

# Strategy

2023-2026



Early Years  
Wales  
Blynyddoedd  
Cynnar Cymru



Dave Goodger,  
CEO

# A message from our Chair & CEO

**We, at Early Years Wales are proud to present our updated strategic plan for 2023 - 2026.**

The work we do with our members has never been more important, having come through the pandemic, we recognise there are many exciting opportunities for the early years sector in Wales.

For example, a renewed commitment to ensuring and protecting the rights of children to play ([Ministerial Play Review](#))<sup>1</sup>, and a [new curriculum](#)<sup>2</sup> that centres our practice on holistic child development are already announced and in our settings. Updates to the [National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare](#)<sup>3</sup>, and the Workforce Plan are on their way, alongside the commitment to deliver universal funded childcare for 2-year-olds. We are on the edge of a new era of focus and development for the early years sector in Wales.

We have seen an increased awareness of the value of our sector by decision-makers in Wales through policy. We now need to see these being delivered through funding and implementation in collaboration with the sector.

All the policies and opportunities are exciting, however, we know that the sector faces many ongoing challenges too. Having adapted to, and responded to the pandemic, the sector must take all the policy changes outlined above and implement these into their practice; making changes to practice takes time, energy, resources and commitment.

Our members are doing all this, and more, in their individual settings with a backdrop of unprecedented financial pressures, and recruitment and retention challenges. Each of these has an impact on the ability to continue to provide the excellent services we know our members do. For this reason, we are very grateful to our Board for extending your free membership for an additional year in 2023, allowing our members priority access to all our resources, materials, and services.

We have purposefully reviewed what we do well, and used this to build upon our offer to our members. For example, we know our many charity settings value all the work we do in support of their governance; we know that the training we provide is varied, interesting and well-received; we know our awards promote the sector; and our grant funding is welcomed by those that receive it. We continue to do all this and more, in both English and Welsh languages to support the whole sector.



**Our strategic plan is a pathway for us to follow, to provide our members with the best services and support to help them navigate the opportunities and overcome the barriers they face.**

We have added additional resources into our Welsh language structures to help with the Welsh Government target of creating [1 million Welsh language speakers in Wales by 2050](#)<sup>4</sup> because we know how much the early years sector will contribute towards this aim. We have invested heavily into an updated training offer and we are working to bring the excellent opportunities created through our Active Early Years project into our core offer. We are continuing to help all settings understand the new curriculum frameworks, pedagogies, and assessment, and we continue to work in partnership with local authorities and the Welsh Government.

We have maintained all our regional staff and offices to ensure that wherever you are in Wales, Early Years Wales is available to you.

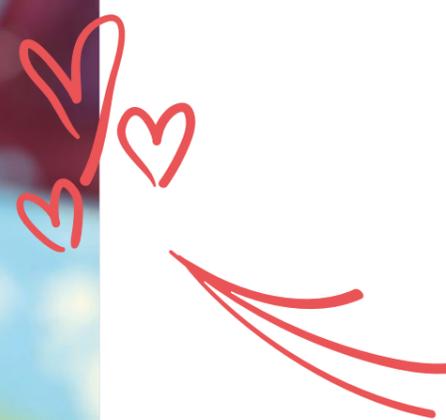
In addition, we are excited to be stepping into new opportunities in 2023. For example, our Arts Council for Wales, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Welsh Government pilot project will commence in May. This will see a number of settings working with professional artists to explore and enhance creativity within the early years curriculum.

We continue to expand our services, resources and support to help all members. In the strategy that follows, we outline some of the areas we will develop in the coming months and years ahead.

We are here to serve your needs, so we will continue to reflect on our priority areas of work matching our offers to your needs and to work with you and for you in all our areas of business.

*Dave Goodger*  
CEO

*Mike Thorne*  
Chair



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-ministerial-review-play-publication-steering-group-report>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-summary-responses-national-minimum-standards-regulated-childcare-consultation-0>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf>

Since **1961** Early Years Wales has been the largest umbrella organisation supporting a range of comprehensive membership services to the Early Years sector in Wales.

