



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan (ECPLC) in Wales

What we have done since publication of the last ECPLC Infographic in June 2025



Introduction

On 15 March 2024, our [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan in Wales](#) (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.

The next few pages sets out what we have done since the publication of the [last ECPLC Plan infographic](#) in June 2025 and is the final infographic, having fulfilled our commitment to produce one yearly following the initial publication of the ECPLC Plan.

A message from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Minister for Children and Social Care.

It has been a privilege to jointly lead our approach to Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales, placing the child and their developmental needs at the heart of our policy and delivery. While we recognise that there is always more to do, we are encouraged by the progress made against the actions set out in the Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan since its publication in 2024. This includes progress in improving both the quality and accessibility of provision, as well as continued support for the childcare, playwork and nursery education workforce.



What we have continued to do

Deliver Flying Start 40,943 children benefited from Flying Start services in 2024-2025.

Deliver the Childcare Offer for Wales Demand is rising, reaching 36% of all 3 and 4 year olds in Wales in 2024-2025, the highest on record.

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

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

During the Spring and Summer school holidays in 2025, 63,173 children benefited from additional play opportunities.

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

The programme has created or expanded 101 settings, with 11 more in development.

Invest in the recruitment and retention of Family Engagement Officers across Wales.

Deliver the Families First programme providing vital early help and preventative support for babies, children, young people and families.

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

Provide the Early Years Pupil Development Grant.

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

Fund the Parents Connect Wales service.

Offer all primary school learners a free and nutritious lunch. Over 64 million meals served since the launch in September 2022.

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



What we have continued to do

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

Promote the use of the NEST framework and Healthy and Sustainable Pre-schools scheme.

Support the use of Welsh language in the home for Welsh and non-Welsh speaking families.

Promote the Playful Childhoods Wales campaign.

Fund Social Care Wales who have responsibility for the workforce development of the early years and childcare sector in Wales.

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

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

Provide capital funding (£5m) to local authorities in 2025-2026 to improve the quality of play spaces and playgrounds, creating accessible play opportunities.

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

Promote the work of the National Neurodivergence Team, the Neurodivergence Improvement Programme and the Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services.



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, moved to annual rate reviews and continue to align this funding for nursery education in settings.

Supported families through the Cymraeg for Kids programme. A further 2,211 face to face and online sessions were held attended by 16,748 children and 16,716 adults.
Project officers promoted the programme at events attended by 1,147 parents and 1,231 children.
17 Mentrau Iaith sessions engaged 658 parents and 681 children.

The Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 came into force on 11 March 2026.

Published A Child Poverty Strategy Progress Report.



Published Families First Qualitative Research.

Launched the Get Help paying for Childcare webpage.

Launched the Parent and Carer ALN Toolkit. This toolkit helps parent and carers understand the additional learning needs (ALN) system in Wales and the support available for children and young people.

Published research exploring the lived experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families accessing childcare, and the experiences of ethnic minority staff working within the childcare sector.

Made available a suite of Community Focused Schools guidance, including case studies, to support key stakeholders.

What we have done to support access to provision continued

Published four PGit/EPP creative digital reels “Being a parent. We know it’s not easy” raising awareness of positive parenting and that physical punishment is illegal in Wales, and a range of supporting age-specific ‘Top tips’ parenting packs.

Launched the Prosiect Pengwin Pilot to test new surveillance, intervention and training tools across Wales.

Published a synthesis of evidence on parental decisions about childcare for children aged nine months to two years old.

The Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Revocation and Transitional Provision) (Wales) Order 2026 has been laid in the Senedd, with an anticipated coming into force date of April 2027.

Published the three-year post implementation review of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020.

Undertaken a thematic review of the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme.



Revised Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations for maintained nursery and primary schools will come into force on 31 October.

Published a Parent and carer’s guide to the assessment arrangements for 0- to 3-year-olds in Wales.

The next phase for the Voluntary Approval Scheme will be to continue to develop and refine the scheme’s detailed design, aiming for implementation in April 2027.

Published the Parent and Carer’s Guide to Nursery Education in seventeen languages.

Published the Additional learning needs (ALN) Ambassador programme report where children and young people with ALN are given a platform to share their experiences of the ALN system to help improve ALN support.

