



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan in Wales

What we have done since publication and what we plan to do



Introduction

On 15 March 2024, our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales Plan (ECPLC) was published, bringing together all our policies and programmes relating to ECPLC from across Welsh Government. The plan places the child and child development at the heart of everything we do and was developed around three themes: quality of provision, access to provision, and supporting and developing the workforce. By focusing on these themes, the plan supports the development and delivery of high-quality, inclusive, play-based childcare and education opportunities for all babies and young children aged 0–5 years old.

The next few pages sets out what we will continue to do, have done since the publication of the ECPLC Plan and what else we will be doing to the end of this Senedd term (May 2026).



What we will continue to do:

Deliver Flying Start

Offer all primary school children a free and nutritious meal at lunchtime

Deliver the expansion of Flying Start Childcare for two-year-olds in Wales

Deliver the Playworks Holiday Project to support the all-important access to play opportunities with food/snacks for children

Fund Mudiad Meithrin to deliver the Sefydliu a Symud / Set up and Succeed programme

Promote the Early Years Neurodivergence Programme

Deliver the Childcare Offer for Wales

Support the workforce's knowledge and understanding of babies and young children's mental health and wellbeing through the NYTH/NEST framework

Work with local authorities, to support our ambitions in improving opportunities to play and promote the benefits of play for children's wellbeing

Fund Children in Wales to deliver Children's Rights in Early Years training

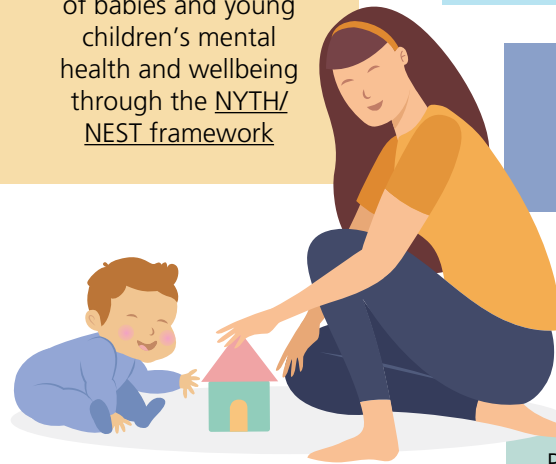
Provide part-time nursery education to 3- and 4-year-olds

Provide the Early Years Pupil Development Grant

Fund Play Wales to promote the value of Play and support taking forward actions following recommendations of the Ministerial Review of Play Report

Fund Cwlwm to increase the availability of high-quality, accessible, affordable, and flexible registered childcare and playwork services

Raise awareness of the change in law under the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020



Progress the actions from the Independent Review of Childminding recommendations

Progress the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan actions and support a more diverse childcare workforce

Fund Children in Wales to run the Children's Rights in Early Years Network and the Early Years Action Group

Implement Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act to ensure children with ALN have their needs identified and supported

Fund the Parents Connect Wales service until March 2026

Undertake a legislative review of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to obtain evidence to understand the practical challenges faced by delivery partners in implementing the ALN system

Promote the Playful Childhoods Wales campaign

What we have done to support access to provision

Provided a 28% uplift in the Childcare Offer hourly rate paid to childcare settings for 2025-2026 and moved to annual rate reviews

Supported families through the Cymraeg for Kids programme. 2,455 face to face and online sessions were held attended by 19,756 children and 19,873 adults

Started to develop proposals for improving Childcare Sufficiency Arrangements

Developed an animated explainer on how Community Focused Schools supports Equity in Education



Provided capital funding to local authorities in 2025-2026 to improve the quality of play spaces and playgrounds, creating accessible play opportunities

Produced E-learning and guidance for professionals to raise awareness of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 with children

Supported the National Neurodivergence Team to update the 'work in an early years setting' webpages

What we have done to support quality of provision

Started to review the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for regulated childcare to address recommendations not taken forward from the last review and to reflect changes in the childcare sector in Wales which have taken place since the last review

Published a response to Estyn's report on the impact of poverty on educational attainment, support, provision and transition for early education

Held a national network conversation on Enabling learning with over 200 practitioners attending

Published supplementary guidance for Community Focused Schools on the key aspects of multi-agency engagement and four video case studies highlighting Community Focussed School approaches within both English and Welsh medium schools and in primary, secondary and pupil referral units schools



Held enabling learning engagement sessions attended by over 400 individuals: supporting senior leaders of primary, secondary, all-age, special schools, and pupil referral units to develop understanding of how it can support planning, designing, and implementing a pedagogically appropriate curriculum for all learners