# Who we are

## • Our Staff

We are a team of 30 staff located throughout Wales

## • Our Offices

- Cardiff (Head Office)
- Swansea
- St Asaph
- Newport

## • Our Board

- |                 |             |                    |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Mike Thorne     | - Chair     | Kathryn Leighfield |
| Jamie Powell    | - Treasurer | Lisa Owen          |
| Carolyn Asante  |             | Victoria Wright    |
| David Dallimore |             | Tom McLean         |

## • Our Management Team

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| David Goodger | - CEO                                     |
| Maggie Kelly  | - National Development Manager            |
| Moya Williams | - North Wales Regional Manager            |
| Elaine Jones  | - West Wales Regional Manager             |
| Andrea Wright | - South Wales Regional Manager            |
| Julie Besley  | - PA to CEO and Office Manager            |
| Lisa McMullen | - Finance Manager                         |
| Julie Powell  | - People Development and Learning Manager |

# What we do

**Early Years Wales supports young children to have highly positive experiences through early childhood play, learning and care (ECPLC), formally known as early childhood education and care (ECEC).**

**We do this through our work with early years childcare and education providers, children’s families, and local and national government. Our work aims to support high-quality experiences for young children through training, information sharing, contributing to policy development, advocacy, embedding new procedures, and by developing and providing high-quality resources.**

We work to ensure play and play-based learning, authentic learning, and cynefin<sup>1</sup> are embedded in practice throughout the early years. We promote the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and support meaningful connections between early years provision and children’s home environment.

We support our members from across the early years care and education sector to establish and maintain sustainable and quality businesses, charities & community groups.

We assist these members in facilitating affordable childcare and providing parental choice throughout Wales both in terms of language and type of setting. Given our roots as the umbrella organisation for playgroups and parent and toddler groups in Wales, we provide particular support to volunteer groups who provide play and social activities for young children and facilitate important social connections for their parents.

It is our fundamental belief that in the early years, education and care co-exist in all settings regardless of whether they are funded by the Welsh Government to offer Foundation Learning; the early education entitlement. We also believe that play and play-based learning are essential for children in the 0-5 age range and work to protect and enhance play through all our practice.

These principles underpin all our work and are embedded in our approaches and the roots of our organisation.

- **In this document, early years provision includes settings that are funded to offer Foundation Learning early education entitlement and those that provide care and education without government funding for education.**



**Throughout the strategy, early years ‘provision’ is used to consider the full range of our membership which includes:**

- Individual Members who work or have stakeholder interests in the sector
- Full Daycare
- Parent & Toddler Groups
- Sessional Daycare
- Playgroups
- Creches
- Childminders

<sup>1</sup>Although it can be translated to “habitat” in English, “cynefin” is not just the area in which we live; it is often used to describe the relationship between people and the natural world, and how our connection to our surroundings can shape our sense of identity and well-being. Cynefin is also used in the broader sense of community, culture, heritage and identity.

It is a holistic concept that encompasses the physical, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of a place, and how these interact with each other. It is seen as the historic, cultural and social space which is shaped and defined by the community that inhabits it.

# Our Aspiration

**Our aim is to support an excellent early years sector in Wales through our work with our member settings.**

This is underpinned by high-quality early years education and care principles, embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and built on the values of play, experiential learning, and development in early years. We will achieve this through supporting our members in all that we do helping them to continue to provide excellent early years opportunities.

We aspire to a sector funded appropriately, providing a career of choice, providing a positive start for all children, and offering affordable childcare and parental choice throughout Wales.

**Together, we will see children in Wales 'play, learn, thrive.'**

## Glossary of Terms

### Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC)

Philosophy that embeds systems and practice promoting continuity of services and approaches for children in all settings, high quality early education and care, and accessible childcare providing parental choice. Derived from practice in Scandinavian Countries, ECPLC aims to take a child-centred approach to providing education and care for children.

### Foundation Learning

The curriculum for non-maintained nursery settings in Wales has replaced the previous Foundation Phase. In the new curriculum, there are no phases and it is seen as a continuum of learning from 3-16. To reflect this, Foundation Learning is used to refer to the 10 hours of nursery education that children access in childcare settings (where the Local Authorities fund this provision).

### United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC is a list of rights that all children and young people, everywhere in the world have. Children and young people aged 18 and under, have the right to be safe, to play, to have an education, to be healthy and be happy.