What we have done to support quality of provision

Published and concluded a [consultation on the Review of the National Minimum Standards \(NMS\) for regulated childcare](#).

Liaised with [Care Inspectorate Wales \(CIW\)](#) as part of their ongoing joint work with Estyn to revise the inspection framework for joint inspections, to ensure the principles of ECPLC are included and resources referenced.

Recruited a new cohort of Community Mentors to support the eleven childcare and play [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#) actions.

Published the [Evaluation of universal primary free schools meals \(UPFSM\): interim report](#).

Published the 2nd Edition of the [Creating an Anti-racist Culture in settings toolkit](#).

Published an Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma-informed training and supporting resource materials [playlist for schools, including two case studies on the development of trauma-informed schools](#).

Liaised with [Care Inspectorate Wales \(CIW\)](#) as part of their ongoing work to revise the inspection framework, to ensure the principles of ECPLC are included and resources referenced.

Published the [findings of a Welsh Government commissioned independent evaluation of Community Focused Schools approaches in Wales](#).

Children in Wales published the [findings of 'The Big Conversation' parent survey](#) and hosted a webinar attended by professionals and parents across Wales.

Developed a standardised handover protocol for health visiting and school nursing services.



Published the [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care: Assessment Arrangements for 0-3 Year Olds in Wales](#) to support observations and assessment across the childcare sector.

Expanded the “Trauma Informed Practice, Skills and Strategies for (those working with) children and young people” training course pilot.

Developed comprehensive trauma informed training across all four practice levels of the Trauma Informed Wales Framework and launching ACE Hub Wales’ e learning course, providing universal trauma aware knowledge for all staff.

What we have done to support and develop the workforce

Provided local authority funding to support settings to access mandatory training (safeguarding and paediatric first aid) and best practice training to enhance provision in childcare settings in areas such as ALN.

Published a consultation on the Revised professional standards for assisting teaching, teaching and leadership.

Continued to progress the actions developed as result of the recommendations of the Independent Review of Childminding including:

- Promoting the ability of childminders to offer Flying Start with local authorities.
- CIW establishment of a Childminding Champions Group.
- The development of a one stop shop of relevant information on becoming a childminder.
- Undertaking a survey of childminders digital skills.

Updated the All-Wales Speech Language and Communication Training framework to incorporate up to date training and evidence.

Representatives of play are on the Regional Partnership Boards Children's Subgroups resulting in increased consideration of play in strategic planning.

Worked with our partners to develop the Strategic Education Workforce Plan for schools.



Commissioned research on the impact of the Play Sufficiency Duties.

Supported the Welsh language childcare qualifications programme for Level 3 and Level 5 childcare practitioners.

Revised the NEST framework to include 'babies' and 'childcare' as key stakeholders in recognition of the importance of early years in the whole system approach.

What we have done to support and develop the workforce continued

Supported the publication of What children say about play in Wales: 2025 and the State of Play Report.

Transferred responsibility for the development of the Teaching Assistants Learning Pathway to Dysgu.

Published the Talk with me 2 consultation including easy read and child-friendly versions.

Commissioned Play Sufficiency Awareness training for Welsh Government officials to support a strategic cross government approach to supporting play sufficiency.

Supported and developed the Family Engagement Officer role via our National Family Engagement Officer Network.

Published good practice videos of NEST in action including early years projects.

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

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

Published the NEST framework (mental health and wellbeing): implementation update 2025.

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

Funded Social Care Wales to deliver:

- The Pathways to Childcare programme – (652 have completed the Introduction to Childcare to end December 2025; 3,529 have been reached via the Young Person's Introduction to Childcare with training for 15 Ambassadors to deliver the programme between May and December 2025; 96 settings signed up to offer work trials across 20 local authorities).
- A national Early years and childcare conference in North Wales in September 2025 (over 100 attendees) and a week-long learning event in November 2025 (over 300 attendees).
- Regular information sessions focused on the All-Wales Induction Framework and Children's Care Play Learning and Development qualifications.
- A week of online well-being events to support the workforce in January 2026.
- Training and development sessions including a management school (33 attendees), outdoor play (52 attendees) and the power of attachment.