Supported Traumatic Stress Wales to pilot a new "Trauma Informed Practice, Skills and Strategies for (those working with) children and young people" training course involving 500 individuals across a range of services, including education, children's services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Refreshed the primary and secondary schools ACEs and trauma-informed training materials

Published the Creating an Anti-racist Culture in settings toolkit

Published a circular letter providing greater practical clarity on the use of liquid paracetamol

What we have done to support and develop the workforce

Appointed a National Speech, Language and Communication Co-ordinator for babies, children and young people

Made 100% Small Business Rates Relief for registered childcare premises permanent

Published the refreshed Childcare, play and early years workforce plan

Co-produced NEST mental health and children's rights training and made it available to everyone

Funded Social Care Wales, as part of their Pathways to Childcare Programme, to develop their work trial offer in 2025 and supported 50 settings across Wales to offer these opportunities. 463 individuals have completed the programme

Published a Ministerial Review of Play Actions Progress Report including a child friendly version and animation

Published an Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: 2024 Update

Published an ECPLC Resources Guide, ECPLC Resources: Animated Explainer and ECPLC Children's Rights leaflet for Practitioners



Funded Social Care Wales to run promotional campaigns including:

- Working in Childcare
- Apprenticeships at Chuckles Nursery
- Apprenticeships
- Volunteering at Shining Stars Nursery

Funded Social Care Wales to deliver a series of continuing professional development network events for both practitioners and managers, a Spring and Autumn school and a week-long festival of lifelong learning in November 2024

Funded the National Centre for Learning Welsh to employ a Support Officer to support retention on the childcare specific Welsh language courses offered

Published a consultation, summary of responses & next steps update on the Professional Registration of the Childcare and Playwork Workforce

Funded DARPL to deliver professional learning sessions to practitioners and leaders in childcare. Developed an enhanced leadership series of anti-racist learning for childcare leaders

Funded Local authorities to offer Childminder pre-registration training and support

Published the refreshed 'Wales – a Play Friendly Country' statutory guidance for local authorities

Extended the contracts to deliver three key playwork qualifications, until 31 March 2026

Funded through Cwllwm, for Mudiad to deliver their Cam wrth Gam training



What we plan to do to support access to provision

- Prosiect Pengwin speech, language and communication surveillance and support package to be rolled out from 2026.
- Undertake behavioural scientific work in language transmission to help those who can speak Welsh to do so with their children and help those who are unsure or haven't done so for a while understand that they can also speak Welsh with their children.
- Publish a consultation on the Review of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Duty on Local Authorities.
- Undertake research to understand the experiences and perspectives of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in accessing and using childcare.
- Publish a consultation on the review of the Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010 and the development of an Approval Scheme for Childcare, Playwork and Activities.
- Review of the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme to be published in 2026.
- Publish a Child Poverty Strategy Progress Report by December 2025.
- Undertake an interim three-year post implementation review of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020.
- Create downloadable Parenting. Give it time resources for babies; children and teenagers and supporting the parent's health and wellbeing, to be advertised digitally.
- Publish Parenting. Give it time's 'Big Book of Feelings' – A book about helping you and your child with emotions.
- Undertake a full review of the Parenting. Give it time website.
- Refresh and publish the Parenting in Wales and Families First Guidance.
- Publish Families First Qualitative Research.
- Review, streamline, and standardise information about childcare to enable parents to more easily navigate the landscape to make choices that suit their family needs.



What we plan to do to support quality of provision

- Revise the Flying Start guidance.
- Refresh the local authority nursery education provision guidance for 3- and 4-year-olds.
- Co-develop assessment arrangements for birth to 3-year-olds.
- Publish the refreshed primary and secondary schools ACEs and trauma-informed training materials in the form of a 'play list' to aide accessibility.
- Roll out the "Trauma Informed Practice, Skills and Strategies for (those working with) children and young people" training course.
- Promote the Creating an Anti-racist Culture settings toolkit.
- Publish a consultation on the Review of Review the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for regulated childcare.
- Consult on Regulations and Guidance on Healthy School Food.

What we plan to do to support and develop the workforce

- Develop Talk with me 2.
- Provide the Training and Support programme for childcare and playwork practitioners.
- Undertake a review of how we support playwork qualifications to ensure any future support is fit for purpose.
- Support the Welsh language childcare qualifications programme for Level 3 and Level 5 childcare practitioners.
- Establish a national professional learning and leadership body with the responsibility for the development of the Teaching Assistants Learning Pathway.