There are four key articles which form the basis of the rights set out in the UNCRC:

- Right to non-discrimination (article 2)
- Commitment to the best interests of the child (article 3)
- Right to life, survival and development (article 6)
- Right to be heard (article 12)

# Pillars of Work

**Our work is operationally delivered through five interdependent pillars of activity. Each pillar aspires to support, value, and enhance the early years sector in Wales and each pillar is of equal value.**

Early Years Wales aims to provide confidence to our members and our funders by being an organisation that is long-established, robustly governed, and provides a high-quality, supportive environment for our staff. We are focused on delivering value for money.

With over 60-years of sector experience and extensive staff knowledge, Early Years Wales is a trusted organisation for working with the sector and for providing research-based and evidence-led policy and practice support.

**Sustainable, quality childcare businesses, charities, and parent-led groups**

Pillar 1  
Page 9

**A qualified, valued, and skilled workforce at all levels (including volunteers and volunteer managers)**

Pillar 2  
Page 11

**Support for parents of children in the early years; support for parent-led groups (e.g., Parent and Toddler groups)**

Pillar 3  
Page 13

**Promoting a positive start for all children through their early years (0-5)**

Pillar 4  
Page 15

**Advocacy for the providers and users of early childhood education and care**

Pillar 5  
Page 17

Our Action Plan

# Sustainable, quality early education and childcare businesses, charities, and parent-led groups

- We value all providers of the childcare sector and work to support best practices in every context of member we support.
- We offer business, charity, and practical support through a range of services outlined in our membership offer and, on our website.
- We collaborate with stakeholders including Local Authorities, Welsh Government, and grant funders to create, maintain and enhance funding for the sector.

**Our Governance Project supports charity settings with their constitution as Charitable Incorporated Organisations. We work closely with the Charity Commission to fast-track CIO applications, and to support volunteer boards with the processes ensuring Charity Commission compliance and accurate applications. Our Members and the Charity Commission appreciate our work.**

“The article is very concise. I will share this with our management committee at our next meeting. Thanks for the template. We have transferred the information across from our spreadsheet. It didn't take long to do. We've uploaded this new template onto the charities site as well. We didn't get through to a 'real' person but the online messages were quite comprehensive so we have been online to set up a government gateway account and are now waiting for a password to be sent in the post so we can access the right corporation tax form! I'll let you know how things develop! I really appreciate your support - you and Sue make such a strong team to guide us through the complexities of childcare governance!

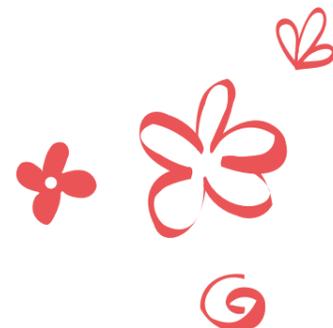
Thanks again!

**Volunteer Board Member**

“The Commission appreciates your support and partnership and that you bring concerns to our attention. And speaking personally, I am really grateful to you for raising matters with us and for all the support and kindness you and Sue show me

Thanks again!

**Charity Commission  
Liaison Officer**



## Our offer includes:

- General and bespoke business support (including but not limited to, financial, procedural, and practical support for the sector)
- Charity commission advice including our charity-commission-endorsed fast-track process for becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Volunteer-managed committee training and policies
- Business advice
- Assistance with registration, start-up processes, and Care Inspectorate Wales requirements
- Quality Assurance schemes
- Recruitment and retention support
- Tendering support
- Flying Start support
- Template policies & procedure packs

## We will expand our offer to include additional:

- Grant funding and support for sourcing grant funding
- Business support networks, workshops, and surgeries
- A bespoke start-up section on our website for new providers of childcare
- Continued work and advocacy for the sector on funding, qualifications, and value and recognition for all staff



Our Action Plan

# A qualified, valued, and skilled workforce at all levels (including volunteers and volunteer managers)

- The early years and childcare sector already has a committed and skilled workforce who we believe should be valued more in society for their work and the contribution they make to children's lives.
- The workforce (as a broad descriptor) includes staff, trainees, and volunteers.

Our training and people development opportunities are professionally presented and underpinned by high-quality research into early years practice. We plan a range of opportunities to meet the needs of our members.

Excellent informative course. The facilitators made the course easy to follow and understand along with giving an excitement to the course content which was infectious. Thank you!

