already an ability to use Welsh - although they may not have used Welsh for a while - to use whatever Welsh they have with their children.