The course was excellent. Delivered in a great environment by very knowledgeable facilitators. Would highly recommend.

Really helpful approach to adding more Welsh by just using 1 or 2 words even if the rest of the sentence is in English. It felt very achievable. Good use of research to promote all bilingualism not just Saesneg/ Cymraeg. Very enthusiastic presentation. Great venue. Was helpful to have the practical examples of resources that are available.

Range of feedback from different course participants



## Our offer includes:

- Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses
- ECPLC qualification and signposting, support, and promotion
- Local officer support visits
- Welsh language development and support
- Support, training, and advice on the Curriculum for Funded Non-maintained Nursery Settings, Foundation Learning principles and early years practice
- Additional Learning Needs (ALN) support, information, and implementation assistance
- Policy implementation advice
- Regional support networks
- Celebrations and recognition of the impact of the workforce including a national annual award event

## We will expand our offer to include:

- An enhanced range of training and CPD courses
- A clearer definition of the opportunities for our members
- More opportunities to recognise, promote and celebrate the achievements of our members, and the early education and childcare sector in Wales
- Work to increase the diversity and resiliency of the workforce in Wales
- Opportunities to create professional learning networks and member groups to support setting to setting peer support



Our Action Plan

# Support for parents of children in early years & parent-led groups

- We are committed to helping children have the best possible start and to maximise positive opportunities for all in the early years.
- We help parents by providing information about the various providers of care and education, promoting the value and importance of ECPLC to support a child’s progression, and signposting to additional support and information for parents.
- Through our bespoke Parent and Toddler groups offer, we support community parent-led early years groups with ideas, policies, practical help, and funding opportunities.

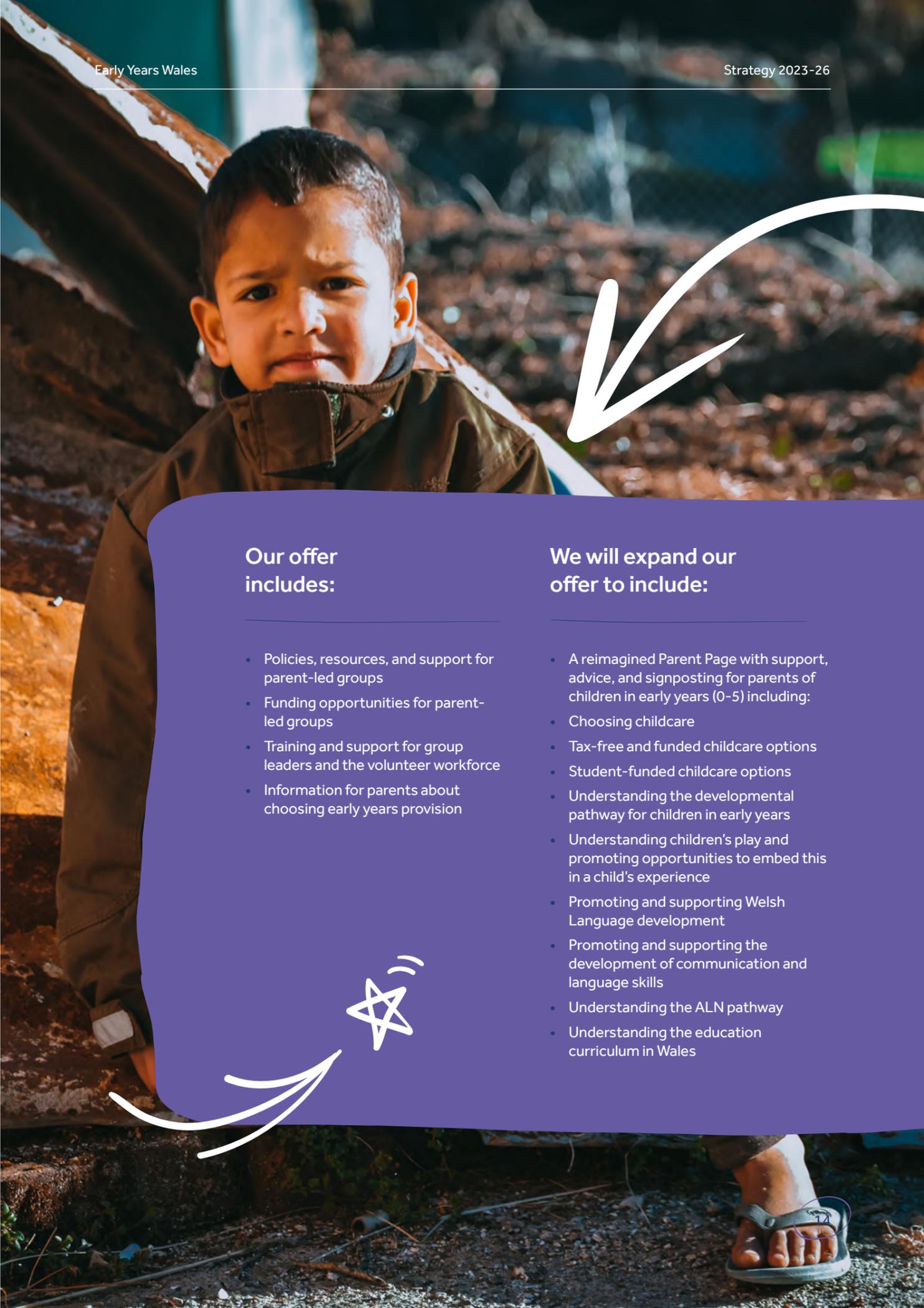
Through our work with Parent and Toddler groups we develop ideas and practice in these groups helping to support parents with their children. We help parents with understanding the needs of the child and the opportunities to support their development through the early years which is a vitally important stage of life.

Found the resources really good – liked making the resources and then able to take home and sharing ideas with the other parents. Gave us the opportunity as a group to set up our own group to continue developing our children’s physical skills.

**Feedback from a parent who attended Active Baby at Home and continued running their own parent and toddler group in Rhyl (2021)**

It has been great learning how to be active with my baby, especially as a first-time mum. Meeting new parents and their babies has helped me so much, thank you!

**Quotes from parents engaged in opportunities in Rhondda Cynon Taff (2022)**



### Our offer includes:

- Policies, resources, and support for parent-led groups
- Funding opportunities for parent-led groups
- Training and support for group leaders and the volunteer workforce
- Information for parents about choosing early years provision

### We will expand our offer to include:

- A reimagined Parent Page with support, advice, and signposting for parents of children in early years (0-5) including:
  - Choosing childcare
  - Tax-free and funded childcare options
  - Student-funded childcare options
  - Understanding the developmental pathway for children in early years
  - Understanding children’s play and promoting opportunities to embed this in a child’s experience
- Promoting and supporting Welsh Language development
- Promoting and supporting the development of communication and language skills
- Understanding the ALN pathway
- Understanding the education curriculum in Wales



Our Action Plan

# Promoting a positive start for all children throughout the early years (0-5 years)

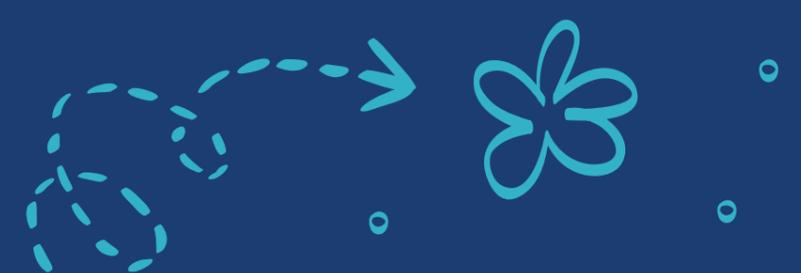
- We understand the power of making a positive start for all children in the early years to support their development and learning.
- We advocate for policies and decisions that support all children in Wales in the early years.
- We promote the Welsh language, whether as the primary language of the child or as an additional language.
- We work to overcome systemic barriers to a child's progress and success in their early years.

From our physical literacy programme, where we helped parents and children develop their understanding of physical activity and how this supports gross movement skills, physical development, cognitive development, and well-being.

The Active Together Wales programme helped [my child] get used to the space and focus more, but he loved the Toddle Waddle as he could run freely and follow his own lead. This was the first time he had the confidence to climb through the tunnel. We have enjoyed both groups a lot.

Attending the sessions helped refresh my memory about some things such as crossing the mid-line, Proprioceptive and Vestibular systems and it was great to be given ideas and activities to support development of these.

Feedback from parents who attended Active Together Wales training and attended Toddle Waddle (2022)



## Our offer includes:

- Promoting the contexts and environments to help all children in their early years
- Information to help children develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally
- Information to support the embedding of play and play-based learning for all children
- Support embedding inclusive practice including Cynefin and overcoming structural barriers for children in their early years and for the workforce
- Advocacy for the child and policies to protect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## We will expand our offer to include:

- Increased awareness of the first 1,000 days of life across the sector and in policy development
- Increase opportunities to support children's positive early years' experience through policy work, resources, training and by supporting the sector
- A commitment to support equalities including the Anti-racist Wales Action plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, and disability equalities, underpinned by actions to bring equality into practice
- Enhancing the Welsh language resources and training available to the sector and to support children's language development



Our Action Plan

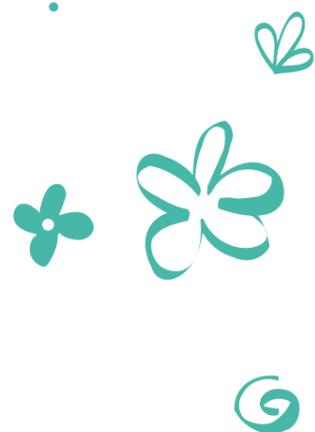
# Advocacy for the providers and users of early childhood education and care

- Our knowledge of the sector, children and child development, the workforce and our members position enables us to inform and influence policy development in Wales to promote the early years sector.
- We are committed to raising the status of the sector and driving policy decisions to enhance the working conditions and value of the early years workforce.
- We believe the advancement of ECPLC will support the sector in enhancing the status, value, and opportunities for professionals within the sector.
- We are committed to advocating for children through policy work to address and overcome inequities in Wales.

On behalf of our members, we work with a wide range of policy and decision makers in Wales and the UK to ensure that their funding and policies are meeting the needs of our members and the children they provide care for.

Early Years Wales has been integral to our project exploring digitally mediated leadership development. The invaluable perspective they provided on their digital training offer alongside their visions for the future of EY leadership development have helped shape how leadership development will be viewed and implemented across the four nations.

Kayla Halls  
Middlesex University



## Our offer includes:

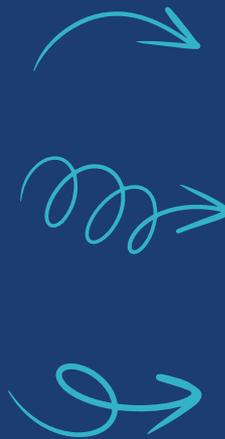
- Representing our members' views to Welsh Government and Local Government
- Developing policies in Wales that enhance ECPLC
- Developing policies and opportunities that promote the ECPLC workforce
- Supporting the status of the UNCRC in Wales and ensuring that new policies protect and maintain these rights
- Supporting the development of Cymraeg 2050: 1 million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050
- Supporting the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- Implementing the ALN Act and Code in Wales
- Supporting the inspectorate and regulatory bodies (CIW and Estyn) in the development and regulation of the sector
- Embedding best practice and promoting the curriculum for non-maintained nursery settings in Wales and early years education principles

## We will expand our offer to include:

- Increase opportunities for members to voice their opinions on policy areas in Wales
- Increase policy visibility and feedback to members on consultations and outcomes
- Adding to the body of knowledge in early years practice in Wales
- Enhanced promotion of the workforce at all levels



# Our Action Plan



## Corporate Governance

## High-Quality Employer

## Financial Control

- We are a values-based employer that understands that our biggest resource is our people.
- We provide confidence to funders through our robust corporate governance, financial control, and management.
- We deliver quality and offer value for money in our work and our outputs, reporting annually on our accounts, the impact of our work and our outputs.
- Our policies and procedures are robust, with safeguarding, equality, and development of all key themes for our organisation.
- We communicate and market ourselves effectively across the stakeholder space and to new audiences.
- We recruit staff and our volunteer Board using best practice for recruitment including monitoring for equality, diversity and promoting opportunities for all.



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Or email:  
[info@earlyyears.wales](mailto:info@earlyyears.wales)